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Individualism and Inter-Subjectivity in Modernism: Two Case Studies of Artistic Interchanges – Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906); Robert Rauschenberg (1925- ) and Jasper Johns (1930- )

by

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Dissertation

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Approved by

Dissertation Committee:
To my mother’s memory

and

To my son, Paul
Acknowledgements

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This study carries three components: 1. a survey of the concept of inter-subjectivity, or the question of the relations of individuals with others. This survey draws upon J. G. Fichte’s idea that “individual” is a reciprocal concept, or the idea that one becomes oneself only with others. 2. a survey of how modernism dealt with the four individual artists in this study. The underpinning question here is why modernism (understood as an evolutive, historicist theory of modern art) missed the question of inter-subjectivity when dealing with Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns who, however, worked together for a sustained length of
time. 3. an analysis of the complementary ties—(alliances and tensions)—at work within, and between, the two artistic interchanges under study.

The three principal themes of this study have led to the following observations. A) The complex and challenging features of these two collaborative pairs do not just tell a lot about each individual artist, in relation with an important other. B) We also see that a manifold experience of inter-subjectivity is inseparable from the subjectivity of each artist. C) The two pairs of artists compared have a lot more in common than modernist history would let us expect. Thus, in the end, thinking about inter-subjectivity in art invites us to rethink the model of history inherited by modernism, not just to understand the past, but also to understand our present: it is still within our common—albeit fractured—space that the individual today can affirm itself.
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My aim in this essay is to contribute to shift the main axis of reflection on modern art from an individual-oriented perspective to an inter-subjective (or dialogical) perspective. The latter is closer to a day-to-day account of what happens in ordinary encounters or in everyday conversations. [See Frontispiece illustration] The former approach corresponds to a proper historicization of the process of formation of art. This process largely consists in emphasizing the high moments and the key individuals that contributed to the modernist enterprise.

While reflecting on this shift, I observed that the individual-oriented direction at work in modernism is locked within a more complex logic that I tried to explore and expose piece by piece. In brief, in the history of modernism, individual artists, one-by-one, appear to be the carriers (or the instruments) of a logic upon which they have no control. This logic is essentially the logic at work in historicism—or in what Hegel would have called the ruse of reason. The movement of history unfolds itself behind the backs of the artists who thus appear as the unconscious medium that carries through the development of modern art.

It is there, of course, that the presence of Clement Greenberg is central. His position in this essay (in Section II) is symbolic of his position within modernism. Given his
status as a key exponent of modernism, I decided to examine Greenberg’s sources in order to reach out the main ideological components in the modernist logic. These sources derive from philosophical texts, hence the abundance of philosophical material exposed in the present work. I questioned especially Greenberg’s claim to present his work under the aegis of Immanuel Kant whom he referred to as the “first real modernist.” Yet, I found out something like a cheat at the core of Greenberg’s ideology: while pledging allegiance to Kant, Greenberg was carrying an intellectual affair with Hegel, as far as his conception of the development of the history of art was concerned, and with Nietzsche, as far as his conception of the roles of individuals in history was concerned.

By contributing further to unlock the grip of this historicist/modernist logic, I hope to have begun to show that it is possible to look at works by modern and post-modern artists in different ways. Works of art that resulted from the two artistic interchanges studied in this essay appear both to stem from and to produce a multiplicity of dialogues (about which modernist history, on the whole, remained silent.) These dialogues were of special interest in that the roles of producer and viewer within each pair of artists were consistently exchangeable: each artist was thus, not just thinking-of-the-other (as Levinas would put it), but also making and viewing art with the other in mind. The works of art in question could thus be defined more as relationships than as end products—or icons.

1 Clement Greenberg, Collected Essays, IV, 85
At the end of this shift of perspectives, one could count both a theoretical loss and a theoretical gain. The loss had to do with the fact that works of art no longer obtained their meanings from the powerful explicatory engine that the logic of modernism used to provide. The gains, however, in my opinion, are worth taking this loss: works of art are then the embodiment of the artists’ freedom of action, and freedom of co-action.

Instead of being the mark of a logic that transcends the art and the artist, the work of art through these dialogues appears to regain a certain autonomy. I define this autonomy as the capacity to function according to its own rules, and as the capacity and the need to open itself to others. Hence, the importance in this essay of texts by Kant, Fichte, and Levinas. It is at this point that Greenberg’s reading of Kant appears partial: it only dealt with a fragment of his corpus. It seems difficult to me to read Kant without coming across the notion of “thinking in community with others”—a notion that remains conspicuously absent from Greenberg’s texts.

We thus return to the notion of dialogue that constitutes the keystone of this essay. The works of art that I selected in the various illustration dossiers incarnate two dialogues between four artists. They offer remarkable case studies on the nature of communication in our modern and post-modern eras. Even though they are frequently referred to in the course of this text, these illustrations can be looked at independently from the text of this work and provide the structure for several ‘dialogues’ around
particular themes. They have been organized by dossiers around these themes. In the end, within the landscape of contemporary theory, this work claims to offer an alternative to the aporias of modernism (together with its all-encompassing logic) and to the post-modern/deconstructive nihilistic shibboleth according to which nothing in communication may be taken for granted, given that any attempt to communicate stands to violate “the heterogeneity of language games,” as Lyotard would have it.

Paradoxically, the two artistic interchanges in this essay point to one thing: communication may take place while preserving a certain “heterogeneity of language games.” They prove in the end that communication and freedom, inter-subjectivity and individualism, humanism and (post-)modernity are not (necessarily) incompatible. These two examples of two very strong artistic interchanges point to the fact that, ultimately, beyond the aporias of modernism and post-modernism, all is not lost among the promises of modernity.

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FIRST SECTION

“In Community With Others”
“...How much and how correctly would we think if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we communicate our thoughts, and who communicate theirs to us!”
Immanuel Kant

“The conception of individuality is, as we have shown, a Reciprocal Conception, that is, a conception which can be thought only in relation to another thinking, and which in its form is conditioned by this other thinking, and moreover by the same thinking of it. This conception is possible in every rational being only insofar as it is posited as completed through another individual. Hence the conception of individuality is never mine; but by my own confession and the confession of the other individual, it is both mine and his, and his and mine; a common conception, wherein two consciousnesses are united into one.” Johann Gottlieb Fichte

“A modernity which spoke with only one voice, or through only one voice, would already be moribund. This means that fundamental disagreements concerning modernity are in no sense a denial of modernity’s continuing force.” Dieter Henrich

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Preliminary Questions

What happens when individual artists work together? More specifically: what about the role of the viewer for any artist when the viewer happens to be another artist and the two of them work closely together? Or, in simple philosophical terms: what about the relationships of the other to the self (or the “I”) as these lead to the production of works of art? These questions can also be addressed from another perspective—the perspective of the production of a work of art. Seen from the other end—that of the product rather than of the producers—the question can then become: “What is the status of a work of art that is the result of some communal thinking?” In fact, these two types of questions will orientate the structure of the present work: 1. The investigation will first proceed from the point of view of the constitutions of the subjects or individuals as they were involved in inter-subjective relationships. This will provide the ground for a theoretical definition discussion of the concept of inter-subjectivity in the first section of the present work 2. It will then proceed from the point of view of the results of these interactions: the works of art themselves, and will then adopt the form of a visual and theoretical examination of clusters of works of art produced by two pairs of artists working together under the light of these interchanges. This discussion will occur in the third section. In between the first and last sections of this essay, a briefer section will pose the question of why modernism
on the whole—tied up as it was in a historicist logic—was not capable of addressing the importance of inter-subjectivity in modern art.

Naturally, the distinction between the makers and their objects is not watertight: the subjects or authors of the works of art will be seen as setting the relationships with specific others in motion, while works of art and ideas will be seen as the results of these relationships—thus a to-ing and fro-ing between art and life (as Rauschenberg is fond of saying) will be the principal unit that will bring the two facets of the present work together. Crucial therefore to these enterprises will be the very relationships that are constitutive of both the subjects involved in them, and the works of art understood as the concrete results of these relationships.

All these questions have at least one thing in common: they address the issue of a community of individuals (at least, more than one) producing art with each other, or with each other in mind. They presuppose that art is based on sets of relationships; these relationships, in turn, presuppose the existence of certain mutually accepted norms or rules. Thus, these relationships, from the start, can be seen as bridging the gap between aesthetics and ethics. What does thinking or working “in community with others,” as Kant put it, mean when it comes to producing art? Kant did spend much time and effort thinking about what it means to look at and to judge art by oneself and with others. He never dwelt very long, however, on the question of what
it would mean to produce art in community with others (in Gemeinschaft mit andern). What are the conditions of possibility of such actions—or co-actions—and beyond this, what does it mean to produce art in common? The present investigation will place the examination of a corpus of works of art by two pairs of artists (Pissarro and Cézanne; Rauschenberg and Johns) within a larger conceptual reflection on the

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6 I will come back to the former point later, but for now, it will be useful to remember that, for Kant, the aesthetic judgment is the site of direct inter-subjectivity. Various forms of communications take place within the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason. These types of communications are, however, indirect and go through the mediation of a theoretical or scientific concept in the former case, and through the moral law in the latter case. Only in the Critique of Judgment does communication become direct from Mensch to Mensch. The type of judgment that takes place around works of art is the only one within which “a Mensch encounters another Mensch without needing to go through an object or a concept, nor the law.” See Alexis Philonenko, “Introduction” to his translation into French of Kant’s Critique de la faculté de juger, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974), 11. See also Luc Ferry, Philosophie politique 1: le droit: la nouvelle querelle des anciens et des modernes, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1984), 135. Indeed, for Kant, sociability (sharing one’s judgment with others) is a defining condition of one’s aesthetic experience: I cannot find something beautiful just for myself. In other words, if I am enjoying a concert, and declare that “it is beautiful for me,” I am making a mistake, and must correct this phrasing. As Kant explains, “many things may for him possess charm and agreeableness—no one cares about that; but when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. He judges not merely for himself, but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things.” Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Judgement, trans. James Meredith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952, § 7). In the next paragraph, Kant, lest his readers had not got the point, reiterates the same issue: “…one must get firmly into one’s mind that by the judgment of taste (upon the beautiful) the delight in an object is imputed to every one, yet without being founded on a concept.” Technically speaking, on the other hand, the concept of “community” (Gemeinschaft) is very useful as a guiding category for this project. It is worth reminding that it functions as one of the twelve categories (the third concept under the class of relation) and is defined as “reciprocity between agent and patient.” (Critique of Pure Reason, B106). It corresponds to the logical function called a disjunctive judgment, which combines mutually exclusive elements that, nevertheless, add up to a totality of knowledge when put together. It is precisely this operation that will be found especially useful to think about the contents of this essay: the parts that are contained in this are not subordinated to one another, but coordinated with one another: therefore, neither one determines the other in some unilateral fashion, but they reciprocally determine each other, as in an aggregate (B 112). The reason why the third category of relation is so pertinent and helpful to think about the cases of artistic interchanges at hand is that it allows us mentally to correlate two things that are almost never put together: 1. individual existence (“as substances”) “pertains to each exclusively of the other” and 2. these individual existences “are yet connected in one whole.” (B 113) This is the only concept that allows us to think simultaneously of these two apparently exclusive propositions under one single operation. For sure, no art historical category allows us to do so: this is why a small detour via Kant seemed necessary to begin with. See Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. and eds. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 212-216.
meaning and implications of the relationship between the Self and the Other. The practical premises of this examination will be that inter-subjective intervals (the space between an “I” and a “you”) were of essential importance for each individual artist, and that these intervals were formative for both sets of individuals involved in each artistic interchange (Pissarro/Cézanne and Rauschenberg/Johns.) The question that will orientate this reflection throughout is: what happened to the “I”s through this complex give-and-take process, in which the I is an other for some Other, who, in turn, becomes an I when confronting that other I? And what artistic and aesthetic forms did these sometimes simple, and, at times, frightfully complex, artistic interchanges take? These questions, before and inseparably from taking concrete shape in clusters of works of art, necessarily implied and involved conceptual foundations that are seldom discussed among art historians. Even though art history has given much room to theory, there is not much room given, within art theory, to thinking the presence of the other—not just understood as an immutable other, camped in his alterity for good—but of the other understood as an other self, i.e., as some one who enters into a reciprocal exchange in which the I and the other mutually depend on this exchange and constitute themselves as such. What is difficult to appreciate is the fact that both “I”s constitute themselves in their opening to an other—other, into which the “I” turns when the other turns into an “I” itself. One more precision: each I cannot be, as it were, the same other: in the same way as each I is distinct from the other I, each other also carries the same distinction. This exchange
process is, therefore, (theoretically at least) inexhaustible, even though, in practice, we know that both exchanges eventually came to an end. It will ultimately remain to be examined what the challenges and risks of these active interchanges were.

Nevertheless, this interval should not be thought of as a space where one loses oneself: quite the contrary, it is a space wherein each “I” receives as much as it gives, and mostly, gains (and regains) itself as an “I” through its interchange with that other/I. In a sense, there are no losers in this game: only winners. The prize of this contest is the “self” as it is constituted through its interchange with an other. This is the positive aspect of this narrative. The less positive, or more problematic, aspect of this is the fact that the relationships that will be studied, exciting and promising though they were, required the exposure of each participant, and as such presented a very fragile, and even precarious facet. Ultimately, neither of these two relationships survived: the demands put upon each individual having, at some point, become too high, or too exacting for the returns. As in all relationships, these particular relationships suppose and are contingent upon constant work on the part of each protagonist: these relationships are hard work. Ultimately, like all relationships, they can do and undo themselves, leaving room for other relationships to take place. The present work goes hand in hand with a theory of subjectivity, that is synchronous, and almost synonymous with a theory of inter-subjectivity: the subject (the “I”) defines itself in its relationship with its “other” and vice versa. The subject is therefore to be
understood as essentially open to an other: as the subject constitutes itself as a self, it constitutes itself as an opening to others.

Let us, therefore, turn towards a few figures that have given serious thought to the “question of the other” in the intellectual history of the last two centuries. We will then soon see what gains can be made as we confront these to our two case studies.

∗ Two Families of Thought on the Self and Others: The Criticist\(^7\) and the Phenomenological Traditions—The Concept of “Transcendent Immanence”

In the process of asking these questions about creating art and thinking in community, it seems difficult not to see the extreme relevance of the monumental programs of reflection led, first, by the German Criticists at the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century, namely by Immanuel Kant, and a philosopher generally held to be his most brilliant follower,
Johann Gottlieb Fichte. It is not excessive to say that Kant, and, more decidedly, Fichte oriented the development of much of their philosophical oeuvres around the question of the other. In his *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1796-99) known from notes taken by his students, Fichte addressed a central critique to Kant on the fundamental question of how and why I recognize and accept other reasonable beings outside of myself, by saying that Kant had not made himself sufficiently clear on that point. Fichte, in a sense, programmatically undertook to finish the job that Kant had started and left, according to him, half done. Affirming further Kant’s great intuitions regarding inter-subjectivity, it is fair to say that the question of the Other

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8 For a concise and pedagogically clear exposure of the complementary links between Kant’s and Fichte’s systems, see Luc Ferry, *op. cit.*, second section: “Les conditions de possibilité d’une modernité non historiciste: le jeune Fichte,” 107-180.


10 This is what has led several philosophers to claim that inter-subjectivity constitutes a pivotal concept within the Fichtean system. See especially Alexis Philonenko, *La liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte*, (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1966), 21-28, where the author clearly states that: «Nous estimons que le problème de l’inter-subjectivité est la question capitale de la première philosophie de Fichte. » Before Philonenko, R. Lauth had already studied the question. See his article, « L’interpersonnalité chez Fichte, » *Archives de Philosophie*, July-December 1962, 325 sqq. Since Philonenko’s considerable exegetic work on Fichte, Alain Renaut’s book *Le système du droit: philosophie et droit de la pensée de Fichte*, (Paris: PUF, 1986) has also laid the ground for an interpretation of Fichte’s work that made his specific conception of law the spinal cord of Fichte’s system. For another French interpretation of Fichte that recognizes the place of inter-subjectivity while refusing to give a preeminent place to the law, see Ives Radrizzani, *Vers la fondation de l’intersubjectivité chez Fichte: des Principes à la Nova methodo*, (Paris: Vrin, 1993). For a clear and pithy analysis of the place of inter-subjectivity in Fichte’s system, see T. P. Hohler, *Imagination and Reflection: Intersubjectivity—Fichte’s Grundlage of 1794*, (The Hague, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982). The increase of the number of studies on Fichte in many languages, centering on the question of inter-subjectivity, is a solid indication of the resurgence of interest in the question of the other, and the recognition of Fichte’s role in laying the ground for this. Among several, almost contemporaneous studies originating from different countries at the same time, I will mention: Edith Dusing, *Intersubjektivität und Selbstbewußtsein: behavioristische, phänomenologische und idealistische Begründungstheorien bei Mead, Schutz, Fichte und Hegel*, (Cologne: Verlag für Philosophie J. Dinter, 1986); Aldo Masullo, *Fichte: l’intersogettività e l’originario*, (Naples: Guida, 1986); Manuel Riobo Gonzales, *Fichte, filosofo de la intersubjetividad*, (Barcelona: Herder, 1988); and Robert Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).
offered a vast foil for Fichte’s philosophy. In an unprecedented manner, the question of the Other became, for the Iena philosopher, a condition of possibility for thinking about the self.

The other, more recent, philosophical movement that has paid close attention to the question of the presence of others is the phenomenological movement, especially at the hands of its founder, Edmund Husserl, and of the French philosopher who claims to manage Husserl’s intellectual heritage: Emmanuel Levinas. The titles of some of the latter’s books speak volumes about his interest in “the question of the Other.”

I am at least referring to Fichte’s early works—the works of the 1790s. I will not enter into the vexing, and complex—as well as controversial—question of how the late works (post-1800) relate to the early works. This is a question that, in my opinion, is more relevant to the history of philosophy. What interests me in Fichte’s early works is the fact that it is impossible to understand much about the I (or the self) without engaging in an understanding of the other. This, in a nutshell, could also serve as one of the arching theses of the present work.

The immense popularity of Levinas’s books in the last decade can be measured by the fast rate at which these have been translated. Some of the titles of his books almost speak by themselves: Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre, (Paris: Grasset, 1991), translated as On Thinking-of-the-Other: entre nous, trans., Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav, (New York: Columbia Press, 1998); Hors Sujet, (Saint Clément: Fata Morgana, 1987), translated as Outside the Subject, trans. Michael B. Smith, (London: The Athlone Press, 1993); in the latter book, see in particular “On Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty,” 96-103, and “The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other,” 116-125. From the latter text, I only wish to quote a brief extract that will immediately give the tone of Levinas’s intuitions. He declares that the regard for the other is “… a goodness in peace, which is also the exercise of a freedom, and in which the I frees itself from its “return to self,” from its auto-affirmation, from its egotism of a being persevering in its being, to answer for the other, precisely to defend the rights of the other man.” The essay ends with this wonderful formula that could well describe the subject of the present essay: “An inexhaustible responsibility: for with the other accounts are never settled.” (ibid., 124-25). Recently, an essential text has also been translated: De Dieu qui vient à l’idée, translated as Of God Who Comes to Mind, trans.: Bettina Bergo, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.) Among the plethora of recent critical essays on Levinas, I will only draw the reader’s attention towards a set of essays published under the title: The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, ed. R. Bernasconi and D. Wood (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). For a most interesting critical assessment from a Kantian perspective, of Levinas’s “thinking-of-the-other,” see Alain Renaut, The Era of the Individual: A Contribution to a History of Subjectivity, trans. M. B. DeBevoise and Franklin Philip, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1997.
These two families will provide the “theoretical” ground upon which we shall tread to explore further the question of the other. Need I say that it would be impossible to describe the vast and complex philosophical systems erected by these authors.

Individually prolix, each of these (from Kant to Levinas) is responsible for scores of volumes, often exposing concepts of intense complexity, and in general, they are often renowned for their arid and unyielding prose. To compound all this, each author—and each family of thought—has been the focus of generations of volumes of critical interpretations, often conflicted with each other, thus creating a less than inviting context for anyone who wishes to launch into the reading of some of these texts. The reputation of these authors for the aridity of their prose bears some qualification, however: first of all, one can often be surprised to come across in the midst of a somewhat recondite passage dealing with the very tough question of the possibility of experience, for instance in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, a whole page or section of limpid clarity that will strike us and illuminate us with its forceful intuitions. More essential, perhaps, is another fact: the criticist enterprise as a whole is centered upon the question of representation (how do I form images or concepts?), and this question of representation necessarily engages the presence of *others* to whom I communicate those representations. The whole point in constituting a theory of the possibility of knowledge (with the synthetic rules of a priori understanding) is not just an act of intellectual acrobatic prowess, or mere theoretical luxury: the point is to establish the claim for the possibility of universal truths—truths that are
therefore not true for me alone, but for me and everyone else. A vital passage that establishes for good the importance of communication at the heart of the Kantian system is to be found at the very end of The Critique of Pure Reason, and is titled “On the Canon of Pure Reason.” This crucial text reaffirms the fact that the justification for truth is not just that truth should rest on some unequivocal and eternal objective ground, but it also must satisfy certain subjective requirements “in the mind of him who judges.” Then Kant establishes two types of subjective relations to truth: he calls one “persuasion” and the other “conviction.” The distinction between these two subjective grounds, is that a truth founded on “persuasion” alone, “lies solely in the subject.” Therefore, such a statement “has only private validity, and this taking something to be true cannot be communicated.”¹³ In contradistinction to truth based on persuasion (that is basically only true for the person who is persuaded of it), there is the truth based on conviction, which is such that it results in an agreement of every understanding. The touchstone, as Kant says, of this second type of truth (based on conviction) is “the possibility of communicating it and finding it to be valid for the reason of every human being to take it to be true.”¹⁴ It is, therefore, not excessive to say that this way of conceiving a theory of truth established a radical departure in the conception of objectivity, whereby the capacity to communicate the truth content of one’s thought to others became a criterion of objectivity. In opposition, the classical or metaphysical (or the pre-criticist) model of truth simply consisted in establishing

¹⁴ Ibid.
that my thoughts coincided with the object being thought about: If my thoughts, in other words, reflected faithfully the object of my thoughts, then, my thoughts were true, without further ado. The question of the validity of my thoughts “beyond myself”\textsuperscript{15} was never raised. If we transpose this intuition in the artistic terms of this essay, much of the enquiry in the second and especially the third sections will consist in distinguishing between artistic truths based on persuasion (i.e., valid for one individual alone) and those based on conviction (i.e., “valid beyond myself.”)

The fact that Kant refused to pose the question of representation in its traditional metaphysical way—how does my image of this object correspond to the object itself? Or: how do my representations correspond to the object in itself?—laid the ground for the modern conception of the subject. Instead of posing the question of representation by opposing (metaphysically) the object to the subject—or the real to the image of the real, or the objective truth standing outside, to my subjective representation of it—Kant refocused the whole process of his investigation by lodging it rigorously inside the subject itself. Centering the whole question of reflexion within subjectivity alone—without exiting the subject—constitutes perhaps one of the most radical contributions of the Kantian enterprise to a comprehension of our understanding mechanisms. What needs to be seen as well, is that, through such a gesture, this theoretical enterprise was a huge call for humility: for the first time, the question of representation doesn’t begin by exiting the site of representation (i.e., the subject, or

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
the author of these representations) by deciding arbitrarily that there exists an objective “truth” standing out there, and waiting for the right and proper representations of some ideal subject to grasp it.16 The vexing question that Kant had to grapple with was: who can judge whether our representations of that objective truth are “right” or “wrong” if not some other subjectivity, itself necessarily establishing its judgment from within its own subjectivity? Or, can one conceive of a subjectivity that would be capable—through some kind of E.S.P. experience—to levitate or leave its own body, and measure the objective truth by relinquishing all traces of subjectivity behind, and reaching a truly objective standpoint? This is, more or less, the gist of the objection brought up by Steinberg against Johns when Johns claimed at the outset of his career not to have wanted to be either present or absent of his work, because any trace of himself in his art would have been a sign of failure.17 Calling such claims pure ideals (or, indeed, dreams), and humbly, and radically bringing us back to one’s unsurpassable subjectivity, the beginning of the Kantian revolution therefore consists in discriminating, within my own subjectivity, between these representations that are

16 This particular point is relevant to what might be called the Jasper Johns/Leo Steinberg argument. The question of the presence (or absence) of the artist as the subject of the works was very much at the heart of Johns’s aesthetic reflections (at least in the first decade of his production.) Johns was concerned with the problem of presenting an object while removing himself as much as possible from the process. This problem reminds us precisely of the ‘realist’ position criticized by Kant, according to which it is possible to conceive a thing-in-itself that stand independently from any subject. But, argue Kant (and Fichte), this thing-in-itself cannot be posited but by a subject who posits it. Therefore, the thing-in-itself is also necessarily for-me as well. This is exactly the point of Steinberg’s objection to Johns when the latter explains that he does not even want to be absent out of his works, because ‘absent’ would suggest that he once had been present. He, presumably, just does not want to be, nor to have been there. To which Steinberg replies that this is, of course, an impossible claim. See Leo Steinberg, “Jasper Johns: the First Seven Years of His Art,” in Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 52-53.

17 Ibid.
mine (strictly individual representations) and those that I may claim to share with others, and that, therefore, are entitled to be called universal.

What Kant called “transcendental” investigation consisted precisely in exhibiting the rules, or the conditions of possibility that enable each individual to reach out to others while never surpassing these limits, or to claim to transcend oneself while always remaining within oneself, since (as per Kant’s call for humility) we may not extend ourselves beyond the limits imposed on us by our own sensibility—therefore, by our own bodies.\textsuperscript{18} If, perchance, we try to venture ourselves beyond our own boundaries,
we take off, as it were, on the wings of the flight of Reason: we are in the realm of mere Ideas and illusions. Let’s consider briefly how Kant himself describes (in terms that continue to be applicable to our positions today):

The charm in expanding one’s cognitions is so great that one can be stopped in one’s progress only by bumping into a clear contradiction. … Captivated by such a proof of the power of reason, the drive for expansion sees no bounds.

Rauschenberg and Johns as ‘imprintists:’ what seems to have fascinated both artists is the fact that the outside world is ‘given’ to us without our faculty to do anything about it. Their works of art, to a large degree, recreate (and stage) the conditions for the fact that things outside are given to us through our senses. The dynamics between the fact that things are given to us, and the question of what to do with them once they are given are at the core of Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s art. At this point, it is fair to draw a kind of analogy between these two artists and the task of the philosopher who (according to Fichte) is not a mere observer but someone who proceeds with an experimentation on the nature of consciousness. (See Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters, (Berlin: 1806), SW VII, 106.) Within the practice of their own media, Johns and Rauschenberg too could be described as “experimenters” on the nature of consciousness. The results of these investigation took the form, not of concepts, of course, but of works of art.

The fact that the very first chapter of the Critique of Pure Reason is entitled “The Transcendental Aesthetic” in which it is established that the very first form of cognition is intuition—i.e., the way an “object is given to us” stresses the ‘radical finitude’ imposed on us by our sensibility, and our bodies. If objects are given to us by our sensibility, this very sensibility indicates the very boundaries of our limits. This is the first time in the history of philosophy that the mind is first and foremost, diagnosed in terms of its own capacity (or receptivity) to be affected by objects. This is what Kant calls “sensibility” (hence the term “aesthetic” which means related to senses, in Greek). Now, if sensibility is the capacity we have to be affected by objects, the particular impact or effect of an object on our sensibility, is called by Kant, sensation—a term, which, of course, will have a long-lasting echo within the theoretical discourse held by the impressionists, especially Pissarro and Cézanne. The editors and translators of the recent translation of Critique of Pure Reason, mention that Kant had, in fact, added a note in his own copy that said: “Intuition is related to the object, sensation merely to the subject.” (Op. cit., 155). For a definition of “sensation” as used in the ideological context of the impressionists, see Richard Shiff, op. cit., 187-189, and see Part One: “The End of Impressionism” (1-52) which revolves around the question of the dynamics between subjectivity and objectivity in impressionism. On the antinomy between subjectivism (or idealism) and objectivism (or realism), and how Fichte solves this antinomy, see Luc Ferry, Philosophie politique, 1: Le droit: la nouvelle querelle des anciens et des modernes, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1984), 123-146.
The light dove, in free flight cutting through the air the resistance of which it feels, could get the idea that it could do even better in airless space.\footnote{Immanuel Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 140. It is tempting here to draw a visual parallel with Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s works that deal with gravity and the feeling of an airless space. See Illustration dossier L, nos. 187, 190, 192.}

Could one think of a more emphatic warning offered by one of the modern theoreticians of the use of the faculties of reason, on the danger of reason falling under the “charm” (in the sense of the spellbinding seduction) exerted by the power of reason on itself!

Illusory as they are, if one treats them as constitutive or as real, these ideas of reason continue to be necessary for Kant, if, instead of treating them fallaciously as realizable, we treat them as what they are: ideas that will never become tangible, but that, then only, offer a very precious function as a point of orientation, or as a set of orienting guidelines. There is, therefore, something ruthlessly empirical at the core of Kant’s system. Within that system, the question of the other is always either presupposed, or openly discussed. This central concern for communication is deeply relevant to the present study. But it doesn’t just occur in the last pages of the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}; it is, as we all know, also central to the aesthetic piece of the Kantian system, the \textit{Critique of Judgement}, not to mention the moral aspect of his system with the \textit{Critique of Practical Reason}. Of course, the major difference between a cognitive judgment (\textit{Critique of Pure Reason}) and an aesthetic judgment (\textit{Critique of Judgment})
is that the former is based on a concept (and is, therefore, measurable or verifiable), whereas the latter is not based on any concept. The mode of assent in an aesthetic judgment is direct. Nevertheless, the person who asserts that an object is beautiful does not just count on others to agree with him, “but he demands this agreement.”\textsuperscript{20} Kant then further clarifies what he means:

He blames them [those who disagree with him] if they judge differently, and denies them taste, which he still requires of them as something they ought to have; and to this extent it is not open to men to say: Every one has his own taste. This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste, i.e. no aesthetic judgement capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all men.\textsuperscript{21}

Of course, one of Kant’s main problems in his complex discussion of the judgment of taste will be to try to reconcile this “expectation” of all men’s assent with my own judgment, with the fact that each single individual has his/her own taste. In other words, the aesthetic antinomy, as observed by Kant, very much resembles that found on our terrain. What I am attached to emphasize, here, is (in Kant’s own words) the fact that, almost surreptitiously, a case of disagreement over an aesthetic matter, seems to lead to a potential ethical dispute—i.e., a dispute over axiological

\textsuperscript{20} Immanuel Kant, \textit{The Critique of Judgement}, trans. James Creed Meredith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 52. (Kant’s emphasis.)

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
conceptions. The term “blame” applies just as well in the case of a disagreement over some wrongdoing, as, here, in the case of an aesthetic disagreement. Ultimately, how will each artist negotiate (almost like a treaty, or an agreement) his demand for assent on his expression of taste with others? Kant remains silent on this point. What is certain is that this assent cannot be coerced upon others—therefore, freedom is a sine qua non condition for aesthetic judgments and aesthetic debates to take place. With freedom, however, also comes the possibility (in some cases, the crashing possibility) that this demand may be turned down: you may always decide that this particular work of art that I consider extremely beautiful is downright ugly! How, in fact, will this dynamics between two polarized subjectivities lead to the production of a corpus of works (in common) will be the orienting concern in the third section of this essay—after having reviewed, in the second section, why modernism was almost forced (theoretically) to ‘forget’ about working in common.

Finally, communication is not only central to the aesthetic and the theoretical spheres, as we have seen. Besides the fact that sociability is an attribute, and a condition required in the structure of all aesthetic judgments—while thinking about a beautiful thing, I think with others, or demand that others think with me—Kant also sees sociability as a cornerstone of our humanity at large: sociability is to be regarded, he says, “as the principal end of human destiny.”

In fact, this remarkable text—which

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Kant confesses was written as if he were “on a pleasure trip”—yields very useful views as to Kant’s conception of humankind, as imagined from its very origin.

Surmising the origins of mankind (one of 18th century philosophers favorite pastime), Kant projects that:

The first human being could … stand and walk; he could speak and indeed talk—i.e. speak with the help of coherent concepts—and consequently think.23

It is remarkable that Kant’s order of reconstruction consists in the following chain of actions: standing, walking, speaking, and talking (i.e. addressing a speech to an addressee), and then only, thinking. In other words, all the previous actions are literally pre-requisites for the action of thinking; here again, one finds oneself in presence of the statement Kant made in “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?”—i.e., one cannot think alone—or rather, as Kant added this precision himself, one cannot think well, nor very much alone.24 Interestingly, Kant really felt like placing a special emphasis on this point in his text on the “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History.” As he established these “conjectures” in parallel with his reading of Genesis, Chapters II-VI, he also inserted a footnote to the above text describing what he calls “the urge to communicate.” Given the special relevance to the field of study that will follow, I feel that it is important to quote this footnote:

23 Ibid.
24 See Footnote 1.
The urge to communicate must have been the original motive for human beings who were alone to announce their existence to living creatures outside themselves, especially to those which emit sounds which can be imitated and which can subsequently serve as a name. A similar effect of this urge can still be seen in children and thoughtless people who disturb the thinking section of the community by banging, shouting, whistling, singing and other noisy pastimes (and often even by noisy religious devotions). For I can see no motive for such behavior other than a desire on the part of those concerned to proclaim their existence to the world at large.25

Need I say how vital this text appears to be for a theory of communication as applied to modern and contemporary art! In it, I find, in fact, mutatis mutandis, a whole virtual theory for whole strands of creation in the arts in the last several decades (not only in pictorial arts, but also in performing arts). The fact that Johns and Rauschenberg have always, with different emphases and motivations, been engaged in performing arts is not incidental to the point I want to make here.26 Even though I

25 Kant, “Conjectures…,” 222 (footnote). (Kant’s emphasis)
26 During and after their years of collaboration, Johns and Rauschenberg have collaborated, either together or separately with Merce Cunningham and John Cage. After their separation, Johns and Rauschenberg remained individually very close to both Cunningham and Cage. I should add that the only occasion upon which I saw Rauschenberg and Johns in the same room was when Merce Cunningham was presented with the very prestigious Lilian and Dorothy Gish Prize, on October 19, 2000. Both artists came to recognize and celebrate in community with others the choreographic genius of Merce Cunningham. Robert Rauschenberg gave a moving presentation of Cunningham that night. When later on, I remarked upon the fact that many people in the audience were visibly moved by the
would like to keep the prerogative to return to this text by Kant later on, in the Third Section of this essay (especially in the § dedicated to “Beginnings,”) suffice it to say for now that this “urge to communicate” addresses pointedly what Rauschenberg and Johns were involved in doing during the 1950s and 1960s, i.e., re-create a primeval situation that looks as if language might be recreated. Similarly, both artists’ keen interests in experimental performing arts (especially in the works by John Cage and Merce Cunningham) should, in my opinion, very much be read as part of this ongoing program to recreate a set of conditions of possibility for the birth (or the creation) of a new language: I am especially thinking of those extraordinary situations in any live concert by Cage, or dance performance by Cunningham, where new sounds are emitted “which can be imitated and which can subsequently serve as a name” i.e., be incorporated in language, or add a new element to language. This, in a nutshell, seems to me to summarize admirably well what all four artists (here: Rauschenberg and Johns, Cage and Cunningham) have been engaged in doing ever since they began their careers as artists. I will also argue that, at the other end of the modernist spectrum—and without the spectacular resources offered by the revolution in performing arts orchestrated by Cage and Cunningham—Pissarro and Cézanne were motivated in their arts by analogous orientations: to create a new language—whose words he had pronounced on Merce, Rauschenberg replied: “We all are in the moving business!...” and he laughed.
The aim was not so much to transmit a “new” message, as to respond to a profound “urge to communicate” and “to proclaim their existence to the world at large.”

This is why incidentally I find Habermas’s definition of language very relevant to what was going on between these artists: for him, language is not conceived as a means for transmitting subjective contents but as a medium in which the participants inter-subjectively share an understanding of a given matter.

Having established this corner stone, Kant moves on according to his plan as he wishes “merely to consider the development of human behavior from the ethical point of view.” This principal chain of actions (walking, talking, thinking), the “urge to communicate,” and ethics are, therefore, in Kant’s conception, inherently linked.

* From the “Urge to Communicate” to the “Duties of the Aesthetical Artist”

It is this “urge to communicate” that grounds in principle the artistic activities of the four artists under focus together. This urgency turns the agents of communication into sites of exchanges, and creates between them a sociable nexus, a *relationship*. These

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27 Another analogy can be drawn here between these two pairs of artists, and more specifically between Pissarro and Rauschenberg, in that these two artists’ sustained interests in living animals point to Kant’s development on man’s awareness of the existence of animals, and the co-extensive consciousness of man as a living creature set apart from animals. See Kant, “Conjectures…” p. 225. [See Illustration Dossier M: Animals]. Wittgenstein in his Notebooks (2.9.16 entry) described how he conceives of the relationship between men among other beings in terms that apply especially well to both Pissarro and Rauschenberg: “The human body, however, my body in particular, is a part of the world among others, among animals, plants, stones, etc., etc. Whoever realizes this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body.” Quoted by Diané Collinson, “Ethics and Aesthetics Are One,” British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 25 no. 3 (Summer 1985): 266-272.

28 Kant, “Conjectures…,” 223.
relationships, in order to exist as such, necessitate rules of action, or norms. Needless to say, of course, within a fully uncoerced and freely decided relationship (nobody forced Pissarro or Rauschenberg to enter into an artistic relationship with, respectively, Cézanne or Johns), these norms are constituted autonomously. They alone created and recreated their own norms. Norms are simply to be understood here as “ideas about the proper ordering of conduct in the world.”

In this sense, they necessarily take into account the particular world within which they are formed: as Henrich explains, the ideal of bravery for instance, would make little sense in a world devoid of danger; likewise, the ideal of conservation in a world that takes care and protects its own resources, is incomprehensible. So, likewise, the rules that Pissarro/Cézanne, and Rauschenberg/Johns instituted for themselves, as artists playing an active role within a definable avant-garde, and within a definable world, reflected to some degree that very context (as it will be briefly sketched in the third section.) In fact the concept of a “serious worker” very much explicit in the ideological discourse uttered by Cézanne, Pissarro (and Zola), and implicit in the early writings of Jasper Johns, especially, and Robert Rauschenberg, will offer a very precious cornerstone to the ethical conceptions of the duties of the artist that these artists forged for themselves, a century apart from each other. The expression of the “duties of the Aesthetical Artist” is not theirs, however, even if it could fit (almost word for word) to encapsulate the kind of programs they established autonomously,

or the sets of rules that orientated their professions as they redefined themselves through their art. The expression was coined by Kant’s successor in a text that I have never seen mentioned in art history and that, yet, in my opinion, will repay close attention. I have, therefore, decided to quote it at some length—given that it establishes the continuous link that one can draw from Kant to Fichte, or from aesthetics to ethics. This text comes from § 31 of Das System der Sittenlehre, and is entitled in English: “Concerning the Duties of the Aesthetic Artist.”

Fichte introduces this text by drawing a comparison between the artist, and the scholar, as well as the “moral instructor” (or the preacher): all three professions, says Fichte, share one characteristic. They all have “an influence upon [their] culture equally great.” The only qualification, for Fichte, is that the artist’s influence is “not so immediately perceptible.” That weakness on the part of the artist is, however, compensated by the fact that the scholar only cultivates the “head” while the moral instructor cultivates the “heart.” The artist appears to be all the more complete as he “cultivate[s] the whole united man.” Fichte then feels a need to explicate this rather extraordinary statement:

31 Ibid., 367.
32 Ibid.
[The fine arts] appeal neither to the understanding nor to the heart, but to the whole soul of man in the union of all its faculties: to a third, composed both of heart and understanding.

Among our four artists, no one could agree more with Fichte here than Johns himself. In fact, one could almost read there an anticipation of the artistic program of the early Johns who, after Duchamp, endeavored to graft a type of art that appealed to the mind mainly on to a type of art that seduces the eye primordially: Cézanne—both artists being unquestionably of great importance to Johns—and also to Rauschenberg.

Note that Fichte finds no name for this composite of heart and understanding, to which the artist alone can appeal simultaneously. Fichte seems here to develop further Kant’s previous claim that the aesthetic judgment was bridging the gap between the theoretical (or cognitive) and the practical (or moral) judgments. In order to describe this compendium with no name, the author feels obliged to resort to a periphrasis that directs attention to its result: it involves the whole of man. Again, however, Fichte feels the need to refine further his remark:

Perhaps the best way to express the manner in which the fine arts operate is to say: *they make the transcendental point of view the common point of view.*

The philosopher elevates himself and others to this standpoint laboriously, and
after a fixed rule. But the soul of the artist occupies that standpoint without determinedly thinking it; it knows no other standpoint, and elevates those who give themselves up to his influence, to it in so imperceptible a manner, that they do not become conscious of the transition.\textsuperscript{33}

For Fichte, the artist mediates the moral law. On the one hand, the practice of the arts “lead man back into himself, and make him at home with himself.”\textsuperscript{34} He then appears almost completely self-sufficient, or autonomous (not actually, but ideally, of course.) The fine arts “tear [the artist] loose from given Nature, and place him self-sufficient upon his own feet.” On the other hand, Fichte also sees a quasi-moral task to the arts, in that they prepare for virtue—or, understand, in today’s lingo: discipline. The difference according to Fichte, is that morality “requires self-sufficiency obtained through thought whereas the aesthetical sense comes to us of its own accord.”\textsuperscript{35}

Nowhere could Pissarro, Cézanne, Johns and Rauschenberg be closer to Fichte than at this point: art does not depend on pre-conceived rules, or conceptions: taste “must come altogether of itself.” “For everyone can have taste.” What the true artist must do is resist against “a violation of taste”—wonderful expression that targets so well the contextual situations (for both couples of artists) whereby a dominant taste, imposed by sets of conventions and education systems whose function was to reproduce those rules, is to be fought. This phrase “everyone can have taste” should, of course, not be

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 368.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 369.
interpreted as a symptom that Fichte almost announced the post-modern world to come whereby “everything goes.” Nevertheless, there is undeniably a very modern sound to this text, in that Fichte establishes several apparently competing points that are in fact inseparable from a modern context: 1. every one can democratically claim to have taste; 2. taste can therefore only be exerted in a context that respects the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, and taste, while an expression of freedom—nobody can force me to have good taste—can easily be “violated” as it is a fragile expression of freedom; 3. we have the rights to stand up for “aesthetic beauty” vs. “vitiated taste” knowing also that taste cannot be guaranteed by a social context that will impose rules of good taste, or “violate” the taste of certain individuals: the only way that is left is not by force nor by intimidation, but by argumentation, that is in respecting the other’s expression of taste (even if it is in dire opposition to mine) and arguing for one’s position rationally. (This point anticipates and contrasts strongly with some temptations felt in the field of modernism to impose what was seen as ‘the right taste’ (by declaring with some authority that this was the taste sanctioned by history)—whether it be the anti-academic taste in the 19th century (see Rewald), or the avant-garde (or anti-kitsch) taste in the 20th century (see Greenberg). In other words, democracy (here in a critique of Tocqueville) must not lead to a point of indifference where everything is passively tolerated: by accepting the dominating rule, or “by spreading a vitiated taste for aesthetic beauty, we do not leave men in that

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36 On this point, see the paragraph entitled “Nietzsche, Rewald and Greenberg: the Theory of ‘The Chain of Crests’” in the third section.
Arguing responsibly for one’s taste while knowing that one may never convince the other that my taste is better, seems to be the position advocated by Fichte—refusing both the slovenly passive attitude of indifference that no longer cares, and the attitude of authority (e.g., the expert) who dictates what the right taste is.

In conclusion of all this, Fichte draws two rules of ethics (that could be called the rules of ethics of the modern artist)—that, in turn, were very much embedded in the practice of both Cézanne and Pissarro, and a century later, Johns and Rauschenberg. The first rule is a negative rule: you shouldn’t become an artist if you don’t have it in you—or you shouldn’t “do it without a special natural impulse.” In other words, it is a bad idea to become an artist out of some arbitrary decision, or to fall in with some convention, or some pre-conception of what art should be. Here comes this resounding statement (that will specifically be revisited in the chapter on “Beginnings”): “It is absolutely true that the artist is born.” We will later on examine how our four artists, in effect, strategically managed their own “births” as artists.

The second rule is a positive one, stemming from a negative warning: the “true artist” must beware “not to fawn upon the corrupted taste of [his] age from selfish motives.”

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37 The Science of Ethics…, 369.
38 Ibid.
Instead of following a particular taste out of greed, interest, thirst for glory, or what have you, the “true artist” must “strive to represent the ideal which floats before [his] mind, and forget everything else.” Pissarro might as well have signed this sentence. Pissarro, and Cézanne, systematically drew ethical practical rules out of their own artistic conceptions. It was not solely the pursuit of what was “beautiful” that was their main concern, it was the pursuit of what they deemed was the “right thing to do” (in terms of artistic taste)—knowing, of course, full well that their taste, right as it was to their eyes, and to those of their enthusiastic supporters, was in direct competition against another form of “vitiated” taste. Johns and Rauschenberg did the same when they too established a new form of aesthetics—and one that inevitably drew upon certain guidelines or principles of action. For instance, to paint by merely resorting to the Abstract Expressionist idiom was no longer cool; or, it was advisable to open up one’s art practice to other non-pictorial art practices, such as dance, performance, or music. The principles that ensued these convictions also led to ethical guidelines: loyalty to one’s own views, sincerity, consistency, belief in one’s ideal, determination, courage, or their opposites, uncertainty, hesitation, difficulty—terms partly listed by Fichte, and that are part and parcel of Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s letters, and can also be found in interviews given by Johns and Rauschenberg. The situation with Johns and Rauschenberg is a little different, of course: they certainly found less of a need to assert their own views against the defenders of a “vitiated taste” simply because the process of public recognition that propelled them to success was much

39 Ibid.
faster than in the case of Pissarro, and indeed, Cézanne (who was fifty-six years old when his work was shown in a serious single exhibition for the first time.) Both American artists also had to stand up against a certain dose of early criticism. In fact, Johns and Rauschenberg both resorted to defense mechanisms against actual, or potential, critiques, through: 1. the careful edification of a very precise cognitive system and a theoretical apparatus that functioned with the precision of a Swiss clock and provided the rules of instruction for the use of the artist’s system—I am here especially alluding to Johns; 2. an almost systematic cultivation of irony as a poetical and artistic mode of expression—here, both Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s works and texts provide ample material to illustrate this interest in irony.

Finally, before leaving this critical text by Fichte (one of the first, to my knowledge) that establishes such a clear link between aesthetics and ethics for a modern artist, I wish to mention here the conclusion with which Fichte brought this text to closure—conclusion, which, again, is in total keeping with all four of the artists selected for study—and thus legitimizes the privileged position that Fichte needed to occupy in this context by opening up the larger question of how one should evaluate the links of modern artists with the Criticist tradition.40

40 Mercifully, the Criticist enterprise is not terra incognita in the studies of modernism. The important use made by Greenberg of Kant for the definitional apparatus of modernism will be discussed in Section II. Before him, Cézanne himself was reported by Joachim Gasquet to have mentioned Kant at least twice: see Conversations avec Cézanne, ed. P.M. Doran, (Paris: Macula, 1978), 110 and 122; [Henceforth referred to as Conversations.] It might be worth mentioning that in the index, only one of these references to Kant is noted (122). Very soon after Cézanne, Desmond McCarthy wrote a very relevant article titled “Kant and Post Impressionism,” The Eye Witness, 10 October 1912, 533-34.
There is a phrase injurious both to art and morality: *That which pleases us is beautiful*. It is very true that that which pleases the completely-cultivated mankind is beautiful, and alone is beautiful; but until mankind is so cultivated—and when will it ever be?—the most tasteless works may please, because they are in fashion, and the greatest work of art may not find favor, because the age wherein it was made has not yet developed the sense wherewith to seize it.

This text is astonishing because it addresses one of the key aspects of the antinomy of taste, and suggests a solution that escapes both the dogmatic solutions that the Nietzscheans will favor—among whom two of the most prominent historians of both impressionism and abstract expressionism: Rewald and Greenberg—and the skeptical solution that has nurtured the dominating forms of discourse in postmodernism. The solution goes like this: one may well hope one day that it will be

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McCarthy was the exhibition secretary in 1910 to the Post Impressionism show, and had written the preface to that catalogue, using Fry’s notes. The question of the import—necessarily via several distorting mediations—of Kant’s corpus on the generation of artists of the 1870s-80s in France is a work that I am planning to bring to fruition in the future. In the field of recent studies on modernism that draw upon Kant’s theoretical import, let us mention the impressive piece by Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996), and more recently Florence de Méredieu, *Kant et Picasso: “Le bordel philosophique”*, (Nîmes: Editions Jacqueline Cambon, 2000).


See the paragraph entitled “The Theory of the Chain of Crests,” in the Third Section of this essay.
possible for all to recognize what is beautiful—which is what pleases the “completely-cultivated” mankind (on this neither Greenberg nor Rewald would have disagreed.) The remarkable twist of Fichte’s argument, however, follows with this question that is not a real question because the answer is obvious: when will mankind ever be “completely educated”? When will mankind ever reach a stage by which a consensus will have been formed as to what “completely educated” means? “When will it ever be”? asks Fichte; the answer, of course, is: never. This means, therefore, that the most tasteless works will continue to please many—as they have always done—while the completely-cultivated part of mankind will continue to think that what pleases it is truly what is beautiful. We are, therefore, left with a situation within which the tasteless and the tasteful cohabitate. The whole question (that is eminently alive today) is what form of cohabitation can there be between competing areas of taste?

This is a question to which Pissarro and Cézanne were very much confronted in their days too. The way Pissarro felt about Cézanne in the 1860s is a perfect illustration of the closing theme in this text by Fichte. One could parallel this edifying text by Fichte with several texts by Pissarro who seems to have thought a lot about this antinomy between the “pleasing” vs. the “greatest work of art:”
Je me rappelle qu’à l’académie, il y en avait qui étaient joliment habiles, qui dessinaient cela avec une sûreté surprenante ; plus tard, j’ai revu ces mêmes artistes à l’œuvre : c’était toujours la même habileté, et rien de plus ; mais rappelle-toi donc Bastien Lepage ! et Carolus Duran ! eh bien, non, ce n’est pas de l’art !

Likewise, bitterly expressing his frustration at the fact that “the greatest work of art may not find favor,” Cézanne, as a young man, and while working with Pissarro, had ceaselessly experienced the burdensome truth of these words; as an old man, he continued to complain to a younger artist about the very unfair fate brought, not so much on him, (as by then he had reached some tangible degree of success) but on a “friend” whose artistic vigor and authenticity could not be doubted according to Cézanne, but who nevertheless could not make it:

J’ai encore un brave ami de ce temps-là, eh bien, il n’est pas arrivé, n’empêche pas qu’il est bougrement plus peintre que tous les galvaudeux à médailles et décorations, que c’est à faire suer…

Both artists, Cézanne and Pissarro express their frustrations over the same fact: those who were “habiles” but who were not as “bougrement peintres” as true artists were

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44 CP/JBH, I, 276
45 According to John Rewald, this friend was probably Achille Emperaire.
the ones who, ironically, were showered with recognition and honors. This shared perception of the intrinsic injustice of the system remained a constant conviction for both Pissarro, and Cézanne, from the beginning to the end of their careers—and certainly contributed to their close association.

The situation with the New York school, especially by the time Johns and Rauschenberg appeared on the public scene, was somewhat different, even though they too were not spared attacks from critics who favored “habileté” over “art” (to resume the Pissarro/Cézanne opposition.) As we will see in the second section of this essay, both Johns and Rauschenberg, especially the latter, were held largely responsible by the champion of modernism, Clement Greenberg, for the demise of “taste” and the sudden domination of new “opinions:” this was to be the beginning of the end of modernism (in the visual arts.)

Pissarro certainly never quite articulated the various propositions that led Fichte to formulate his aesthetic problem with the conceptual clarity characteristic of the Jena philosopher—which can thus be summarized: 1. an assent can be formed on what is beautiful on one condition: this will not happen unless “mankind is completely cultivated,” which is, of course, a way to say that it will never happen. Fichte confirms this with his slightly sardonic question: “and when will it ever be?” 2. a consensus on what is beautiful may, therefore, only remain an “idea” in the Kantian
sense, i.e. a mere guideline, a methodological orienting point. (Indeed, if we do not, at the very least, presume the possibility to convince our readers, or our audiences, of our own aesthetic choices, art history, and aesthetics, would be filled with the silence of a grave.) 3. until this consensus is reached (which is: never), all (modern) artistic debates will continue (which is, therefore: forever) to lie at the crux of a tension between that which pleases us, and which may be utterly tasteless, and that which belongs to the “greatest art,” but which may not find favor at the time it appears. This antinomic conception of the history of modern taste has long been debated and would probably not be all that original, had it been written in the 1950s. But I seriously doubt that many (if any at all) had given this question such clear thought before Fichte did in the 1790s—in fact, even in the 1950s this problem was far from being articulated in these terms and led instead to dogmatic solutions exposed by both John Rewald and Clement Greenberg who saw the history of art as an uninterrupted “chain of crests.” The difference between Fichte on the one hand, and Rewald and Greenberg on the other, is that for the former the notion of the “greatest works of art” or of a “chain of crests” remains a distant and unrealizable idea, whereas for the latter two, it is a concrete and objective fact. This distinction is commensurate with the distance between the Criticist tradition and dogmatism: one remains open to discussion; the other is the object of a firm assertion.
This very problem (sometimes awkwardly re-formulated by the impressionists, and by almost everyone throughout the history of modernism) found its place at the heart of Pissarro’s personal reflections on his “position” within the ongoing history of taste, as we will have an occasion to revisit this point later. Suffice it, for now, to quote a letter written by Pissarro to Huysmans:

Pourquoi Flandrin qui est si bien exécuté, si correct de dessin, le morceau si parfait d’exécution, nous laisse froid et insensible, tandis qu’Ingres, dont les portraits sont maigres, peints comme une porte,—selon l’expression de Degas,—nous ravissent et nous enthousiasment ; pourquoi !

In fact, Pissarro, in the same letter, gives a variant of the problem that almost echoes word for word the problematic sketched by Fichte nearly a century beforehand:

J’ai vu des tableaux effrayants d’exécution, se rachetant par un sentiment d’art tellement noble, que je pense qu’une belle exécution n’est pas absolument nécessaire. J’ai vu par contre, des toiles parfaites qui étaient horribles d’art.47

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47 Ibid., 211. In front of the magnitude of the problem, Pissarro, acknowledging that he is no theoretician, admits to Huysmans: “…votre réflexion que nous devrions exposer nous-mêmes nos théories, est certainement juste, mais hélas! c’est difficile. Le beau, l’idéal, l’art ne se définissent pas facilement.”
If Pissarro (and Cézanne, as we will see later) very much echo Fichte’s concern about the antinomic nature of the history of taste, Johns and Rauschenberg emphasize a particular aspect of this antinomy—that of the “pleasure” factor. Fichte uses as a springboard to his reflection the commonly heard statement: what pleases *us* is beautiful. What Johns does is that he drops the “us” and reformulates the same principle around the “I.” “I make what it pleases me to make.” A very large aspect of the history of modernism is indeed predicated on this shift from the “us” (that decides on the legitimacy, or the aesthetic validity of art productions—be this “us” the public, you and me, or the critics) to the “me—” with the implication: “I am just as good as you, and what pleases you is worth no more than what pleases me.” No more justification is then needed. Of course, however, this “me” is never quite alone either: this is where our interest begins.

Now, to end this brief series of “echoes” to Fichte, here is how Rauschenberg once described his profession to a group of students:

> I ended up saying that *art is nothing that you can measure.*[^48] It depends on the time, the look, the intensity and the devotion that is placed in it. And, of course, all that comes with sacrifices because the rewards are not immediate. I

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[^48]: This statement echoes another statement by Johns who pointed out that “a lot of the things in my paintings are involved with measurement:” spoons, rulers, gauges, charts. These are set against what Johns called “the immeasurability that art is supposed to have.” Grace Glueck, “No Business like No Business,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, sec. 2, p. 26; in *Writings*, 128.
said that if you can avoid being an artist, do so. And if you decide that you
can’t avoid being an artist, good luck.49

In fact, in this text (which itself echoes several texts by Pissarro to which we will
return50), Rauschenberg synthesizes some of the ultimate repercussions of the
antinomy described earlier by Fichte: art is founded on some immeasurable
phenomena, and is itself, to some degree, immeasurable. Facing this immeasurability
on one’s own can be daunting, as well as vastly exciting. Finding some one who can
understand the loneliness, as well as the huge challenge faced by an artist facing these
challenges, is all an artist can desire, as Pissarro expressed it in most clear terms:

… la peinture, l’art en général m’enchante, c’est ma vie, que me fait le reste,
quand on fait une chose avec toute son âme et tout ce que l’on a de noble en

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49 Robert Rauschenberg, Rauschenberg: An Interview with Robert Rauschenberg by Barbara Rose,
50 See CP/JBH, I, 252. Pissarro first explains that, despite the fact that he sent the best things he ever
did to London, the London taste was not ready to accept it. Specifically referring to his Paysanne
dégustant son café au lait devant sa fenêtre (P&V 549) and to his Petite bergère à la baguette (P&V
540), he wrote: “Je ne ferai hélas jamais rien de plus soigné, de plus travaillé, cependant cela a paru
grossier à Londres… Rappelle-toi que je suis de tempérament rustique, mélancolique, d’aspect grossier
et sauvage, ce n’est qu’à la longue que je puis plaire s’il y a dans celui qui me regarde un grain
d’indulgence ; mais pour le passant, le coup d’œil est trop prompt, il ne perçoit que la surface, n’ayant
pas le temps, il passe ! ” Let’s for now remark on the fact that this is probably one of the first texts in
the history of modernism, written by an artist, that produces a theory of its own self-reception. I will
claim that this oft-quoted text has been consistently misunderstood in that the description “je suis de
tempérament rustique…” is not to be taken at face value, but it is, in fact, a proposition that is written
in free indirect style. It tells us, not so much what Pissarro thinks of himself, but what Pissarro thinks
that others (in this case, the Londoners) think of his work—which is the only way one can explain the
sentence that precedes, where it is established that his work appears “grossier” to the English taste.
soi, on trouve toujours un sosie qui vous comprend, pas n’est besoin d’être légion, n’est-ce pas là tout ce que doit désirer l’artiste! 

*Language, Communication, Verständigung <Mutual Understanding>*

Communication happens usually without us thinking about it as a process. We think we know how it happens almost naturally—few of us actually think about the fact that we are speaking at the very moment when we are speaking; speaking and communicating tend to happen spontaneously, with an unpredictable end:

Every analysis of linguistic processes of communication (*Verständigung*) is guided by intuitions. We think we know what it means to perform a speech act successfully. 

If, indeed, we utter certain things that present a ring of truth to others, we are necessarily able to transcend ourselves while remaining within ourselves. Implicitly or explicitly, the question of language or communication is truly central to the Kantian edifice, and it may perhaps not have been sufficiently acknowledged by

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51 Ibid. 253.
recent proponents of the Kantian Critical Theory. In the last few decades, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has strongly represented this family of thought by reviving some of the concepts that originated from Kant around the very fruitful concepts of “communicative action” and of “discourse ethics.” This is how Thomas McCarthy, Habermas’s principal translator and commentator in North America, presents the German philosopher’s program:

The Kantian aspect of Habermas’s program might be represented as an analogue to the question, How is experience possible in general? The corresponding question for Habermas would then read, Wie ist Verständigung überhaupt möglich? How is mutual understanding (among speaking and acting subjects) possible in general? And just as Kant’s analysis of the condition of possibility of experience was at the same time an analysis of the object of experience, Habermas’s investigation of the “general and

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53 It would in no way be possible, nor desirable, even to begin to do justice, in the present context to the vast output of contemporary thinkers who have done or are doing work on the broad theme of intersubjectivity and who, to various extents and with various results, owe a debt to the Kantian system. Let us only mention in Germany, Jürgen Habermas and K.-O. Apel; in North America, Thomas McCarthy has contributed vastly to the dissemination of critical habermassian themes. Also in North America, taking a critical attitude to Habermas, John Rawls has been a central force in analyzing the contemporary issues of ethics and justice within the framework of the democratic systems. In France, a group of authors (sometimes labeled as “French Habermassians”) have produced an especially precise, and pedagogically clear reading—and recent translations—of key texts by Kant; one of their claims is to have developed fruitful fields of application of the complex Kantian apparatus in today’s world. Chief among these are Luc Ferry, and Alain Renaut, and before them Alexis Philonenko. The latter three authors have developed the central importance of the notion of inter-subjectivity within Kant’s and Fichte’s systems.

unavoidable presuppositions of achieving understanding in language” is meant to elucidate the structures of communicative interaction itself.\(^{55}\)

In the text by Kant alluded to by McCarthy: “…if one wants to know how pure concepts of the understanding are possible, one must inquire what are the \textit{a priori} conditions on which the possibility of experience depends and that ground it…” it is noteworthy that, at this vital point of his “inquiry” into what makes understanding possible, Kant himself is not far at all (already) from the problematic sketched by Habermas two centuries later: what interests Kant is not to elaborate, in private as it were, a solipsistic interpretation of how he, Immanuel Kant, understands things. What interests Kant, right from the start, is the possibility of understanding \textit{a priori} that will, therefore, permit (or legitimately allow us to expect) universal understanding—Kant is therefore implicitly interested in reciprocal understanding (Verständigung):

“A concept that expresses this formal and objective condition of experience \textit{universally and sufficiently} would be called a pure concept of the understanding.”\(^{56}\)

What McCarthy may not emphasize enough is that there is almost an organic link—already within Kant’s project—between the universal conditions of experience (Erfahrung), and the possibility of universal understanding (Verstand), and (therefore necessarily also) mutual understanding (Verständigung)—even if the latter concept,


\(^{56}\) Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, \textit{op. cit}, 227
McCarthy is right to insist upon this, has been developed to unprecedented proportions by Habermas. Understanding, one might therefore say, is inseparable from being understood, and vice versa. Experience, understanding and accord (Verständigung) are part and parcel of the same project. This term, together with much of the habermassian enterprise, will, therefore, offer another precious anchoring point for what will be developed in the course of this study.

What does this mean, as far as Pissarro and Cézanne, or Johns and Rauschenberg, are concerned? One had to wait for Habermas, and Apel, following the famous “linguistic turn” to produce a copious and indeed irreplaceable theory of communication—even though (as Renaut often insists on this point), a very precise theory of inter-subjectivity was already at work within the Kantian system, and even more so within the Fichtean one. The point made by McCarthy succinctly enlightens us as to the vital nerve of the Habermassian system. Put differently, if to Kant, the central concept is that of “Erfahrung” (or experience, and its conditions of possibility), to Habermas, the same theoretical key stone is occupied by the concept of ‘Verständigung.’ ‘Verständigung’ is not easy to translate into any language but provides a useful tool to express the type of two-way dynamics in place here: it does imply the notion of “understanding” going both ways between two people (or more), and thus, by extension, the notion of “accord,” or “agreement.” Unlike the word “understanding” in English (“verstehen” in German), ‘verständigen’ carries a markedly active connotation: it means to make oneself understood as well as to reach out a common
understanding; it implies therefore a certain individual effort towards a point of mutual resolution, and of agreement: a ‘common accord.’ One could even say that the two major enterprises of artistic interchange under focus here (Pissarro/Cézanne; Rauschenberg/Johns) could be described as live experiments in “Verständigung.” These Verständigung effects took the visual and very palpable features of clusters of works of art through which the two artistic interchanges became embodied. [See Illustration Dossier A: nos. 3-37 for Pissarro and Cézanne; nos. 38-53 for Johns and Rauschenberg.]

Having gone through the detour of what is known as the “linguistic turn” Habermas is in a position to operate a very fine description of what he calls “discourse ethics”—which, in turn, can be fruitfully imported here to grasp, in a general manner, the type of background that Pissarro and Cézanne, as well as Johns and Rauschenberg faced when confronting each other. What is most interesting—and applies especially well here—in Habermas’s theory of ethics, is his approach of needs (Bedürfnisse) which, he explains, cannot be grasped prior to social interactions:

Needs have two faces. They are differentiated on the volitional side into inclinations and desires, and on the other side, the intuitive, into feelings and moods. Desires are oriented toward situations of need satisfaction; feelings “perceive” situations in the light of possible need satisfaction. Needs are, as it were, the background of partiality that determines our subjective attitudes in
relation to the external world. Such predilections express themselves both in the active striving for goods and in the affective perception of situations. The partiality of desires and feelings is expressed at the level of language in interpretations of needs, that is, in evaluations for which evaluative expressions are available… These evaluative, need-interpreting expressions serve to make a predilection understandable… and at the same time to justify it, in the sense of making it plausible by appeal to general standards of evaluation that are widespread at least in our own culture. Evaluative expressions or standards of value have justificatory force when they characterize a need in such a way that addressees can, in the framework of a common cultural heritage, recognize in these interpretations their own needs.57

These last few words, in turn, seem to echo those quoted above by one of the four artists studied here: in this case Pissarro describing the fact that all an artist may wish for is to find a “sosie”—an alter ego—that will recognize his own needs in what the artist produces. Habermas refers here to the broadest possible mechanisms of social interaction whereby the need-interpreting expressions of a large group are recognized, and accepted by others as expressions of their own needs. This is the key to a successfully integrated society. The situations on which we are focusing could be

interpreted as close to this model: it is the case when one artist finds in the “need-interpreting expression” of another artist perhaps not exactly an interpretation of his own needs—but something extremely close to this. In such cases, the premises for the beginning of an artistic communication are ripe.

When discussing ethics within the two collaborative pairs of artists under study, the questions that will arise will obviously not be: how was it decided who was to go shopping on such or such a day? Even though it might be argued that such questions would not be without interest to some, they remain pretty unanswerable and lie outside of the practical aesthetic sphere of interests under review here. What I mean by these words “practical aesthetic” is the fact that the aesthetic choices made by each artist as they were confronting one another also developed into practical, therefore ethical choices. The question of whether Pissarro or Cézanne should express their “sensations” in such or such a pictorial way was formalized through a series of evaluative expressions—which Pissarro would justify when claiming that they were on the right way; Cézanne would express analogous sentiments (but negatively) when he would curse against his artistic adversaries. We can establish this much as a premise of an accord that remained unbroken throughout both artists’ lives (even after they parted company): it is infinitely preferable to paint our ways than to follow an academic model. Such a statement is characteristically not an aesthetic judgment, but in fact, an axiological judgment, or a judgment of value that, therefore, implies a certain ethical system to support it, with other participants who equally recognize the
established *value* of such a principle, and readily confirm, approve, and gratify the marks of success that come from the application of this principle. Likewise, if this principle is broken (if an artist decides to go and show his work to the Salon, for instance) certain marks of disapproval are to be expected. This series of evaluative judgments linked to, and derived from (pictorial) expressions first found its validity (or its recognition) in an other’s (and several *others’) acceptance, or indeed keen interest, in regarding this interpretation as an expression very close to his own. One sees in this text by Habermas a very close rendering of the type of situations that will be analyzed in the second section of this essay: the passage of Cézanne’s (absurdly called) “baroque” phase to his “impressionist” phase. In other words, each type of artistic expression that corresponded to a deliberate choice will, most likely, reflect what each artist felt as a “need” (*Bedürfnis*) in the general sense that Habermas accords to this term—a need that finds an adequate expression, and, immediately, *demands* (without necessarily receiving satisfaction) its recognition. Here we find, I think, the ground on which each of the two artistic interchanges gained so much strength: each of the two interchanges offered for each of the four artists a perfect foil for a) a cogent expression of each artistic needs and b) the quasi-immediate recognition of the validity of each particular expression. Of course, the ensuing, and most vexing, question that will eventually have to be answered will be the following: if each interchange offered such a perfect foil for each artist’s expression, why did it not last longer? The fact is that this mutual process of expressing one’s artistic needs/recognizing the validity claim of each of these needs is *never* guaranteed.
Furthermore, the very condition of success of this process is, in fact, the full freedom of each participant to say: “No, this time, it didn’t work: your statement is not valid.” Hence, perforce, the extreme fragility of this process, and, in reverse, its cogent satisfaction when (and while) it works. This is precisely what McCarthy heightens in his comment of Habermas’s text:

… since Habermas cedes a certain privilege to subjects as regards the interpretation of their own needs, there can be no question of prescribing or dictating their needs to them.\(^{58}\)

In other words, it is both ways that the process must remain uncoerced: from the productive end to the receiving one; from the expression of one’s needs, to its receiving its validity claim. Each artistic interchange, therefore, takes the inevitable form of a “shot in the dark:” the fact that it worked so many times, over and over, might be subsumed under the category of some miracle, for indeed, the instruments of “pressure” from one artist upon another are absolutely minimal:

We can at most try to convince others, by using arguments that run the spectrum from aesthetic to therapeutic, that their understanding of their own needs is inadequate, inauthentic, or what have you. But as we saw, these

arguments themselves remain tied to specific contexts of action and experience and thus are not able wholly to transcend the struggle between Max Weber’s warring gods and demons. 59

The repercussions of this text go well beyond the boundaries of an artist’s studio, although they include such boundaries as well within its final statement. The allusion to Weber’s famous text poses a potential vexing question: how to reconcile these potential warring points of view—that are comparable to the fight between irreconcilable gods from Olympus 60? An assumption will be made here: that is that the energy contained between a minimum expectation to bridge the gap up to the maximum hope of finding a ‘double’ (un sosie) will be the motoring force fueling the artistic communication between the two pairs of artists under study. While treading


60 For a remarkable commentary on this lecture on the destiny of the scientist by Max Weber of 1919 where Weber proclaimed that it was impossible to endorse any value judgment or any practical conviction on the mere strength of scientific arguments—thus burning all bridges between sciences and ethics, and proclaiming the theory of warring gods all confronting each other, each with a different value system—see Sylvie Mesure and Alain Renaut, La guerre des dieux: Essai sur la querelle des valeurs, (Paris: Grasset, 1996).
on a very delicate balance, while these two exchanges went on, what came out of these carries the proof that warring and mutually exclusive vantage points are not the ultimate unavoidable destiny of mankind, nor of this special part of mankind: artistry. Yet, unquestionably, each pair of artists consisted of two vastly different characters, as has been pointed out by biographers and art historians alike. Could we think of two more different individuals than Cézanne and Pissarro! Or indeed, Johns and Rauschenberg! Yet, they both managed to be conciliatory, and got out of this interchange, while it lasted, as much as they gave to it: a lot.

*The Phenomenological Construction of the Other*

The phenomenological enterprise takes stock of the results of the transcendental investigation, which can be summarized with this other wonderful formula invented by Fichte:

“No I, no you; no you, no I.”

This can be put in the form of an antinomy: I. riveted to our subjectivity, we are irretrievably limited to certain restricted conditions of being within this particular spatio-temporal framework: I cannot live in another time frame, nor exist in two different places at the same time, even if I decide too; I am, by essence, limited by my own body (a point whose

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61 The defining line between the phenomenological school of thinking and the Fichteian version of the Criticist tradition appears to be very thin. Several titles testify to the proximity of concerns between phenomenologists and Fichte: see, for instance, Marc Richir, *Le rien et son apparence: fondements pour la phénoménologie* (Fichte, *Doctrine de la Science*, 1794/5), (Brussels: Ousia, 1979); or Wolfgang Janke, *Vom Bilde des Absoluten: Grundzüge der Phänomenologie Fichtes*, (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1993).

repercussions, Johns, and Rauschenberg both explored very specifically within the corpus of their works; so had also done Pissarro and Cézanne within their own idioms, with a greater insistence on their “sensations.”) 2. yet, these limitations (the radical finitude of my subjectivity) do not stop me from projecting beyond myself, to others, my thoughts, representations, desires, etc. One can therefore detect an immanent dimension vs. a transcendent dimension within this antinomy. The reconciliation of these two conditions is precisely what French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, has decided to grapple with, following in this the footsteps of the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl. Much of the French philosopher’s program finds a fitting expression in the following phrase: “transcendence in immanence.” Levinas summarizes the contents of this antinomy, with an impeccably dry precision:

The I is situated outside of immanence while belonging to it.64

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63 The self, explains Levinas, is never completely closed upon itself, even during the experience of sleep: “the possibility of awakening already makes the Self’s heart beat, from the disturbed and living interior, transcedent in immanence.” Emmanuel Levinas, De Dieu qui vient à l’idée, (Paris: Librairie philosophique Vrin, 1982), 50. I am most grateful here to Alain Renaut for several developments that, with his unmistakable pedagogical clarity, suggest a bridge from the Criticist to the Phenomenological traditions. See especially, Renaut, Kant aujourd’hui, (Paris: Flammarion, 1997) 70 sqq., (a book whose translation into English should be eagerly awaited), and by the same author, The Era of the Individual: A Contribution to a History of Subjectivity, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), chapter VI “Levinas: The Rupture of Immanence.”

This formula best describes the relationship of the terms of the title of this essay: each of the four individual artists will indeed be seen as constantly reaching outside of their own “immanence” towards the other, while necessarily remaining within their “immanence.” It is that dynamics, this fascinating and fragile equilibrium that made up the essence of the interaction between each pair of artists under consideration here, and that made up for the rich and fascinating results that came out of those.

Levinas further describes with the poetic style that can also be his own mark, the program of Husserlian phenomenology in these terms. According to the French philosopher, Husserl’s discourse designates “the subjectivity of the subjective.” Thus, “Lived experience and life” (the very theme of the phenomenological enterprise) can be evoked in such terms:

Presence to oneself as a living presence to oneself, in its very innocence, casts its center of gravity outside itself: the presence of oneself to oneself always awakens from its identity as a state, and presents itself to an I which is “transcendent in immanence.”

In a sense, therefore, phenomenology takes act of the job done by Kantian Criticism in its laying out of the limits of the act of thinking, and the restraints put on the acts of reason, and then, installs itself within the “living-ness” of lived experience. Hence,

65 Ibid. Italics are Levinas’s; emphasis is mine.
the much greater appeal of phenomenology (seen as a theory of livingness) in its
application to art phenomena. We only need to turn to Merleau-Ponty for a perfect
proof of this: the author opens his beautiful book *Eye and Mind* with this epigraph by
Cézanne that offers quite a program:

> What I am trying to convey to you is more mysterious; it is entwined in the
very roots of being, in the impalpable source of sensations.\(^{66}\)

Of course, Cézanne offered a particularly fertile ground for a phenomenological
investigation, given that his own discourse (as transcribed by Gasquet, especially)
almost could sound like an invitation to a phenomenological exploration.\(^{67}\) It will


\(^{67}\) For an early phenomenological treatment of Cézanne’s work, see Forrest Williams, “Cézanne and French Phenomenology,” *The Journal of aesthetics & art criticism*, (Madison, Wis.: American Society for Aesthetics, v. 12 June 1953): 481-92. The premise of the argument is that “Cézanne suspended his egoistic concerns and, bracketing the everyday believed-in world of common sense, psychology, and physics, sought to constitute the *eidos* or structure of everything he saw.” (485) The same author sees a parallel between Cézanne’s obdurate acceptance of “every given reality as absolutely valid in itself” and Husserl’s phenomenology. Williams then reproduces the structure of Roger Fry’s argument: Cézanne using impressionism as a launching pad towards his own truth, within a phenomenological vocabulary. “The impressionists simply accepted appearance, that is, whatever is arbitrarily impressed on the retina at a certain time and place. Their concern with reproducing the same arbitrary conditions of place, light, and atmosphere at each stage of their work is consequently understandable. These scruples, moreover, compelled Cézanne to look outward and to look closely. But Cézanne looked more closely, and more reflectively, than his mentors, than Pissarro, and what he discovered was not impressions, not the appearance of phenomenalism, so to speak, but appearing objects. After having ‘seen through’ impressionism, Cézanne could dispense with its technical scruples and deliberately employ, if necessary, visually incompatible shadows.” (486-7). This approach is clearly indebted to Merleau-Ponty for whom Cézanne’s principal concern was with “the object in the course of appearing.” (*Sens et non-sens*, Paris : Gallimard, 1948, 26-27). Thus, Merleau-Ponty also credits Pissarro for having led Cézanne to form his later conception of painting, and to have abandoned his earlier visual interest in dreams and fantasies for a much more careful study of appearances. See
surprise few people that this extraordinary sentence by Cézanne was (partially) quoted by Merleau-Ponty:

The landscape is reflected, humanized, rationalized within me… I objectivize it, project it, fix it on my canvas… You were talking to me the other day about Kant. It may sound like nonsense, but I would see myself as the subjective consciousness of that landscape, and my canvas as its objective consciousness.  

It is not uninteresting to note that the only part of this quote that Merleau-Ponty left out is, in fact, the reference to Kant. Did Merleau-Ponty find it too vague or confused to be worth mentioning? Did he feel—which is perhaps more likely—that Cézanne’s practice (through Gasquet’s account) lent itself more readily to a phenomenological approach than to a Kantian one—and that this mention of Kant was getting in the way of what he was trying to say? This question leads us to a parenthesis: on the absence of attention paid to Cézanne’s mentions of Kant. Indeed, this small omission, deliberately made by Merleau-Ponty, compounds another (this time, not deliberate) omission by P.M. Doran who left out of his index one of two references to Kant made


by Cézanne in the same conversation.\textsuperscript{69} Now, what to make out of this omission? It would be wrong to give disproportionate importance to this incidental fact. Likewise, to claim that Cézanne was a Kantian who ignored himself would be ridiculous: this is certainly not my intention. However, to disclaim that Cézanne had heard of Kant, or that he never would have entered a discussion about Kant\textsuperscript{70}, seems to me to be equally preposterous. Not to give this mention of Kant more than it deserves, nor less than it deserves is what I am aiming at. All the references made by Cézanne to Kant\textsuperscript{71} seem to be in the context of a “talk:” we first learn that Cézanne “made” Gasquet “explain Kant’s system.”\textsuperscript{72} Then, in the extract left out by Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne declares: “You were talking to me the other day about Kant.”\textsuperscript{73} Finally, referring to a walk he took with Gasquet, Cézanne said: “The other evening, when we were going back to Aix, we talked about Kant.”\textsuperscript{74} It seems, therefore, that the main “access” Cézanne had to Kant was, via a promenade with Gasquet, through discussions, and

\textsuperscript{69} See P.M. Doran, \textit{op. cit.}, 230. The only reference to Kant that is given is page 122, where Cézanne is supposed to have said: “L’autre soir, en renlevant à Aix, nous avons parlé de Kant. J’ai voulu me placer à votre point de vue. Les arbres sensibles ? Qu’est-ce qu’il y a de commun entre un arbre et nous ? Entre un pin tel qu’il m’apparaît et un pin tel qu’il est en réalité ?” This is a clear reference to the problem of the thing in itself, and the ensuing question of the representation of the thing in itself: But the reference to Kant that Doran left out was the one (p. 110) that had, in fact, also been “omitted” (or rather, cut out) by Merleau-Ponty himself. Doran, probably unbeknownst to him, repeated Merleau-Ponty’s omission.

\textsuperscript{70} I am referring to a conversation I had with Michael Doran about this very issue, and where he seemed positively inclined to think that the references to Kant were Gasquet’s inventions.

\textsuperscript{71} In \textit{Conversations}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 110 and 122; in Joachim Gasquet’s \textit{Cézanne}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 122, 150, and 166. (The translator, in his introduction, (p. 29) even mentions a reference to Kant that I have not found anywhere, and that is not footnoted anywhere: “You were going on about Kant…” which is supposed to be found in “the famous letter from Cézanne to Gasquet,” i.e., presumably the letter addressed from Cézanne to Joachim Gasquet of April 30, 1896: but there is no reference to Kant in that letter, nor is there in any other letter to Gasquet.

\textsuperscript{72} Gasquet’s \textit{Cézanne}, \textit{op. cit.}, 122.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 150.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 166.
possibly, unilateral discussions (when he asks Gasquet to explain Kant’s system.)

Even if (to be the devil’s advocate) it is authorized to cast some doubt upon the accuracy of Gasquet’s transcription of his “conversations” with Cézanne, it is not permitted in the same breath to doubt the contents of Cézanne’s letters to the young Gasquet. Some indisputable facts, there, indicate the degree of indubitable attachment

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75 Several cautionary warnings have been sounded about the unreliability of the transcription of Cézanne’s words by Gasquet. On this issue, see Edmond Jaloux, Les saisons littéraires, 1896-1903, (Fribourg: Editions de la Librairie de l’Université, 1942), 75, where the author claims that Gasquet wanted to be to Cézanne what Plato was to Socrates. Also see John Rewald, Cézanne, Geffroy et Gasquet, suivi de Souvenirs sur Cézanne de Louis Aurenche et de Lettres inédites, (Paris: Quatre Chemins Editart, 1959); Theodore Reffe, “Cézanne, the Logical Mystery,” Art News, April 1963; P. M. Doran, op. cit., 106-107, and Shiff, “Introduction,” in Joachim Gasquet’s Cézanne : A Memoir with Conversations, trans.: Christopher Pemberton, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 15-23. Shiff concludes with a more moderate cautionary warning, in saying that no “facts” in Gasquet’s account may be taken for granted without “corroboration,” but that, on the other hand, the portrait of Cézanne that results from it is “faithful to its own historical moment.” (23). Jean-Claude Lebensztejn (Les couilles de Cézanne, (Paris : Nouvelles Éditions Séguier, 1995), 46-47) followed a close reading of letters in which a few lines that are targetting the Gasquets had been left out by Vollard and Rewald. Lebensztejn concludes that “Cézanne avait au fond peu de sympathie pour la personnalité de Gasquet, précieux ridicule et poseur invétéré.” (46) It would be closer to Cézanne’s complex and inconsistent personality to say that Cézanne’s sentiments towards Gasquet (as towards almost all his friends) alternated between bouts of great enthusiasm and generosity, and expressions of slander and contempt. Undoubtedly, Cézanne judged, not just Gasquet, but every one else around him “without indulgence.” The type of extraordinarily rude expressions Cézanne would use in writing could be directed against any one who had come close to him, and whom he suspected of having stolen his secret: “Je suis très énervé de l’aplomb qu’ont eu mes compatriotes de vouloir s’assimiler à moi en tant qu’artiste, et de vouloir mettre la main sur mes etudes.—Il faut voir les saloperies qu’ils font.”… “…les prétentions des intellectuels de mon pays, tas d’enculés, de cretins et de drôles.” Letters from Cézanne to his son (26 August 1906 and 8 September 1906) read by Lebensztejn from the negatives of the “Fonds Vollard” kept at the bibliothèque du Musée d’Orsay. If these letters show us an even more scurrilous and paranoid Cézanne than the one edited by Vollard and Rewald, these general remarks (mes compatriotes) do not single out the Gasquets in these flows of insults. Cézanne was as prone to badmouth (débiner, is the word used by Lebensztejn) Gasquet, as he was to adulate him. One should therefore beware of fast conclusions in either direction. I am, on the other hand, in full agreement with Lebensztejn (48) when he comments on Gasquet’s turgid style: “même quand son interpretation du peintre est correcte, il en fait un poseur à son image, alors que l’absence de pose…est un trait capital de la figure artistique de Cézanne.” On the almost unbelievable level of coarseness that Cézanne used, not only in everyday conversations, but also in his letters, see Jean de Beucken, Un portrait de Cézanne, (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), 339. de Beucken reintroduces the curses that Cézanne uses and explains that Rewald modified Cézanne’s original text and replaced “enculés” by “ignores.” Gerstle Mack, in Paul Cézanne, (New York: Knopf, 1935) follows this same process of euphemization. Lebensztejn, having re-read the original manuscripts, confirms this embellishment detail at the hands of Mack and Rewald.
felt by Cézanne for the young Gasquet, even though Cézanne could be downright critical, and even rudely so, of him, as he was wont to be about any one who risked to come close to him. In the last ten years of his existence (1896-1906), Cézanne, in fact, wrote more letters to Joachim Gasquet than to any one else—including his son. He wrote twice as many letters to Joachim Gasquet as to any one else, but his son. In that critical period, Cézanne sent twenty letters to Joachim Gasquet; seventeen to Paul, his own son (who was virtually his only correspondent during the last year of his life); ten letters to Louis Aurenche; nine to Emile Bernard; seven to Charles Camoin; four to Vollard, his dealer; and two each to Henri Gasquet (Joachim’s father) and to Maurice Denis. Beside the number of letters, the tone of some of these letters is unmistakably admiring and dispels any possible doubt as to the genuine attachment Cézanne felt for J. Gasquet: An expression such as “Je vous revois en vous lisant et, la tête plus calme, je pense à la sympathie fraternelle que vous m’aviez manifestée.” (for instance) cannot be mistaken as a mark of half-felt politeness. It simply expresses a sentiment of sincere friendship and “sympathie.” Furthermore, the fact that Cézanne was, at the very least through conversations, acquainted with Kant is confirmed by the fact that Georges Edouard Dumesnil, professor of “lettres et philosophie” at the University of Aix, and Joachim Gasquet’s teacher, made a very strong impression on Cézanne who, through Joachim Gasquet, asked Prof. Dumesnil

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to accept two of his paintings: “Je serais très heureux si le professeur de philosophie de l’Université d’Aix daignait accepter mon hommage.” Now, it is more than likely that Dumesnil, when he met Cézanne, mentioned (at the very least) some of his principal subjects of interest: Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel—the former two thus reemerging through the conversations between Gasquet (a student of Dumesnil) and Cézanne. To bring this brief parenthesis to closure, this simply confirms a notable fact in the cultural history of France in the last decades of the century that is the vast popular reception given to German idealism. There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that Cézanne would have been exposed to this corpus of ideas, if but very indirectly, or even, confusingly. This simple fact certainly does not turn Cézanne into a Kantian. Far from it, in fact, Cézanne appeared to stand in strong disagreement against certain aspects of Kantian aesthetics when he wrote, for instance, to Joachim Gasquet:

L’art est une harmonie parallèle à la nature—que penser des imbéciles qui vous disent que l’artiste est toujours inférieur à la nature? 79

Did Cézanne count Kant among these « imbéciles »? For, Kant, indeed, thought that natural beauty was unsurpassable by man-made beauty. 80 Incidentally, a decisive

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78 Cézanne, Correspondance, op. cit., 258.
79 Ibid., 262.
80 “The superiority which natural beauty has over that of art, even where it is excelled by the latter in point of form, in yet being alone able to awaken an immediate interest, accords with the refined and
factor of distinction between Cézanne and Pissarro, in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and

Rauschenberg and Johns in the following century, is that Kant’s strong doubt as to the
possibility for “man-made beauty” to match natural beauty became a shared premise
in the latter part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. John Cage, in an extraordinary text on
Rauschenberg and his \textit{White Paintings} [Ill. 143] thus leads an aesthetic reflection on
the same theme:

\begin{quote}
The white paintings caught whatever fell on them; why did I not look at them
with my magnifying glass? Only because I didn’t yet have one? Do you agree
with the statement: After all, nature is better than art? Where does beauty
begin and where does it end? Where it ends is where the artist begins. In this
way we get our navigation done for us.\footnote{81}
\end{quote}

The difference, to put it in other terms, between Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one
hand, and Rauschenberg and Johns over the question of the evaluation of the aesthetic
impact of natural over man-made beauty, was that, for the former, the illusion or
expectation to produce ‘beautiful’ works that could match nature still existed,\footnote{82}
whereas, for the latter, that mere possibility had become more than questionable.

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\footnote{82}{At the very least, Cézanne, in particular, held that it was possible and desirable to produce a work whose harmony was “parallel” to nature.}
Hence, a certain dose of cynicism, or of irony, on the parts of the two American artists, in contradistinction with the abiding optimism (if but sometimes self-critical\textsuperscript{83}) of the two French artists.

The main point I wish to retain here is that, through these allusions to problems or questions Cézanne had heard about in “talks” with these friends, a more profound type of problematic was being sketched that echoed strongly some of the principal axes of investigation established by the Criticist tradition, and which reflected on some of the problems Cézanne struggled with, from the time he met Pissarro in the 1860s until his death—such as, for instance, how is \textit{pictorial} representation possible? What is in me, what is in the object? What is subjective and what is objective?\textsuperscript{84} It is not mere chance that it was precisely one of these allusions to the “landscape being reflected, humanized, rationalized within me” that Merleau-Ponty happened to pick up to launch his own, very rich, reflection on Cézanne—by-passing over Kant’s head. Merleau-Ponty could have chosen among many other examples of sentences or exclamations, transcribed by Gasquet, that lend themselves to a phenomenological interpretation. Often making commentaries on Cézanne extremely difficult because these conversations seem to articulate one aspect and another of the creative work that seem in direct contrast (if not in opposition) with each other, Cézanne often

\textsuperscript{83} Cézanne to Gasquet: “La nature, j’ai voulu la copier, je n’arrivais pas. J’avais beau chercher, tourner, la prendre dans tous les sens. Irréductible. De tous les côtés. Mais j’ai été content de moi lorsque j’ai découvert que le soleil, par exemple, ne se pouvait pas reproduire, mais qu’il fallait le représenter par autre chose… par la couleur.” See in \textit{Conversations}, 119.

\textsuperscript{84} For a most detailed discussion of this particular issue in the context of an analysis of Cézanne’s art theory, see Richard Shiff, \textit{op. cit.}, 27-38.
opens a description with a claim to objectivity that soon slips away into a avowal for a complete surrender to his own subjectivity. See, for instance, this succession of phrases, as transcribed by Gasquet:

C’est la mer… Voilà ce qu’il faut rendre. Voilà ce qu’il faut savoir.

The sentence thus begins by dressing this epistemological program: Cézanne needs to render the sea according to the best knowledge he will have acquired—one is not absolutely sure whether the knowledge in question is knowledge of the sea, or knowledge of how to “render” it. Soon, however, the sentence takes a completely different turn:

Voilà le bain de science, si j’ose dire, où il faut tremper sa plaque sensible.85

Again to prolong this dichotomous account of his own, rather conflicted, task, Cézanne begins in the same text to compare his job to that of a geologist (who must understand the very structure of the earth he is about to paint) or to a chemist; but, soon enough, he abandons the positivist tone of this program to shift to a literary, symbolist description of his task, indicating that he will find the source for this epistemological program by reading Lucretius:

85 Cézanne, Conversations, 112.
Ces grands arcs-en-ciel, ces prismes cosmiques, cette aube de nous-mêmes au-dessus du néant, je les vois monter, je m’en sature en lisant Lucrèce. Sous cette pluie fine je respire la virginité du monde. Un sens aigu des nuances me travaille. Je me sens coloré par toutes les nuances de l’infini. A ce moment-là, je ne fais plus qu’un avec mon tableau.\textsuperscript{86}

This text could serve just as well to describe what Merleau-Ponty identifies in the Cézannian enterprise. It must be said that one could find plenty of texts by or about Rauschenberg with very close intentions. Cézanne describes his own sensory and artistic system as a “sensitized plate” that has to be dropped or immersed within a bath of data to collect information. At that point, Cézanne and his canvas are one and the same thing: both object and subject. This is precisely what Rauschenberg has been very eager to achieve by resorting especially to photographic techniques that he grafted onto his canvases:

I have worked with photographic sensitized canvas very much in the same way that I did the all-white paintings. \textit{It picked up the shadows}. There’s still a project that I have in mind where the walls will absorb whatever images appear in that room.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Barbara Rose, \textit{Rauschenberg}, (NY: Vintage Books, 1987), 77. This conception of the artist as a perfectly neutral recipient was made possible by the artist’s own deep commitment to photography. “My favorite camera was a Rollei. This was probably in 1967 or thereabouts. I had such a close
In the first sentence of his book, Merleau-Ponty opposes the attitude to things propelled by scientific method, to the one drawn upon by phenomenology. “Science, he says, manipulates things and gives up living in them.”\(^{88}\) One could say, in reverse, that the phenomenological approach to the world doesn’t manipulate things and accepts to live in them. Instead of the “looking from above” implied by the scientific gaze as it focuses on the “object-in-general”, the phenomenological approach returns to the simple “there is” which precedes all scientific judgments. One sees that (just like at the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) a certain opening is, therefore, required at the outset of all phenomenological approaches. Naturally too, this approach can only be made possible through “this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and my acts,”\(^{89}\) that is the body—and not just any body, but my own body. Then follows this extraordinary sentence which opens way to our own concerns:

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\(^{88}\) Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, op. cit., 121.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 122.
Further, *associated bodies* must be revived along with my body—“others,” not merely as my congeners, as the zoologist says, but others who haunt me and whom I haunt; “others” along with whom I haunt a single, present, and actual Being as no animal ever haunted those of his own species, territory, or habitat.  

It is the task of art to draw “upon this fabric of brute meaning” as Merleau-Ponty observes. Art would therefore offer a privileged sphere for a phenomenological experience of the other—understood not as a “congener” but as some one who haunts and, in turn, is haunted (by) the other as well.

Within the phenomenological family, it is undoubtedly Levinas who seems to have thought with more insistence than any one else about the question of the other. In a few remarkably evocative, and beautiful passages, Levinas compares the opening up of the I to the other, to the moment of awakening. This appearance of the other constitutes a moment of difference, of exteriority, of lack of coincidence with the same. But, Levinas asks,

> What might this exteriority signify, which tears at the innermost of the intimate? What is the meaning of this “soul within the soul,” this alterity, there where everything is nevertheless coincident with self or rediscoveries of

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90 Ibid., 122-3.
self, this unreality at the heart of lived experience? What might this exteriority... signify? A retro-cedence: that which is identified in immanence and recovered there, detaches itself from itself or comes to its senses, like the instant at which sleep gives way and where, in awakening, the lived experience before us discolors a dream that is past and may only be remembered. Transcendence in immanence, the strange structure (or the depth) of the psyche as a soul within the soul; it is the awakening that always recommences in sleeplessness itself; the Same infinitely carried back in its most intimate identity to the Other. It would be absurd to isolate this Other [Autre] from that infinite relation and freeze it as ultimate—that is, as the Same in its turn—in some impenitent attachment to the rationalism of the Same. In awakening, between the Same and the Other there is shown a relationship irreducible to adversity and conciliation, alienation and assimilation. Here the Other [Autre], instead of alienating the uniqueness of the Same that he troubles and holds, only calls the Same from the depths of himself toward what is deeper than himself; there where nothing and no one can replace him. Would this already be toward responsibility for the other [autrui]? The Other calling the Same at and to the depths of himself?  

This text could have never been written by Kant: here are, perhaps more clearly expressed than ever, the differences between Criticism and Phenomenology. They lie,  

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91 Levinas, op. cit., 24.
for one thing, in the styles of each type of investigations. The phenomenological
approach, with its common ground with Criticism, is much more sensual than the
Criticist approach: the phenomenologists speak about the body; the critics speak
about the a priori forms of sensibility. One could say that one is more drawn to a
poetical read of the appearance of others; while the other, even in its
contemporaneous version, as revived by the efforts of the Habermassian, or the
Rawlsians schools, or the works of Renaut and Ferry in France, take a more
procedural, or legalistic approach: how does the presence of the other pose the
questions of my rights and duties towards him, and vice versa? Or how do we
establish the conditions for an ethics of discourse through which the ideal of reaching
out to the other will orientate my actions and speech? From a strategic point of view,
one could say that the phenomenologists dwell in this opening to otherness and
engage in it with all the energy of their lived experiences. The emphasis on the
“livingness of the lived experience” is a specifically phenomenological trait. In
contrast, the criticists would rather pay attention to what it is that makes this opening
an opening, to its conditions of possibility, to its limits. There is also a difference of
principle that ultimately makes the two traditions irreducible to each other: according
to Husserl and the phenomenological approach, the gesture of openness to the other is
a “destiny” or an “intentionality”—it is almost like a calling. There is no going back.
For the criticists, however, the relationship to the other is more based on an act of
conscience that is always refutable: one can always say no to the other, even if the presence of the other is ultimately inescapable.

Let us now therefore look at what constitutes more specifically the phenomenological approach, especially at the hands of Emmanuel Levinas. Just as in sleep, for instance, the I is “never numbed to the point of absence,” the Same always carries the potentiality for Being-for-the-Other. Here is how Levinas puts it, again in a very moving tone, and a serious slap to Heidegger’s amoralism:

Before any knowledge that I might have of myself, before any reflective presence of me to myself, and beyond my perseverance in being and my resting in myself, do we not find here the for-the-other of the great sobering of the psyche into humanity and the à-Dieu breaking with the Heideggerian Gemeinigkeit?92

What Levinas also calls the “responsibility for the other man” is expressed in terms of an “impossibility:” “the impossibility of leaving him alone with the mystery of death.”93 Levinas immediately feels a need to explain, however, the terms of this “responsibility:”

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92 Ibid., 167.
93 Ibid., 163.
Responsibility is not here a cold juridical exigency. It is all the gravity of the love of the neighbor—of love without lust—on which rests the congenital meaning of this used word and which all the literary forms of its sublimation or its profanation presuppose.\(^9^4\)

Nowhere, in fact, will Levinas’s beautiful intuitions appear to be more relevant than in the third section of this work, where portraits of the “Other” and “Self”-portraits will be reviewed—see Ill. Dossier B. For, according to Levinas,

The irreducible alterity of the other man, in his face, is strong enough to “resist” the synchronization of the noetico-noematic correlation and to signify the *immemorial* and the *infinite*, which do not “hold” in a presence or in representation. An immemorial and an infinite that do not become immanence where alterity would again give itself up to representation, even when the latter is limited to a nostalgia of absence or a symbolism without images. I can, to be sure, have the experience of another and “observe” his face and the expression of his gestures as a set of signs that inform me of the states of soul of the other man, analogous to those that I experience. This is knowledge by “appresentation” and by “intropathy” (*durch Einfühlung*), to remain with the terminology of Husserl, who is faithful in his philosophy of the other to the idea that *all meaning begins in knowledge*. But against this conception of the

\(^{94}\) Ibid.
relation to another we make the reproach that it persists not only in imagining this relation to the other as an indirect knowledge—incomparable, certainly, to the perception wherein the known surrenders itself in the “original”—but also in still understanding it precisely as knowledge. In this knowledge, obtained from the analogy between the behavior of a foreign body objectively given and my own behavior, there is formed only a general idea of interiority and of the I. *The indiscernible alterity of the other is precisely missed.* …

This is how Levinas suggests that the “indiscernible alterity of the other” should not be missed:

What we take as the secret of the other man in appresentation is precisely the flip side of significance other than knowledge. It is the awakening to the other man in his identity, indiscernible for knowledge, a thought in which the proximity of the neighbor and the commerce with the other signifies, irreducible to experience, and the approach of the first come.

This proximity of the other is the meaningfulness of the face—a

meaningfulness to be specified—signifying directly from beyond the plastic forms that mask the face by their presence in perception. Prior to any particular expression, and beneath any particular expression that—already as a

95 Ibid., 161. (My emphasis.)
pose and a countenance given to oneself—covers over and protects, the face is nudity and destitution of expression as such, that is, extreme exposition, the defense-less itself. ⁹⁶

Few images could illustrate better what Levinas evokes so poetically here than Jasper Johns’s (so far unpublished) Portrait of Bob [Ill. 68] as it points out to the proximity of that other through the “meaningfulness of his face.”

Indeed, again, this text locates the inexhaustible, unknowable experience of the other in the experience of his face. One sees better why it would be difficult, not to say prejudicial, to economize a detour through some of the critical discoveries of these authors, in order, then, to reinvest the capital of their conceptual discoveries within the context of the two artistic interactions to be examined later. The concepts and intuitions produced over the last 200 years by generations of philosophers, from either tradition, provide valuable conceptual guidelines for our own investigation that pursues an analogous problem: how does an individual open himself to another—and vice versa?

* Analogies of Directions

⁹⁶ Ibid., 161-62.
The point of the present study could and should not be to review all the usages and meanings of each of these concepts as they can be applied in the fields of the human sciences\(^97\): this would have been madly ambitious, and ultimately futile—all the more so since the studies related to “selves” and “others,” “identity” and “alterity,” “individualism” and “inter-subjectivity” have recently been soaring exponentially. A mere glance at the importance of these themes in the field of philosophical studies has already been cast above. Let us just take note of the fact that these issues continue largely to dominate a large strand of philosophical research: a recent issue of the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, for instance, whose theme is precisely subjectivity and language,\(^98\) offers a good example of the present popularity of these concerns.

My chief argument here is that art theory can also be a legitimate field of application of these concepts, no less than political philosophy, or other social or human sciences:

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\(^{98}\) *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, April-June 2000), no. 2/2000: “Subjectivité et langage.” More specifically relevant to the present work, cf. the articles by Sandra Laugier, “Wittgenstein, la subjectivité et la «voix intérieure»” (179-198) for a Wittgensteinian approach of the problem of two subjectivities communicating together; see also Guy-Félix Duportail, “Mise en commun du sens et sens commun,” (199-213) for an analysis of the communality of sense that draws its inspiration both from Analytical philosophy, and from the work of Jürgen Habermas; in an analogous vein, attempting to establish a crossroad between analytical philosophy (and its ‘linguistic turn’) and the tradition of continental philosophy, see Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, “Autoréférence et autoréflexion: le problème de la relation d’un x à lui-même chez Russel et chez Fichte,” (215-236.) In the same issue, see also a review by Natalie Depraz of Jean-Luc Marion’s latest book: *Etant donné*, Essai d’une phénoménologie de la donation, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997) for a critical analysis of the phenomenological concept of the “gift” (or of the “given” presence—“étant donné”—of the other) through a reflexion on two utterly divergent examples: that of Caravaggio’s *Vocation of Saint-Matthew* on the one hand, and that of the living experience of the process of seduction, on the other hand (257-261.)
there too, the recognition of others, and how one negotiates the presence of others, is a requirement, just as it is in morals, or in global politics. All the authors we have seen so far share the conviction that subjectivity can, first and foremost, be defined as being open, as an opening—thus redefining in a radical way the traditional, metaphysical concept of subjectivity that was defined solely in terms of propriety and responsibility for one’s representations and one’s actions: a subject was an agent who knew what he thought, and who knew what he was doing. With the criticist revolution, subjectivity carried an unavoidable dimension of opening within itself. But an opening to what? To whatever stands outside the subject: to alterity, and others. There again, therefore, with the Criticist system and with phenomenology, the presence of others is, one could say, constitutive of subjectivity. Without others, subjectivity would turn into itself, would become complete inwardness and would die asphyxiated.

For both the Criticist and the phenomenological systems, there lies the notion that the others are a condition of possibility for one’s self to exist as a conscience, as a thinking self. Without others, I wouldn’t be here: others are the condition of possibility of my existence as such a conscience. The criticist and the phenomenological traditions both share the conviction that the tête-à-tête that the philosopher entertains with truth may not occur without an engagement with others,
or, to put it differently, that one may not think well in isolation.\footnote{On this point—reminiscent of Kant’s statement used as an epigraph for this work, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, referring specifically to Bergson on the theme of the importance of others in one’s relationship with truth, in Eloge de la philosophie, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 38.} Both the Criticist and phenomenological systems support the view that the idea of humanism is no mere nonsense, even after its post-modernist deconstructions. In fact, one could say that what reunites these philosophical positions—despite their significant differences—is the project of a post-metaphysical humanism. Such a concern also animates every line of what follows. In essence, it is assumed here that every work of art appears as the result of a presentation, of a kind of gift, or of exposure—all such gestures that by definition summon up an other, even if this other may sometimes remain absent, invisible, or imaginary (an artist may very well create his/her work of art in complete isolation with an imaginary viewer in mind, or with no one with him/herself in mind.)

“I do a one-man tango when I go to the studio,” as Rauschenberg once put it.\footnote{Rauschenberg quoted by Rose, op. cit., 85.} Even in these limit cases, the artist always addresses an other—may that other be him/herself even. No one has better expressed this single dilemma than Keats himself in a much-celebrated line\footnote{One could certainly think about other literary examples in which solitude refers to its exact opposite: conviviality. See, for instance, Edmond Jabès, in Livre du dialogue, (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 26:

“Nous avons hérité d’une Parole orpheline, errante, exilée, que nous avons cherché, en vain, à dominer sans nous douter qu’elle renvoyait à notre commune solitude.” In one of his many novels, Verstörung, Thomas Bernhard (Frankfurt-am-Main: Insel Verlag, 1967), has one of his characters state that he speaks a language that he alone understands. This character then concludes that everyone only speaks his/her own language, and through each thought or action, is constantly sent back to him/herself. This ultimate disintegration of all communicative bonds ends up in a complete nightmare.}:
O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell

Thereby, the poet turns “solitude” into another, a companion, that, thus, performatively contradicts its own definition, and ruins its original effect: if solitude keeps company to the poet, then, solitude annihilates itself, and becomes its antonym: company (dwelling with thee.) Indeed, one should not assume, because of the title of this work, that any of the four artists under focus here never did experience, nor even enjoy, “solitude.” Solitude may be an antonym for company, but it is not necessarily contradictory with inter-subjectivity: in fact, it often participates in inter-subjectivity. One might even go further: it is a condition of possibility of inter-subjectivity.

Without selves—constituted as selves, and therefore without subjects conscious of themselves—there is no possible dialogue, as mutual interaction. The ego, within the dialogue with others, must be able to return to himself in order to get back to the other, and give himself again and engage again in the dialogue. Solitude, moments of silence, of withdrawal, self-absorption are necessary to, and inherent in dialogues. Reflections of the other, and the interrogations the other raises in us, can only take place in moments of (relative) solitude. This would be one very plausible way to read the above line by Keats: solitude is never absolute. Inter-subjectivity is not just about active and effective dialogues. The inter-subjective game may prolong itself in these moments of silence or withdrawal. In fact, as will be seen later, it is often,

paradoxically, at distance from one another that two co-artists are at their closest: despite being separated by a thousand of kilometers, or more, when Pissarro was staying in Montfoucault a tiny hamlet near Brittany, and Cézanne, in l’Estaque, the two artists managed to continue to engage very closely and intensely in their artistic interchange. The physical or geographical distance between the two artists did nothing to stop their fecund process of thinking about each other’s works, as both artists’ works in the mid-1870s undeniably reveal. These dialogues are punctuated with great moments of silence, or of returns to the self. Therefore, again, individualism and inter-subjectivity are not opposed to each other, but constitute, as it were, the two facets of a modern subjectivity: never completely closed on itself (impossible absolute solitude), its carries the dynamics of a shuttle between others and self. The subjectivity could be represented with the figure of a bridge ensuring a constant movement, a passage between the others and oneself.

* For a Kantian Critique of a Kantian Critic

There is another important (and eminently art historical) reason why a detour through the work of the Criticist tradition, Kant especially, seemed indispensable and will repay our efforts, later on, in the second part of this essay. This very much pertains to the art historical question of the roles and positions of the four artists (Pissarro, Cézanne, Rauschenberg, Johns) within what is called “modernism.” The champion of
modernism in art criticism, Clement Greenberg, is one of the only authors who (to my knowledge) actually wrote and published on all four of these artists; he also held the flag of Kantian Criticism to herald his program to define and edify the modernist enterprise: in other words, Pissarro, Cézanne, Rauschenberg, Johns, each individually, had each participated in a common artistic enterprise—the principles of which, whether they knew it or not, having been laid out by Kant. (It is incidentally interesting to note that no critic of modernism happens to have written and published articles on each of these four artists.) Greenberg’s position regarding the four artists under question could thus be summarized: each of them contributed, to some extent, to the unfolding (Cézanne and Pissarro) or the closing (Johns and Rauschenberg) of the modernist enterprise, which consisted, in Greenberg’s own words, in “us[ing] art to call attention to art.”103 There is no doubt about this: if all four of these artists share anything at all, from the outset of their careers, it is that they “us[ed] art to call attention to art.” In other words, each of these four artistic practices has been inseparable (and continues to be in the case of Rauschenberg and Johns) from an intense reflexion on modern art, its rules, its meanings, its functions, the limits of its possibilities. Thus, it could be said, following Greenberg’s cue, that these four artists—as early or late modernists—engaged in a transcendental examination of artistic practices, or in a reflexion on the conditions of possibility of their artistic practices. However, as this will be clarified in the second section, these individual experiences were discussed in isolation of each other within the modernist discourse.

103 Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” The Collected Essays and Criticism, IV, 86.
Greenberg’s interest in Kant will here appear as paradoxical, to say the least. Greenberg oscillates between aesthetic value judgments that tend to be pronounced on a rather stern and dogmatic tone, and a perplexed and reluctant awareness that no criteria can be found for the validation of such judgments. Johns and Rauschenberg, individually, were seen by Greenberg—Rauschenberg, more so than Johns—as two contributors to the demise of high modernism. In a fascinating interview in the late 1960s, Greenberg reveals several of the contradictions that are clearly plaguing his doctrine. This text, not quoted often enough, deserves some attention as it exposes most clearly some of the limits of the modernist enterprise—limits that are precisely the ones I propose to examine. To the question: “Where does American art stand on the international scene today?” Greenberg answers:

American painting is well ahead. The credit of it is such that a lot of inferior American art is taken very seriously all over the world. It’s a paradoxical situation when someone like Rauschenberg—who’s nowhere nearly as good as Eakins, Homer, Ryder, or the early John Sloan, or Milton Avery, not to mention Marin—is viewed a major figure because of the credit American art in general now enjoys in the world.
Greenberg makes no bones about it: Abstract Expressionism “seemed to me to separate the good from the bad in the art of the 50s pretty correctly.”\textsuperscript{104} Since history, in Greenberg’s conception, can only be apprehended in terms of progress or regression, and given that in Greenberg’s estimation, what follows Abstract Expressionism, on the premises of what Johns and Rauschenberg did, it follows logically that Greenberg can only think of what Rauschenberg and Johns were doing in regressive terms.\textsuperscript{105}

Greenberg justifies this position in a fascinating interview that reveals much of the somewhat confused philosophical base of his own “homemade esthetics.” To the question: “Is it not possible that one person can fail to be moved by something that moves another?” Greenberg, first pretending that the question should be discarded, answered:

Ah, that’s possible, but here we’re getting into a fundamental question of aesthetics that I don’t think should clutter up this interview. It happens again and again: we’re talking about art and—bang—we come up against questions that philosophers of aesthetics have broken their teeth on ever since the discipline of aesthetics was born, back in the middle of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. The


\textsuperscript{105} Greenberg argues that the history of progress in art is, paradoxically, that of the maintenance of a continuous level of quality: “Continuity of standards of quality” … “can be maintained only through constant innovation.” Ibid.,
answers, or lack of them, are there for anyone who’s interested in finding
about them, in Kant’s *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* and Croce’s *Aesthetics
as the Science of Expression*.106

This is perhaps the clearest sign ever given by Greenberg to the fact that his reading
of Kant’s pivotal text in the *Critique of Judgment*, mixed with his reading of Croce’s
work, led him to confusion. The answer Greenberg proposed to what he calls the lack
of answer that constitutes Kant’s heritage in aesthetics was soon to be cleared by
Greenberg who surreptitiously reintroduced a dogmatic system of evaluation of taste
that left nothing open to doubt, uncertainty, or lack of answers.

My own contention is that such reflections could not be carried on alone: each artist,
even though each was quite capable of leading an individual reflection by himself,
still needed an other in order to bring the results of their reflections to full fruition.
Simultaneously, one should pay attention to another declaration by Greenberg, in the
very same text—which, incidentally, was of critical importance within the
Greenbergian interpretive system. According to Greenberg, the first modernist (or the
pioneer) who initiated this whole movement was Immanuel Kant himself. “I conceive
of Kant, as the first real Modernist,” wrote Greenberg emphatically.107 The tone of
this assertion bears a few remarks: Greenberg could have alluded to the fact with

106 Interview between Clement Greenberg and Lily Leino broadcasted by the United States Information
107 “Modernist Painting,” 85.
some qualifying phrases by saying that Kant was the first modernist *in philosophy*, or that he laid the conceptual ground for modernism to come. No, Greenberg needed to insist on this with unequivocal strength: to him, Kant was the first real modernist. If we are to take this declaration seriously (how could we not?) we need to revisit Greenberg’s definition of modernism and see how, in a sense, Kant doesn’t just announce, but belongs really to the ideological/philosophical camp that saw the emergence of modernism, in art through Manet and Newman, or indeed, through Pissarro and Cézanne, up to Rauschenberg and Johns.

The irony, however, will be that the reason why Greenberg seems to assign a canonic position to Kant within modernism—i.e., the fact that reason uses its own tools in order to lead a huge critique of its own claims and procedures—leaves out another truly essential concept within the Kantian system: that of inter-subjectivity—or the question(s) of oneself with others. Not only did Greenberg not seem to see the quintessential importance of this concept in Kant’s work, but I would also venture that, even if he saw it—and it is difficult to read *The Critique of Judgment* without encountering it all the time—Greenberg, in fact, could have found no use for it. Inter-subjectivity had no place in Greenberg’s conception of modernism. What I therefore propose to do is to follow partly the same itinerary as Greenberg, or at least, establish here the premises of Greenberg’s system. This will then allow us to understand what positions Cézanne, Pissarro, Johns, and Rauschenberg occupy within the modernist
edifice. By the same token, we will also measure what relationships they carry with this other real modernist, Kant himself.

I will continue, however, to suggest that it is impossible to understand much about Kant’s system without exposing the notion of inter-subjectivity—central not only to Kant, but also to his brilliant follower, Fichte. The point of this rectification will be, not so much to contradict Greenberg: as he was partially right. It is true that to some extent, all four of these artists, shared with many of their colleagues to participate in a mega project of critique of the rules and methods of art; and, in order to do so, they did, indeed, use artistic means. The analogy with Kant makes sense, so far: one used the tools of reason in order to critique reason; the others used artistic means in order to critique art. The point, however, that was completely missed out by Greenberg is that all these critiques did not occur in a vacuum. To put it more strongly, these enterprises of criticism all needed as a condition of possibility the existence of others to be there as attendants and collaborators to the projects in question. Revisiting some aspects of Kant’s system, throughout Greenberg’s allusions, will then lead us to the core of Kant’s system: how to deal with the presence of others? What to make out of others? How can I communicate with them? At this point, it will then appear clear that, as per Greenberg’s claim, a reference to Kant is indispensable in order to think about modernism. While I will agree with Greenberg’s claim, I will dispute the premises of that claim. I will agree on the fact that Kant is a real modernist, in the
sense of a truly modern thinker. I will claim that the reason why this is so, is because he constructed a concept of subjectivity that is inseparable from inter-subjectivity. I will argue that what one could call “presence to oneself” (or individualism) and “presence to others” (inter-subjectivity) are in fact two facets of the modern and post-modern subjects, and that these two facets are not (necessarily) contradictory, but in effect create a complex dialectical dynamic within subjectivity. I will argue that the difference between the two is more one of tempo, or of inflection than of nature: in other words, I hope to make it clear at the end of this study that individualism and inter-subjectivity are very much inter-dependent of each other. By the same token, it will appear that the two extreme figures of absolute egoism, or complete, and unlimited altruism (which would function as the two theoretical bookends of this essay) are both untenable—at least for very long. Therefore, the two positions (inwardness/outwardness; or individualism/inter-subjectivity) constantly hold each other in check, and call each other, almost in order to exist. What would be the value of solitude if we were not with others? And vice versa, what would others mean to us, if we never were forced back to ourselves? Through their lives, and especially through their arts, these two pairs of artists very much demonstrate how these two moral poles are inseparable, and establish, between them, an interval, or an intermediary space that I now propose to explore briefly.
The opening question of this essay—“what happens when individual artists work together?” will offer a guiding thread throughout this whole enquiry. This question finds a close, and serendipitous, echo in the opening question of a book written nearly twenty-five years ago: “Que se passe-t-il quand des gens parlent, qu’est-ce qui est en jeu lorsque nous parlons? ” (What happens when people speak, what is at stake when we speak?) Surely, words are not (always) works of art, and the conversations that we are studying left other traces than oral speech exchanges. François Flahault provides, however, a brief and enlightening answer to his founding problem—whose terms concur with the aims of the present research:

Ce qui se passe, c’est, à travers une production verbale rendue possible par les contraintes d’une langue et par l’ordre d’un discours, l’inscription des sujets dans l’espace où il est question de leur réalisation.

(What happens is that subjects [in the sense of ‘agents’] position themselves in the space of their own realization through some speech production that is made possible within the demands of a language, and the order of a discourse.)


Ibid.
This is precisely this kind of process that I propose to examine through the examples of these two pairs of artists: the positing of each artist (or his “inscription” as Flahault puts it) in the space of their artistic “conversation,” or the interval of their interaction—within which these artists find the possibility of realizing themselves. This is not to say, of course, that each of these artists could not possibly have realized himself outside this space of interaction. This isn’t to say either that they did not partly realized themselves in other exchanges as well. In the same way as we all tend to carry more than one conversation, with more than one addressee each day, each of these artists also carried out more than one artistic interchange, and therefore, each time “realized” themselves in different ways with each participant. Pissarro and Rauschenberg, among these two pairs of artist, will appear as the more outgoing, and extraverted personalities, whereas Cézanne and Johns will seem to be more oriented towards themselves, being perhaps more contemplative personalities—although one should be careful not to overemphasize these latter traits: Cézanne, despite his reputation for quasi-total inwardness, at the end of his life, always readily saw young artists who would come to visit him from Paris. As for Johns, the number of interviews to which he has accepted to lend himself throughout his already long career is surely an indication that he is no recluse either. In fact, it will be possible to show that a dimension of inter-subjectivity (or openness to the other) is inscribed within much of the work of each of these four individual artists—individually of
whom they chose to work with. This openness to another individual, whereby a free artistic interchange took place, is precisely the space described by Flahault in which, these artists inscribed and realized themselves at the same time.

Interestingly another example of this theory of the constitution of the subject through language, or speech interaction—or a theory of inter-subjectivity through language—can also be found (and was claimed by Flahault) from an author whom one doesn’t readily associate with a theory of subjectivity: Jacques Lacan. Lacan, in a surprising text of *Ecrits*, thus describes the process of interaction in dialogues that will be a central focus in this study:

Qu’est-ce que la parole?…. elle donne au sens son support dans le symbole qu’elle incarne par son acte.

C’est donc un acte, et comme tel, supposant un sujet. Mais ce n’est pas assez dire que, dans cet acte, le sujet suppose un autre sujet, car bien plutôt il s’y fonde comme étant l’autre, mais dans cette unité paradoxale de l’un et de l’autre, dont, … par son moyen, l’un s’en remet à l’autre pour devenir identique à lui-même.

On peut donc dire que la parole se manifeste comme une communication où non seulement le sujet, pour attendre de l’autre qu’il rende vrai son message, va le proférer sous une forme inversée, mais où ce message le transforme en
annonçant qu’il est le même.
La parole apparaît donc d’autant plus vraiment une parole que sa vérité est moins fondée dans ce qu’on appelle l’adéquation à la chose : la vraie parole s’oppose ainsi paradoxalement au discours vrai, leur vérité se distinguant par ceci que la première constitue la reconnaissance par les sujets de leurs êtres en ce qu’ils y sont intéressés tandis que la seconde est constituée par la connaissance du réel, en tant qu’il est visé par le sujet dans les objets. Mais chacune des vérités ici distinguées s’altère à croiser l’autre dans sa voie.¹⁰

Lacan’s distinction between a “true speech” (i.e., one in which the mutual recognition of the subjects, as participants and authors, of the speech is established) from a “true discourse” (whose validity claim is based on how adequately the discourse reflects a segment of reality) offers an interesting point of anchorage for the approach of the topic of this work: the question of how “true” (to reality) the works of art produced by all four artists will be subservient to the question of how successful the interaction within each pair of artists actually was. Flahault, (and Lacan, almost despite himself, in this particular text), both have in mind situations in which human subjects constitute themselves and their others through a “true” speech interaction—“true” not so much in the sense that it tells or reveals some hidden truth, but in the sense that it

truly articulates these subjects as subjects, and truly posits them as partners in an
exchange that guarantees their truths as subjects. It is this kind of “true” interaction
(that will be tested, not by analyzing speech interactions, but art interactions: how an
artist produced a work of art as part of an ongoing system of exchanges) that will be
the principal feature in the third section of this work.

The aim of the present study, therefore, is to examine four subjects who, two by two,
came to constitute themselves as co-artists and each revealed oneself through another.
This work is, therefore, neither just about people, nor just about art: it is about
relationships between subjects as they are mediated by the fabrication and
contemplation of art. Analogously, Flahault very much resisted the idea of placing his
book within either the camp of psychological studies (a theory of the subject: who
speaks?), or within the camp of linguistic studies (a theory of language: what is
spoken?). He claimed to be articulating the two, and thus, to stand “in between:” “il
s’agit pour moi d’opérer une liaison entre ces deux champs, quitte à ne proposer
qu’une élaboration encore rudimentaire.” (What is at stake for me is to operate a
connection between these two fields, to the risk of only offering a yet basic
elaboration.) \[111\] This “in-between” kind of speech (half-way through the constitution

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\[111\] Ibid. The risk described here by Flahault offers another call for humility—at least, this is how I
interpret it, and how I endorse it for this essay. While I personally believe that this “in-betweenness”
can largely be an enriching factor, it also can create a fairly uncomfortable academic situation. To use a
metaphor, one could say that it may be like living in two different houses, while feeling “at home” in
neither. In the case of the present work, this essay could be situated “in-between” art history and social
or moral philosophy. Thus, in a sense, it could be said that the present study will very much generate a
“parole intermédiaire” of its own. This first “parole intermédiaire” will bear upon another type of
of the subject who speaks, on the one hand, and the production of the message that is uttered, on the other hand) is precisely what Flahault calls “la parole intermédiaire” (intermediary speech). This is very much how I conceive the odd position of the present study: somewhere between philosophy, or more precisely a case analysis of subjectivity at work in an artistic interchange, on the one hand, and, on the other, history of art, or to be more precise, the study of objects created by subjects (in this case, four artists) each of whom has been thinking and working with another subject (or co-artist.) What these four artists produced together can be called “intermediary art” in the sense that what is at stake is not only the production of works of art, regarded in and of themselves, but, also the production of artists who constitute themselves, and others, as co-subjects, within the rules of a pictorial practice that they tend to define together as they go along. To put it in a more provocative way, the object of the present work will not so much be “how did so-and-so produce this or that work?” but “how did this work of art (itself the result of an artistic interchange between two artists, in the first place) contribute to the formation or the creation of this artist?” —And how, in tandem with this question, did the process of formation of this artist through such or such works, affect another artist as well? (How did art, understood as a plural activity, create this artist?) How, in other words, did an artist grow, develop, and benefit from and, also occasionally, struggle with, the

“intermediary language”—that developed in the course of the artistic interchanges that will be studied here: indeed, I can barely find a better expression to describe the type of manifold interchanges produced between Pissarro and Cézanne, or Johns and Rauschenberg. Thus, this essay could itself be called “an intermediary text about four producers of intermediary languages.”
interrelationship he experienced with another artist? The making of artists is, within
the present study, as important as the making of art: they are, in fact, co-substantial.
Art will thus be regarded here as this intermediary support, or this “medium” that
binds a subject to another subject, and to himself. What is unusual in the present case
study is that both partners are successively consumers and producers of this
“intermediary art.” One might say (here as a hypothesis) that the intermediary quality
of the art produced by each of the four artists in question predisposed them to the
open dialogues that they all embraced. This is what I now propose to examine
through four individual examples of specific statements by each of the four artists
(although I do not claim that these statements “summarize” or “synthesize” what
these artists are about). These are mere examples in all of which, each artist, in his
own specific terms, seems to indicate that their work evolves within an intermediary
zone, an open area somewhere between the constitution of the artistic subject and the
definition of its object. This openness again could therefore be seen as predisposing
them to another type of openness: one towards each other.

“Certainty,” (Cézanne), and Impossible “Perfection,” (Pissarro)

This certainly offers a very plausible context of interpretation for Robert
Rauschenberg’s famous saying in a much-quoted (though seldom analyzed) statement
to Dorothy Miller: “Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in that gap between the two.)”\textsuperscript{112} It has not been sufficiently observed that in this definition of his own art—given at a time when Rauschenberg and Johns\textsuperscript{113} were actually working closely together—the author of the definition uses an intransitive verb in order to define what he is doing—or more accurately what he is “trying” to do. The term “acting” emphasizes the performative aspect of the artist’s job, rather than the product itself\textsuperscript{114}. It seems fair, from a close reading of this definition, to say that the activity itself within this “intermediary” zone—or this gap—between art and life, carries more importance than what results from the activity, given that the results (the work of art) are not mentioned. Of course, Rauschenberg’s definite engagement and interest in performance art will confirm this reading. [See Ills. 187 and 192] Let us retain, for now, that Rauschenberg defines art as an “act”—and an act that takes place within a “gap:” an act situated, therefore, within an intermediary space. This act goes back and forth between two bookends that are “art” itself, and “life.” Since this act functions in the gap between these two notions, it cannot be identified with either of these notions, or only barely, insofar as these two notions constitute the limits of possibility of the act and the boundaries of the gap: we, therefore, reach the paradox


\textsuperscript{114} In this sense, it does subvert the traditional distinction prevalent in aesthetics by which one of the defining criteria of art over nature was “making” vs. “acting:” see Kant’s \textit{Critique of Judgement}, \textit{op. cit.}, §43, p. 162: “Art is distinguished from nature as making (facere) is from acting or operating in general (agere), and the product or the result of the former is distinguished from that of the latter as work (opus) from operation (effectus).”
by which “art” (as an act) is neither art, nor life, but needs both of them in order to circulate “in-between.” At the same time, this act (even if it is to be taken in its most theatrical connotation, as in the “actor”) requires at least an other: the minimum requirement for this act to take place is, at the very least, one spectator—a spectator who, soon, can claim a share in the action, or be invited to join in.

Likewise, the very relationship between message and utterance (that Flahault designates) seems to be at the heart of Johns’s concerns in some of his early sketchbooks:

The relationship between the object
& the event. Can they 2 be
separated? Is one a detail
of the other? What is
the meeting? Air?\(^{115}\)

Even though the two vocabularies, syntaxes, and individual ways of expressing the problems faced by either artist are conspicuously different, both artists lay the ground of their problems around a certain “in-betweenness”: there, around a gap, and here, around a relationship or a meeting. “The relationship between the object & the event:” what do these words handwritten by Johns on the page of one of his

\(^{115}\) *Writings*, 49
sketchbooks—produced at about the same time as when Rauschenberg gave his interview—mean? As often, many of the artist’s own comments are open to layers of interpretation—his own words lying somewhere “in-between” the exactness of an engineering chart and a poem—and therefore, soliciting all the more the intervention of another party: be it the viewer or reader of the artist’s work, or a colleague and friend. With its characteristically open-ended, and inconclusive, style, this short text in one of Johns’s earliest sketchbooks situates the position of the artist within what he calls “the relationship between the object and the event.” What is he talking about? For one thing, he is not talking about a depicted object in the traditional context of a theory of representation, whereby the object X (the object of representation) is almost taken for granted, or, at least, is not a subject of concern, or of reflexion. In that relationship between an object and an event, the object could be the object of representation, but what about the so-called “event”? Is the event the act of representation performed by the artist? Or is the event what simply happens to the object—while it is being represented, or inserted within a given work of art? Think,

116 A wonderful (and very Johnsian) example of the difficulty to reconcile “object” and “event” can actually be drawn from a philosophical text that will be later put to use. In this example, the object is a square circle, and the event is simply to comprehend it, and it is discussed by Fichte, op. cit., 15-16: “A critic has asked me, ‘Whether the squaring of the circle is impossible because straightness and crookedness have nothing in common?” He thinks he has been very smart in having asked this question, looks around, laughs, and leaves me to sink under my disgrace.” Follows a row and an argument between Fichte and the critic, which is fun to read. The point, however, that is relevant here is the conclusion: Fichte explains that the circumference of a circle is equal to a polygon with an infinite number of sides. He adds that the condition for a square circle to exist is that one should understand it, but, Fichte confesses: “I never could understand it.” Basically, you have to choose between the object, or the event: if you posit the object, you cannot understand it: and, if you can understand it (or measure it), then the object disappears: “...if you keep on dividing ad infinitum, as the problem requires you, you will never get to measuring it. But if you proceed to measure it, you must first stop dividing, and then your polygon is finite, and not as you have posited it, infinite.”
for instance, about the actual “balls” in *Painting with Balls*. [See Ill. 77] The object can indeed fall, break, move, be squeezed, or evolve, in numerous possible ways. One thing is certain: the object doesn’t stand still—and the event itself is not set (or pre-set) in advance in any predictable way, nor does it seem to unfold according to any predictable, or known rules. This event (whatever it is) and its object are a subject of questioning—and keep the artist guessing: in this short, and somewhat mysterious text, these five lines are punctuated by four question marks. The articulation of these relationships (operated by the artist himself) is a) not pre-determined, and b) can only be expressed in the form of questions—questions, which both situate the artist himself (who asks the questions,) and base his entire working procedure on these questions. At the same time, it is evident that these successive questions call for someone else: the very addressee toward whom the questions are pointed. Even in the limit case when the question might be addressed to the artist by himself, in a reflective mode, one must admit that the artist would then be treating himself as *some one else*, or talking to himself as an *other*—some one to whom he can turn and ask a question. No matter what interpretive decision one takes, this short text leads to a(n implicit) demand for recognition, and, to some degree, at least, a demand for participation on the behalf of the viewer/listener to whom the question has been asked.

Flahault describes this kind of situation as such:
…une parole qui, loin de se réduire à un simple moyen de communiquer ou
d’informer, est demande de reconnaissance, par le truchement d’une action
entreprise à la fois sur ma propre identité et sur celle de l’autre. L’illocutoire
… prend appui sur le « qui tu es pour moi, qui je suis pour toi », y revient, le
modifie, en repart ; rien ici n’étant réglé une fois pour toutes.

(…A speech that, rather than being reduced to a mere means of
communication or of information, is a demand for recognition through the
means of an action that carries an impact on my own identity, as well as that
of the other. An illocutory act… is levied upon the following equation: “who
you are for me; who I am for you.” It comes back to it, it modifies it, it is
launched back from it; nothing in there is ever solved for good.)

This open-ended relationship between “object” and “event”—or between object and
language, or object and representation—that conjures up the identity of the subject
who articulates this relationship, and summons, as it were, a viewer (whether real,
imaginary, or reflexive) is at the heart of Johns’s conception and practice of his
métier. Two more brief examples: in commenting the relationship between two works
of his (Passage, and Passage II) Johns made the following statement that makes the
point even more limpid:

117 Flahault, op. cit., 71.
I felt that Passage suggested a state of affairs that might not be static, a state of change or a detail of a larger state of affairs. I suppose it is connected to Passage II in that way. *The relationship probably exists only in my own subjectivity.*\(^{118}\)

Another clearly decipherable example points to the same phenomenon by pointing to the subjectivity of the artist as a set of relationships.

Crediting Duchamp for having changed the parameters of art practice in the 20\(^{th}\) century, and having shattered the boundaries established by impressionism, this is how Johns diagnosed the result of Duchamp’s input:

Marcel Duchamp, one of this century’s pioneer artists, moved his work through the retinal boundaries, which had been established with Impressionism into a field where language, thought and vision act upon one another. There it changed form through a complex interplay of new mental

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and physical materials, heralding many of the technical, mental and visual
details to be found in more recent art.\textsuperscript{119}

An early reader of Wittgenstein’s works, and an admirer, and friend, of Duchamp,
Johns defines the older artist’s position in terms that again readily conjure up
Flahault’s development on “intermediary languages:” situated in a kind of in-between
zone, Duchamp would have gone beyond “the retinal boundaries” imposed (or left
over) by the impressionist, and secondly, Duchamp’s work would thus oscillate
within a field defined by a triple dynamics between language, thought, and the legacy
of the impressionists, i.e., the visual. We cannot but leave aside here the question of
deciding whether Johns’s interpretation of Duchamp’s role is faithful to Duchamp’s
own conception. Let it be said that Johns, by giving equal emphasis to “language,”
“thought,” and the “visual” describes his own artistic and aesthetic program as much
as Duchamp’s. The mention of “the retinal boundaries” lead us, however, to wish to
examine further what the situation was as far as two artists who had a lot to do in
marking these “retinal boundaries” and having pushed them to their (transcendental)
limits: Cézanne and Pissarro.

\textsuperscript{119} Johns, \textit{Writings}, 22. First published by Jasper Johns, as “Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968),” \textit{Artforum} 7 no. 3 (November 1968): 6. This (famous) text was also quoted in a (less famous, but provocative) article by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, “The Impressionist Revolution and Duchamp’s Myopia,” \textit{Arts Magazine}, (September 1988): 61-67. In the article, the author argues that the boundaries between impressionism and the Duchampian revolution are not as evident as one thinks. Although his point was argued from a very different vantage point from mine, I have to say that I tend to agree on the whole with the conclusions of this article.
Having given an example of Rauschenberg’s and one of Johns’s expressions of how they conceive of their art, I now wish to emphasize an analogy between the two American artists, and the two French artists who will be studied here. This has little to do with chronology, nor sequential priority—hence the decision to reverse the chronological order of exposure and place: Johns and Rauschenberg before Cézanne and Pissarro in order to mark this point. This analogy has to do with the open-ended aspect of the relationship between each artist and his art. For both Pissarro and Cézanne, complete artistic answers are (almost) always missing, or allusive: perfection is always at a remove. Both Rauschenberg and Johns have mentioned the presence of Cézanne in relationship to their work. The relationship I wish to point out here, however, is one based on analogies—rather than on a set of traceable influences. This relationship is trans-historical, and targets one of several fundamental parallels within each of the practices of these four artists: I am referring here to the “intermediary” quality of much of these four artists’ works—which, by implication, opens an inter-subjective area within their art. The point is that Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one hand, Johns and Rauschenberg, on the other, practiced their art as a platform of reflexion on their own identity—even if that identity became ever more elusive, and problematic to define in the latter cases—that implied a call for an other’s participation or response. What I mean is that there is a dimension of inter-subjectivity that is almost inherent in the practice of each of these artists’ art—irrelevantly of who ended up working with whom. Somehow, their art could always
be seen as a kind of calling for some one else to join in.\textsuperscript{120} For instance, one can resume Johns’s formulation to address Cézanne’s own problem: talking about objects, events, and the open-ended relationships between them and the artistic subject who confronts them, here is what Cézanne says:

\begin{quote}
…dès que nous sommes peintres, nous nageons en pleine eau, en pleine couleur, en pleine réalité. Nous nous colletons directement avec les objets. Ils nous soulèvent.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
(…Insofar as we are painters, we swim in deep waters, deep colors, deep reality. We are confronted with objects upfront. These sweep us off our feet.)\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

This text conjures up another serendipitous visual relationship between Johns and Cézanne in their depictions of divers: see illustrations 189 and 190. One could multiply ad libitum examples by Cézanne especially having to do with what could be called the principle of uncertainty in art—another possible formulation that designates the shuttling dynamic that takes place between the constituting subject of art who is

\textsuperscript{120} This is still very evident in Johns’s latest works. On this point, I wish to express my deep and sincere gratitude to a friend and colleague, Richard Field, from whom I learnt a lot on these issues. See his recent text on “Chains of Meaning: Jasper Johns’s \textit{Bridge} Paintings,” in Jasper Johns: New Paintings and Works on Paper, (Exh. Cat.), (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 15-36.

\textsuperscript{121} Joachim Gasquet, “Ce qu’il m’a dit…” (1921) in Conversations avec Cézanne, ed., P.M. Doran, (Paris: Macula, 1978), 159.
attempting to articulate, or control, an ongoing relationship between objects and
events, while, necessarily, calling for the participation of some one else in order to
bridge this open-ended situation. One senses here again that the relationship between
the theory of art in community with others, is very close to a theory of speech, such as
that sketched by Flahault.

Here is another, very typical example of Cézanne demonstrating the “uncertainty” of
his position while working on Henri Gasquet’s portrait:

Ah ! Chacun sait ce qui bout dans sa marmite… Moi, je te connais, parce que
je te peins… Ecoute un peu, Henri. Toi, tu as la certitude. C’est ma principale
espérance. La certitude ! Chaque fois que j’attaque une toile, je suis sûr, je
crois que ça va y être… Mais, tout de suite, je me souviens que j’ai toujours
raté, les autres fois…. Moi, je ne sais jamais où je vais, où je voudrais aller
avec ce sacré métier.

(Ah ! To each, his own recipe… As for me, I know you because I am painting
you. Now just listen, Henri. You, you know what is certain. Now, that is my
biggest hope: to know what is certain! Each time I launch a new canvas, I feel
sure, I think that will be it… But then, right away, I remember that I have
always failed on all previous times… I never know where I am going, nor do I
know where I would like to go with this damned job.\textsuperscript{122}

Cézanne, for sure, offers here one of the most powerful suggestions of what inter-
subjectivity in art might mean: “I know you because I paint you.” In other words, art
(in its productive end) constitutes a means of knowledge of the other—which is
precisely what will be tested and verified later on—except that the formula that will
bind the two pairs of artists will be transformed into something like this: “I paint (or
work through other media) \textit{with} you, therefore I know you.” For Cézanne, if one
takes this extract of a conversation literally\textsuperscript{123}, access to the knowledge of some one
passes through painting a portrait of that person, in the first place, and (I argue)
painting \textit{in community with} that person in the second place. This, for sure, offers a
compelling illustration of the triangular relationship (as drawn by Johns, and
Rauschenberg above) between object, and event, on the one hand, and spectator and
act, on the other: in the case of Cézanne’s portrait of Gasquet, the object and the
spectator become one and the same person, and art induces knowledge of that person.

The point is, however, that with Johns, and Rauschenberg, as indeed with Cézanne, so
far, the relationship between objects and events, or between life and art remains at
work within an open space—the space of a ceaseless search, of a constant return, of a

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{123} See note 74 on the doubts expressed as to the reliability of Gasquet’s transcription of his
“conversations” with Cézanne.
tentative pursuit that never quite succeeds, but is yet ceaselessly motivated by hope—by an indomitable flow of energy (that took at times spectacular turns, in the case of Cézanne) and brought him back to his bare canvas with dogged obstinacy. Few texts evoke this point with greater clarity and pithiness than Johns’s oft quoted, and possibly most famous, line: “At every point in nature there is something to see. My work contains similar possibilities for the changing focus of the eye.”124 These open relationships, or these gaps call for another’s participation. One might be tempted to say that all modern art functions, to various degrees, within an inter-subjective space to the mere extent that every art production requires the active participation of a viewer or a reader. One should then add that in the three examples just presented, the situation requires a special viewer all the more as these three artists articulate their art within “open relationships,” or “gaps.” In almost all cases, the works of the three artists in question presented themselves as problems or puzzles: the presence of an other willing “to give it a try” and get involved in the problem, as well as its (possible or impossible?) solving, could only be welcome.

What about Pissarro in all this? How did he decide to go about laying out his own artistic problematic? The problem for Pissarro deserves to be posed separately insofar

as he is regarded as standing at the edge of the modernist canon. Pissarro is usually more readily associated with Corot, or the Fontainebleau school, than the New York School. The name of Cézanne associated with Johns and Rauschenberg will probably not raise too many eyebrows—both artists having thought and written about Cézanne specifically. The juxtaposition of Pissarro next to Johns and Rauschenberg, on the other hand, will. Now, of course, one could close the question simply by saying that the comparison is not between Pissarro (or Cézanne) and Johns (or Rauschenberg), but that it is between the relationship that bound Pissarro to Cézanne, and the relationship that bound Rauschenberg to Johns. This should be too easy, and while it is true that the focus of this study will be (in the third section of this work) a close examination of the analogies between these two inter-relationships, if there must be some analogy between two relationships, the members of the relationships must also bear some comparison, so that the analogy may exist in the

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125 See Section II.
126 An interesting exception will be found in Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, op. cit., where Pissarro is compared to Duchamp and Johns.
127 This is how Rauschenberg expressed himself about Cézanne: “It is my own personal psychosis that it is only by the background that you can see what is in front of you. Only by accepting all that surrounds you be totally self-visualized. And at the same time, your self-visualization is a reflection of your surroundings. Albers was right about that. That’s why I like Cézanne so much. Matisse said you have to read between the lines. When he would stop a line, say, at the ear, and begin it again perhaps at the neck, he was really exercising the viewer’s mind to fill the blank.” Barbara Rose, op. cit., 72-73. Johns, who owns several remarkable works by Cézanne, has often referred to Cézanne in reference to his own work. The earliest published mention of Cézanne by Johns refers to an idea a teacher of his (speaking of Cézanne and cubism) called “the rotating point of view.” Johns, Writings, 20. The two expressions are in fact directly complementary: Rauschenberg sees Cézanne’s work as a ‘surrounding’—not unlike his own work; and Johns describes the physical gesture of the rotating eye movement that strives to capture all facets of an object (while, of course, never succeeding in catching them all at the same time)—this also can very well be related to his own working procedure. This example actually typifies what I mean by this inter-subjective exchange: out of the same experience (here, looking at Cézanne’s work), each artist, over and again, draws radically different results. Thus, each preserves a very distinct characteristic while, at the same time, sharing the same common trunk of original experience.
first place. This statement finds its mathematical expression in the famous formula: 
\[ \frac{a}{b} = \frac{c}{d} \Rightarrow ad = bc. \]
Jasper Johns actually reflects upon a similar equation on the equal relationships of the sides of a rectangle, taken two by two: if the shape of a rectangle is defined by four points A, B, C, D, then AB = CD and AC = CD.\(^{128}\)

Whereas Cézanne (in the midst of painting Gasquet’s portrait in 1896) had been focusing on the gap between “certainty” and “hope,”—a gap, which, I will try to argue later, Cézanne had been experiencing since his youth—Pissarro, in his first letter to his eldest son, Lucien, in 1883, describes ironically his ongoing pursuit of a (never reachable) point of perfection:

Nous sommes tous bien, les enfants toujours de même, ta mère très affairée et moi continuant mon bonhomme de chemin, entouré de mes tableaux inachevés, de mes croquis, cherchant l’oiseau rare au plumage resplendissant de toutes les belles couleurs de l’arc-en-ciel, au chant harmonieux et pur ; la perfection, comme dirait Degas, quoi !!—N’oublie pas de dessiner.\(^{129}\)

We are all fine, the children always the same, your mother overly busy, and I keep plodding on the same path, surrounded by my unfinished canvases, my

sketches, seeking for the rare bird with feathers that shine with all the glorious colors of the rainbow, singing a most pure and harmonious song: in brief, I am after perfection, as Degas would have it!! – Don’t forget to draw.

Pissarro’s tone may be more ironic, more jovial in its mildly self-deprecating intentions: the result of the letter is quasi-similar to the observation made by Cézanne thirteen years later: “perfection” (or its cézannian equivalent: the “certainty” of knowing what the aesthetic solution is) is to be found just as easily as hunting for the rare bird with rainbow-colored feathers and a pure and harmonious song. It is to be found in our heads only, in other words, and those who think they have actually found it (the academics) are simply deluding themselves. Nevertheless, and this is what is interesting in this brief text by Pissarro, the fact that “perfection” is unreachable is, by no means a hindrance to work—on the contrary: the proof of this is in the final injunction to his son: having intimated that perfection is never to be found, he rapidly concludes with a stern summation: Don’t you ever forget to draw! — An injunction that, of course, the father very much takes to heart, as he religiously applies it to his own life as well. We can say, therefore, at this point, that “perfection” as an unreachable target functions very much for Pissarro on the model of what Kant called an “idea.” An idea lies outside the realm of experience: very much like perfection for
Pissarro, it sums up the totality of what the best accomplishments in art could ever produce: yet, as such, it is not reachable.\textsuperscript{130}

\textit{\textbf{\textit{A Parallel to the “Gap:” Kant’s “Gulf” Between the Idea and Its Realization}}}

The “idea” continues, however, to play an essential role as a guideline, as a point of focus, which—even though it is never reachable, nor realizable—will, nevertheless, always continue to orientate our own thoughts and actions. We will see that this is very much the mode of action that the four artists will follow: endlessly trying to close the gap between reality and perfection, between art and ideal. Kant uses the example of the “idea” of virtue, which leads to the idea of “perfection” in the moral sense:

That no human being will ever act adequately to what the pure idea of virtue contains does not prove in the least that there is something chimerical in this thought. For it is only by means of this idea that any judgment of moral worth or unworthy is possible; and so it necessarily lies at the ground of every

\textsuperscript{130} In Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that will be able to come forward as Science, (1783), § 40, Kant explained that an “idea” refers to the “absolute totality of all possible experience” while that totality “is itself not experience.” Thus this observation paved the way to modernity in a revolutionary way, through this most humbling call: it is impossible to experience the totality of all possible experience. Through this rule, Kant was throwing one of the most deadly blows towards all metaphysical enterprises.
approach to moral perfection, even though the obstacles in human nature, as yet to be determined as to their degree, may hold us at a distance from it.\textsuperscript{131}

Mutatis mutandis, whatever holds Pissarro at a distance from the realization of the concept of perfection—the simple fact that it is unrealizable—it in no way discourages the artist’s continuous attempt to get closer to that “idea.” Reaching perfection is a hopeless dream, and, therefore: “N’oublie pas de dessiner,” is his conclusion. We must go on. The reason why we must go on is, paradoxically, because we are free. Being free, we can always go beyond our own boundaries, while keeping an eye on this elusive, and unreachable, goal. Freedom (in the Kantian sense) is this practical dynamic—itself another “idea”—that takes us beyond ourselves (beyond our own limits) to a point closer to the “idea” of perfection. The mere thought of setting up a goal, or of limiting one’s efforts is therefore almost absurd, because freedom can always, at least \textit{de jure}, go beyond that goal:

Even though this may never come to pass, the idea of this maximum is nevertheless wholly correct when it is set forth as an archetype, in order to bring the legislative constitution of human beings ever nearer to a possible greatest perfection. For whatever might be the highest degree of perfection at which humanity must stop, and however great a gulf must remain between the

\textsuperscript{131} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, 396.
idea and its execution, no one can or should try to determine this, just because it is freedom that can go beyond every proposed boundary.132

In fact, this fascinating text by Kant can apply just as much to Pissarro—and his asymptotic notion of “perfection”— or to Cézanne’s unreachable “certitude” and, just as well, to Rauschenberg’s ongoing shuttle between art and life, as well as to Johns’s notion of “accuracy” when, in 1963, the artist was describing his own work procedure to Billy Klüver:

The early paintings of mine seem to me to have been about, partly, … accuracy, and questioning whether there are such things, so that the paintings tended to be a sum of corrections in terms of painting, in terms of strokes. So that there are many, many strokes and everything is built up on a very simple frame but there is a great deal of work in it, and the work tends to correct what lies underneath constantly until finally you quit and you say ‘It’s this one.’133

132 Ibid., 397.
133 Jasper Johns, Writings, 85 (my emphasis); interview of the artist conducted by Billy Klüver in March 1963 at Johns’s studio, at 128 Front Street, New York. This was published with other artists’ interviews as a 33⅓-r.p.m. record that was included in The Popular Image, (Exh. Cat.), (Washington, D.C.: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1963.) Johns later in the interview proceeds in saying that his recent work (i.e., the work of the early ‘60s) differs from his earlier work in that the artist is less concerned with “accuracy” and more with “feeling or emotion.” Explaining the reason for this withdrawal away from “accuracy,” Johns explained (again in very Kantian terms): “…since there didn’t seem to be any such thing anyway, it was never achieved.” (Ibid.)
Whether through Pissarro’s or Johns’s examples—or Cézanne’s and Rauschenberg’s, these four individual artists (even before we consider their work while each was in association with another) all share similar questions regarding working procedures and the conditions of possibility of their own art practices. Two things seem sure: 1. How far one decides to go in pursuit of (inexistent, and ultimately unrealizable, though very useful as an idea) “perfection” (Pissarro’s term—as well as Kant’s), or “accuracy” (Johns’s term—the term “perfection” having at the end of modernism virtually lost its ‘edge’), this is ultimately left to the artist’s own initiative (or his freedom in Kantian terms.) Freedom can always “go beyond every proposed boundary:” hence, in Johns’s own terms, the “many, many strokes” and the layers of corrections that make up the surface of his early works—and in Pissarro’s terms, the unflagging dynamics of changes and ceaseless technical explorations throughout his career. 2. As a consequence of the first proposition, where one stops (or where one decides no longer to pursue that idea of perfection) is also an act of freedom: the process goes on “until finally you quit and say ‘It’s this one.’”

I will try to demonstrate that what brings these four artists together—besides the fact that they will be studied here each for his interaction with another artist—is the fact that they all, in different individual ways, and with different media and strategies, negotiated their artistic position within this “gap” that Rauschenberg has often mentioned. One could say that for Jasper Johns, the principal gap is one between “making” and “meaning” or indeed, between the “object” and the “event” around it,
or the event that affects the object, or the event(s) that take place within the site of the work of art, as a meeting point between viewer and producer. For the two 19th-century artists, the question of this gap between end product of the artistic gesture, and the subject (or agent) who articulates that gesture was already a critical concern. For Pissarro, this tension often took the aspect of an opposition between “la sensation” and “la vérité.” For Cézanne, this tension was eventually translated into an opposition between “making” and “inventing.” Thus, Cézanne, even though he worked very close to Pissarro, became very close avant la lettre (conceptually—and unbeknownst to him) to Johns’s own formulation of his artistic problem. No matter how exactly the tension perceived by each of these four artists was expressed, this “gap” (this unresolved tension) necessarily called (or still calls, in the case of Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg) for a response from some other party. There is, therefore, an impetus for inter-subjectivity lodged at the center of the practice of each of these four artists. They each articulated a form of art that stopped short of producing neat and clear artistic statements: to use a punctuation metaphor, what I see uniting all four of these (yet wildly different) artists is the fact that their art almost never uses ‘periods’ or ‘exclamation marks.’ Instead, they all seem to favor ‘question marks’ or ‘suspension marks.’ The claim of the present work is that the other characteristic that each of the four artists in question shares with all three others, is that they each had the luck of finding a “respondent” of impressive distinction, so that the ensuing artistic dialogue that took place was nothing short of spectacular.
The main problem that will orientate this entire essay can be put in the form of a paradox—or even an antinomy: how can selves and others communicate? Works of art—especially in the modern period—have been regarded as unique statements expressing the uniqueness of a given individuality: the more powerful, and the more original this unique form of expression is/was, and the greater the genius that produced it. What happens, then, if two of these individuals, each by essence unique, decide to share this quest for individuality in community with each other? If a work of art constitutes a unique event, and expresses an “apex,” or a moment that will not be repeated, and a sentiment or an event that is the distinct mark of an inimitable individual, what, in that unique experience, can possibly be “shared” with some one else? Given that the concept of “individualism” shares the same etymological root as “undividable,” what is there to be divided amidst this “undividable lot” that is an intrinsic feature of all (or most of) the modernist artistic enterprises? It must be acknowledged that there is here the appearance of a contradiction lodged at the center of all modernist discursive formations.

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of the title of the present work: nothing presages that “individualism” and “inter-subjectivity” may function at all together or that this antinomy can find a solution. At the same time, it has to be accepted that these two notions seem almost inseparable in the history of modern art. We only need to think of the number of groups, associations, communes, couples of artists who have in the last two hundred years blossomed, and forged headways in creating new forms of art “in community with others” to be convinced that “inter-subjectivity” has been a living force and a determining factor in the history of modern art. Our two examples of inter-subjective pairs also offer compelling cases of an intense collaboration that lasted several years in both cases.135

A few words will now clarify the need to import non-art historical concepts into art history. In a nutshell, this need is based on my conviction that art history belongs (although grudgingly or unbeknownst to itself) to the larger epistemological family of the so-called ‘human sciences.’ Often ignoring itself as such, however, art history has not helped itself to develop some of the useful tools that its sister disciplines have developed in the last century. It is, however, never too late.

135 The Pissarro/Cézanne association lasted from c. 1861 until 1885, even though it became very intermittent in the last years; the Rauschenberg/Johns association, much more constant, lasted from c. 1953/4 until 1962.
*Art History as a Human Science or Art about Mankind and “Verständigung”*  

[Mutual Understanding] (Habermas)

It will appear clear from the outset that the present work is based on the assumption that inter-disciplinary efforts, or cross-insemination between different branches of the so-called “human sciences” are not necessarily a bad thing. There are, at least, two reasons for this:

1. All disciplines within the human sciences share ultimately the same founding question: what is man?\(^{136}\) Or, what does it mean to belong to mankind? Given that this question has often been held as unanswerable, the negative complement of the first question has often replaced it: what is not man? — Or what is it that distinguishes man from what is not he? No matter what form the question may take, it constitutes the point of focus of all the human (or, sometimes also called ‘social’) sciences—ethnography, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, etc.—which all, each under a specific specialty, constitute as many attempts to comprehend the human phenomenon. Art history very much shares the same premises as these other human sciences, even if (traditionally) it has tended to cultivate a certain aloofness, or

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\(^{136}\) The English (and the French) languages are among the few Indo-European languages that do not permit to refer to the human species without using the same term that designates the masculine gender: “man.” In contradistinction, in German, the term “Mensch” designates neither a man, nor a woman, but both as members of the human species. The same can be said about Latin (with “homo” vs. “vir”) or Greek (with “ανθρωπος” vs. “ανήρ”). When the term “man” is being used in the context of this discussion, it clearly designates the generic term (man/woman = human being) as opposed to the gender-specific term.
isolationism from these extraneous disciplines.\textsuperscript{137} Let aside, for now, the complicated relationship of art history with its sister disciplines, the overarching horizon (that constitutes the common point of focus of so many disciplines, including art history) is inseparable from another question: that of the possibility of (mutual) understanding: how can a “canonically great” work of art be instituted as such if there is not (at least) some broad agreement upon the excellence of such a work of art, and therefore, a certain mutual understanding about the greatness of such a work of art? The essential question of the possibility of mutual understanding has largely been eschewed in the practice of art history for a simple reason: there is a performative contradiction between its institutional functioning (oriented and dependent upon the decision-power of a group of experts who establish the axiological structure of the art world(s) from the most to the least significant and worthwhile works of art) and the actual logical requirement of its own premises (if a work of art is “truly great” it has to be recognized as such by, if not all, the greater number of people, and therefore, if such is the case, there is no need for an “expert” to confirm a posteriori the greatness of the work of art that has been acknowledged as such by most.) Within or without the contribution of art history to the debate, the question of the possibility of mutual understanding can probably be accountable to two still largely dominating features in the practice of art history: 1. a positivist claim: art objects can be described as they are in themselves; 2. A canonic vantage point: it is possible to classify those objects according to their aesthetic merits, following an indisputable axiological system. All it takes is the acquisition of the skill and knowledge of an “expert” in order to be able to “read out” what constitutes excellence. In contrast, the fluidity of structures, and the ease with which other human sciences question their own premises, methods, and results, cannot but appear threatening to the time-honored, and canon-oriented \textit{modus operandi} of art history’s classification systems.

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understanding has oriented much of the philosophical tradition that has nourished the development of human sciences in the last hundred years or so.

2. The decision to confront various disciplines around a common concept, or concern—here, what it means for individual artists (or for artists as individuals) to think and work in common—also stems from the conviction that disciplines too—just like individuals—have to (if not collaborate with each other) make an open effort to know what they might gain from a comparative or joint approach. In fact, it is my conviction that a greater gain stands to be made from a careful, and well-managed confrontation of the methods and results of different disciplines. Here, therefore, ironically, the methodology of this essay seems to be suggested by its own contents. As indeed, I hope to prove that individuals gain in “transcending” their individualities and opening up to others—even if this exchange does require no less than a “transcendence” and therefore doesn’t come easy—the same assumption will be made about the very practice of art history: transcending its own boundaries, and “opening up” to other disciplines among the human sciences can only produce more exciting results in the end.

* Fichte: A Definition of Man Implies a Definition of Man With Others
Let us see where these two points lead us: Through the infinite complexity and diversity of the answers, or fields of application of this type of questioning, it is patent, and almost unanimously accepted, that no single definition (or essence)—if any—could encapsulate the “nature” of mankind. This being said, it remains true that the question of the meaning of mankind continues to orientate, with very different expectations and results, the methodology of most human sciences—and is and continues to be a key component to the reflexion of throngs of modern and post-modern artists. This chief concern has been echoed in many ways for the last two centuries: the question: “what are the signs of what is properly human?” is simply inseparable from another problem: the recognition of man by man. This notion that no sooner one thinks about man than one thinks about man thinking about himself, and about others at the same time, might appear almost tautological; the problems is, however, deeper than that. When I think of myself as a human being, I bring up not only an image of myself fitting in that definition, but I also necessarily think about all the others (virtual or real) who equally fit in that definition and make it possible for me—and them—to recognize one another in the same definition. It was Fichte who first laid the ground for this equivalence between essentially “being a man” and “being a man with others.” Describing what defines self-consciousness, Fichte explained
…a rational being can not self-consciously posit itself as such, without positing itself as an individual, or as one of many rational beings, which many it assumes outside of it by assuming itself.\textsuperscript{138}

Fichte could not put it more clearly: by positing myself, I posit others like myself, and vice versa. Through this act of positing, not just I, but all others—like me—are conjured up right away. These others are, in fact, the condition of my definition of myself, as I am theirs.

\textit{Analogy between Fichte’s Position and Those of Pissarro/Cézanne and Rauschenberg/Johns}

One sees right away through this brief example what benefits already can be drawn from looking at the definition of the problem one is dealing with, from other areas of research—here through the work of a philosopher who is often credited for contributing to laying the theoretical ground for human sciences. His is, of course, the perspective of some one who adopted a further vantage point than specific and detailed case studies can avail: this, of course, will in no way stop us later on to get myopically close to problems faced by artists in front of their works as well—the

\textsuperscript{138} Johann Gottlieb Fichte, \textit{op. cit.}, 17. (Italics are Fichte’s; emphasis is mine.) One will see later that Fichte’s definition of that human individual is, in fact, a non-definition: man resists attributes assigned by nature, and, in Fichte’s words, man’s essential disposition is his imperfection. “If man is an animal, then he is a very imperfect animal.” (Ibid., 121.)
Fichtean problem of man recognizing man will find an interesting echo, for instance, in the way both Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns, constituted themselves as artists for some one else, as well as for themselves. Their own gaze included some one else’s gaze as a mere example (or as an assumption as Fichte would say) that, out there, there was at least some one else who presented the same features as an individual artist as they did. The two approaches are complementary, not exclusive, of each other. Here, for the time being, Fichte, who will continue to play an important role later in this essay, offers a basic definition of this “human individual” that already encompasses much of the data of the problematic that will be addressed here: that of the condition of possibility and the meaning of the co-presence and the collaboration of one (individual) with an other. What is at stake through Fichte’s words is the following problem: the defining presence of the other for oneself or, to put it differently: how is it that I can first recognize some one outside me that is not me but has the same attributes as me; then, how is it that I can only become (or posit) my self through others—or through this recognition of others? One of the reasons why it will appear useful to spend some time with Fichte is that we will be dwelling on the specifics of this process of mutual recognition although in the practical context of the hard-felt, concrete, and tactile mediations of paints and brushes, or encaustic and collage, as these media embody the co-relationship of Cézanne and Pissarro, or that of Johns and Rauschenberg. [See especially Illustration Dossiers A and B] The issues, of course, are different—they do, in each case,
however, present strong analogies: Fichte is after a definition of “man” that can address man as an indeterminate being that needs to think about how to live—and most importantly, to live well, or justly—with others. Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns are after a definition of themselves, and each other, as artists. As artists, they too aimed at transforming themselves—through and with others: each of these four artists, in different ways, through the mediation of their art (in ever transformable forms) could be said to have attained the status of non-definable beings—non-definable beings who will be seen looking at ways of transforming their own art partly through their interchange with others. We will look at the ways in which inter-subjectivity appears to congeal through the common usage of oil paints and brushes, encaustic, and other media, in the cases of the four artists under focus: the medium of these moments of inter-subjectivity in action is the common research that bonded Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one hand, Rauschenberg and Johns, on the other.

Fichte again, in order to distinguish the human animal from other animals, opposed the “determinability <Bestimmbarkeit> of articulation” (characteristic of man’s actions) to the “determinacy” <Bestimmtheit> of articulation” that more readily characterizes the animal world; see The Science of Rights, op. cit., pp. 118-119. In other words, what Fichte is trying to say is that what man is or does is forever “transformable” (or further “determinable”): it doesn’t receive all its determinations (its full definition) right from the beginning. Analogously, what characterizes, among other factors, Cézanne and Pissarro, as well as Johns and Rauschenberg, through their art is a conception of their practice that is ceaselessly transformable (or ever determinable, to use Fichte’s concept). Again here, what Fichte establishes at a definitional level finds an analogy in the artistic practices of these four artists: as the artist posits his self, the result of this self-determining gesture is a “determined” object; this determined object is defined by its opposite, i.e. all the sum of possibilities (or determinabilities) that have not been brought up to the world of determinacy. In fact, Fichte himself invites us to draw analogies with “everyday life:” “One does not and cannot think clearly of anything at all without also thinking at the same time of its opposite, i.e., without negating its opposite by thinking “it cannot and should not be this.” (To be sure, within everyday life this usually occurs only tacitly.” Fichte, Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo), [1796/99], trans. and ed., Daniel Breazeale, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 123.
“Bestimmbarkeit vs. Bestimmtheit: Rauschenberg’s Factum I vs. Factum II, or “how to test the limits of freedom in art?”

One example will suffice for now: Rauschenberg’s impossible challenge of repeating the same gesture twice, thereby pushing the limit between the determinate and the determinable as far as he could. Rauschenberg, of course, was by no means the only artist at the time to explore the limits of what the problem of repeating the same exact gesture could mean. In an analogous context, Roy Lichtenstein, for instance, produced two rigorously identical portraits and titled one: Portrait of Allan Kaprow and the other Portrait of Ivan Karp. To consider but one example, Factum I and Factum II [Ills. 40 and 41] appear very much to involve the type of problematic described by Fichte. By creating a work of art, each artist establishes a determined action through which, necessarily, the artist posits his self, and out of which results a “determined” object; this determined object is defined by its opposite, i.e. all the sum of possibilities (or determinabilities) that have not been brought up to the world of determinacy. As Fichte explained, anything can only be posited only in opposition to what has not been posited. Likewise, the determinate (what has received a determinacy) can only be posited by “extracting” it out of the determinable (the determinable is what could receive a determinacy, but hasn’t yet.) The determinate

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140 Allan Kaprow was a friend and colleague of the artist at Douglas College, Rutgers University, and had brought Lichtenstein’s work to Ivan Karp’s attention. The latter, at the time, was the director of the Leo Castelli Gallery.
comes out of the determinable, but negates it when it becomes determinate: once, anything is determinate, it is obviously no longer determinable. Once a determinate work of art is *there* with all its determinations (all its physical, and aesthetic properties), it no longer belongs to the realm of the determinabilities; the two fields are absolutely inseparable, however, because before the work of art received all its determinate qualities, it was only just “determinable,” i.e., it wasn’t quite what it is, but *could become* what it was out of an act of creation—or “position” (Setzung).

The determinate activity may not be posited unless the opposed activity, from which the determinate activity is *extracted* (abgezogen), is also posited along with it.\(^\text{141}\)

Both Johns and Rauschenberg offer here striking examples in their work of a method that could have been drawn from an application of Fichte’s observations. Johns’s reflections (that I am prone to characterize as transcendental reflections on pictoriality, i.e., on the conditions of possibility, and the very limits of the practice of painting in its specificity) has often produced comments that strike a familiar sound with Fichte’s problematic:

One assumes that one’s relationship to the work is the correct or only possible one. But with a slight re-emphasis of elements, one finds that one can behave

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\(^{141}\) Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy*, op. cit., 123.
very differently toward it, see it in a different way. I tend to focus upon a relationship between oneself and a thing that is flexible, that can be one thing at one time and something else at another time. I find it interesting, although it may not be very reassuring.¹⁴²

One could find dozens of examples that illustrate this exploration of the shift from one element to another in Johns’s oeuvre. In fact, one could almost say that this statement to Geelhaar expresses one of the many and complex durable rules of procedure that inform Jasper Johns’s work. In a way, one of the narratives that weaves through Johns’s œuvre consists in successive trials of all the determinabilities that had been ruled out by each determinate act. The example of the story of Flag is, perhaps, one of the more obvious cases in point [Ill. Dossier F: nos. 119-130]: Flag, 1954-55 opens the march. Then comes Flag above White with Collage, 1955, where the white of the stripes is “stretched” beyond, or beneath the stripes—and the “white” becomes a sort of blank, but a blank, which, unlike the white of Rauschenberg’s White Canvases, [Ill. 143] is anything but neutral—and anything but white: it simply resonates, almost pulsates, underneath layers of pulpous, beige, creamy, wax paint; there is something quasi-organic about that surface. Then, only a few months later, Flag explodes in size and becomes this maximal White Flag, 1955[Ills 124 and 126]: a work 6’ 6” by 10’ which, fortunately or unfortunately, can only be appreciated in


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the contradiction that is constitutive of its project when one is standing in front of it. Even though the contradiction itself is simple enough to describe, the result necessitates the physical experience of the object itself in order to become comprehensible: here, perhaps again, phenomenology and criticism could be seen as complementing each other. The contradiction is this: with White Flag, 1955, Flag, 1954-55 has not only gained vastly in size (another determinability that Flag, c. 42” x 60”, could not carry out), but furthermore, Flag seems to have dropped all its colors (here a determinability, or several of them, has been lost). The first impression (if one can ever recreate it) when one sees a reproduction of this work, or when one sees it at a distance, is “where are the colors gone?” Flag seems to have been vastly stretched out and bleached. However, this lacuna or quasi-complete absence of color (even though white is the sum of all the colors of the spectrum, and a kind of brown, the sum of all the colors of the palette) is contradicted by an ebullient activity that goes on in all directions throughout this monumental canvas: let us say that the interplay between the pigment-less encaustic, the white encaustic, and some white paint, here and there, together with the glue, the infinitely complex, almost sensually tickling, gestural manipulation of the brush, the multifarious diversity of applications of collage elements, newsprint, surface effects, the different degrees of translucence/transparency/opaqueness of one layer of stuff, or data (newsprint) slowly reemerging from the (seemingly once lost) background—all these effects, and more, combined create an overall sensation perhaps comparable to the experience one has in front of a stained-glass window in the Sainte-Chapelle: with the latter because of an
excess of color all in your eyes in one instant; with the former (White Flag) because of an excessive absence of color that is, somehow, dazzling. The chain goes on, and on, throughout Johns’s career, involves works on paper, graphite pencils, color, no color, complementary colors, lithographs, metal bas-relief, clear and rigorous design, or confusing and virtually unrecognizable patterns—or both as in the exquisite and mysterious watercolor, pastel, and graphite pencil on paper with stamped insignia: Flag on Orange Field, 1957 (Janie C. Lee collection)\textsuperscript{143} or the “equivalent” of Flag, 1954-55 with pastel and collage on gesso board with Flag, 1957\textsuperscript{144}. It seems that Johns from one flag after another, is hunting one determinability after another—not wanting to leave to determinacy to stop and limit the field of his possibilities. What is characteristic of Johns is that out of the determinabilities offered to him (which are almost infinite), Johns seems to want to explore the greatest possible number of determinations—so that the end result is that it becomes almost impossible to ‘classify’ his work according to traditional media technique labels. Ruth Fine having asked Johns whether he was making an actual distinction “between oil, acrylic, and encaustic [Ruth Fine then searches her word to characterize all the other determinations used by Johns and says:], and everything else?” Johns answers:

Where the medium is one that is often used for painting on canvas, it may be a question of intention. There are certain sketches indicating the gist of forms or

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 100-01
ideas, and the spirit of such work may suggest drawing, even when executed with oil paint on canvas. Works in pastel and watercolor are often referred to as paintings. I don’t know why. I usually think of them as drawings, or simply “watercolors” and “pastels,” although I have always catalogued the 1957 Flag in pastels and collage, and the 1961 Liar in mixed media, among my paintings.¹⁴⁵

Johns, almost proceeding like a great chef, sees how many variations he can produce out of a given theme. Each result leads to different questions and answers. Johns never quite copied himself, however, in the way that Rauschenberg did with Factum I and Factum II. He addressed a similar problem, though, with Picasso, when he copied a work by Picasso, Reclining Nude, 1938. While acknowledging the impossibility of “replicating in oneself” what another artist has done, Johns, however, tried. Here is how he described what this copy means to him:

I love to look at it [his copy of the Picasso], and I’m very happy that I have it to look at. In a sense I have the feeling that much of what’s interesting about it is not willed, but is innate to the structure of the man who made it, and there’s

no way to replicate it in oneself. One can only admire it in the other person, or hate it if you happen to hate it!\textsuperscript{146}

Rauschenberg dealt with the same problem directed towards his own work. With \textit{Factum I} and \textit{Factum II}, (one being the \textit{exact} repetition of the previous work) saw just how far he could push the limits of the “transition from determinability to determinacy,” i.e., the very definition of freedom—or the passage from what is merely possible for an artist, to what becomes concrete, real, and physical.) Once \textit{Factum I} was there, it was impossible to imagine that it could not be there, or that it was a mere “determinability:” \textit{Factum I} had gone from a mere thought to a fact (a “factum”)—Rauschenberg’s ironic emphasis on the facticity (or the quiddity) of his work of art easily leads us to think that this very question (the one of the dividing line between, and, at the same time, the inseparability of what is determinable and what is determinate) was not far from Rauschenberg’s mind. At any rate, by then creating (or positing) \textit{Factum II}, Rauschenberg did something highly unusual: he reverted the normal process of transition between determinable and determinate—even though the process is, in fact, irreversible. What is done can no longer be undone, than who is born can be unborn. What is done is done: that is all there is to it. However, what is done (says Fichte) cannot be done without positing its opposite as well—“by thinking

'it cannot and should not be this.’” By doing Factum II, Rauschenberg did as if Factum I had not been done—as if it were possible to do it all over again, out of all the infinite indeterminate determinabilities, although, of course, we all know that Factum II is, to some degree, an act of deception: Factum II could not exist without Factum I. Yet, Factum I could very well exist without Factum II: in fact, Factum I negates the conditions of possibility for Factum II to be what it pretends to be: another Factum I. One could prolong at some depth analyzing the details of the strategy that occurred in the production of these “two” works of art, one being the repetition of the other—while the other is, in fact, stubbornly, non-repeatable. All the tension, and the fascination that these two works continue to exert on us, is in large part due to the program inherent in these works: repeating what cannot be repeated—or making the determinate indeterminate again.

In the same way, as the production of Factum I posited its opposite (which Fichte would have called Not-Factum I), and as Rauschenberg decided to revert the process and go against the flow of time by returning from Factum I back to Not-Factum I (which, of course, could not be another Factum I), Rauschenberg, by demonstrating the impossibility of the act of going back from the determinable to the determinate, proved in effect the validity of Fichte’s statement—Fichte himself having thought that a demonstration was dispensable:

147 Fichte, Foundations, 123.
148 Especially when they can be seen side by side, as was the case most recently at the Museum of Modern Art.
This will not be proven here, but anyone who thinks clearly of anything will discover this truth within himself.\textsuperscript{149}

And Fichte immediately follows suit with the following sentence that implicitly announces the possibility, and the necessity for all those who are Not-I to be:

Therefore, in connection with the act of positing the I, one necessarily has to think about the act of not positing the I as well.\textsuperscript{150}

\textit{The Dynamics Between Individualism and Inter-Subjectivity}

The whole point of spending time with a few of Kant’s and Fichte’s monumental intuitions as far as inter-subjectivity is concerned, will be to test how strong an analogy there exists between the situation evaluated theoretically by the Criticist school and the modernist tradition (embodied by our four examples). Indeed, in each case, through each search, each individual finds, not just himself\textsuperscript{151}, but (an)other(s) too—yet, strangely enough, the modernist tradition (at the helm of Greenberg)

\textsuperscript{149} Fichte, Foundations..., 123.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} The question ultimately of whether one can ever find oneself will be raised in conclusion. For now, we should say that even if the fact of coinciding with oneself (being at one with oneself) may, in our post-metaphysical age, appear a mere illusion, it is, nevertheless, an idea (in the Kantian sense) that is worth trying. This idea (throughout the history of modernism) has served as a guideline, or as a horizon that has provided an anchoring point for many research projects.
remained relatively silent on this point. Having established, first from a theoretical/philosophical stance, then from a very concrete/art historical stance, the premises and results of this dual search—whereby one’s self and an other are found through the same creative process (‘two for the price of one,’ might one say), we will then be in a position to return to the initial paradox or contradiction that presented the stimulus for this inquiry: ultimately, who wins? The self or the other? Or can both win at the same time? Does individualism leave room for inter-subjectivity? Or does inter-subjectivity squander individualism? How could these antithetical attitudes coexist: ipseism and alterity? Individualism and inter-subjectivity? Self and other? Taking and giving? Another intermediary zone will be awaiting us here: the “gap”—both intermittently exciting and threatening—between the self and the other, or individualism and inter-subjectivity—will eventually have to be bridged, or find a point of solution, or dissolution. Having looked at these two examples, one will be able to reflect back on the signification of inter-subjectivity in art, at the beginning, and at the end of our modernist period. This will be all the more precious given that some of the main tenets of modernism, radicalized during the post-modern age, have heavily insisted on the dominance of individualism, in all domains, at the cost (or even the ruin) of any possibility of inter-subjective communication. If it can be proven, that individualism (at least through the two major examples that will be studied) is not an exclusive pole of reference in early and late modernism, and that, in fact, each of the two case studies articulated a constant dynamic of oscillation.

See Section II, and the beginning of Section III.
between individualism and inter-subjectivity—thus creating some kind of shuttle
between the self and the other—then, the present study will also have achieved one of
its ambitions: contribute—if but modestly—to a critique of post-modernism, and
suggest at least one possible direction towards what might be called ‘post-post-
modernism’ (which, of course, would not and should not be—unlike some of the
early claims of post-modernism—a return to what was there before.) We will then be
able to look at what happened through several decades of “deconstructive” practice,
and see where to go next: not by preaching some illusionary, naïve and undesirable
return to the mythic past of a pre-modern seamless subjectivity in perfect union with
itself, but to look beyond and see whether recollecting the pieces and fragments left
over by (soon) half a century of various deconstructive practices (especially alive in
the context of US academe) may not begin to make some sense again. In other words,
the paradigm of communication (far from being the expression of some universal,
ideal-ridden myth) would, in fact, take concrete notice of the situation inherited from
deconstrutivism, and begin afresh, starting to “communicate” or reconstruct some
non-coercive, and consensually accepted sense with others, from within the ruinous
landscape that we have inherited. In this sense, the oscillating model going back and
forth between self and other (individualism and inter-subjectivity)—as seen at work
within our two case studies, could then serve as an ethical (not just an aesthetical)
model for a renewed practice of art history.
We have seen that a sort of founding principle—that of mapping out and recognizing all traces of human beings—as so many other selves—continues to be at the root of most—if not all—disciplines of the human sciences. All such disciplines—from anthropology to ethnology, from sociology to art history—share the ongoing task of identifying signs of the human phenomenon—in its ever-changing traces, and ever more probing manifestations. They also share the basic methodological need to differentiate those human manifestations (in whatever form they may take, and in whatever time and space they may occur) from things and from other living species (before differentiating within each discipline the multiple types of manifestations under each specialty and categories established.) At bottom, it always remains essential for human sciences to distinguish themselves (and their object: mankind) from the object of study of pure sciences (physics, astronomy, etc.), or, more challengingly, from the object of sciences of other living organisms (zoology, microbiology, genetics.) The dividing line is more or less clear or fuzzy according to each discipline, and its practitioners, and it raises vast questions. One of the basic dividing lines is that what is human is co-substantial with the idea of freedom— with the caveat that man may never claim to be outside the realm of determining causality either. Man’s freedom is therefore a limited concept—limited by that upon

153 Freedom is almost synonymous with what Fichte called “determinability:” indeed, what is freedom if not the capacity to transcend one’s own present situation, or to exchange one determination for another?
which he has no control: time, for one thing. One can certainly change a number of
determinations—one can become vegetarian overnight, or abandon the use of oil
paints for that of encaustic, for instance, but one cannot be taller than oneself, nor can
one (yet) modify one’s DNA. In other words, one of the unifying tasks of all human
sciences is to ask, not only under what sets of determining factors, or causal
sequences, these human manifestations have been produced, but also what they
mean—and how they may be interpreted as signs of an act of freedom.¹⁵⁴ Freedom, of
course, has especially been at the core of the modern era—with mankind conceiving
of itself as being in charge of all, not only “determinable” but also ultimately
“determining” things to come. In a sense, one could say that with the modern era,
man assumed the role of God: determining (or aiming at determining) himself as
wholly as possible.¹⁵⁵ This certainly should be no different as far as art history is
concerned. The question in general is investigated through an approach of any

¹⁵⁴ For an enlightening study of the foundation of human sciences, see Alain Renaut, Pour Kant, (Paris:
Aubier/Flammarion), 1997, especially the chapter entitled “La fondation des sciences humaines” (415-
431). On the opposition between “explaining” facts of nature and “understanding” (or interpreting)
human facts, see Karl-Otto Apel, Die Erklären-Verstehen-Kontroverse in
transzendentapragmathischer Sicht, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979). In fact, the concept of freedom is
perhaps one of the ultimate criteria of distinction between pure and human sciences: whereas the
trajectory of a meteor can (in theory) be calculated and thus predicted according to mechanical and
physical laws, human actions escape such ‘scientific’ apprehension in that the ‘freedom factor’ can
always intervene against the statistical high probability that this human event will occur in such or such
a way. There is thus always a chance that the result of a decisional act that doesn’t fall within the realm
of the highest statistical previsions: one may predict (some aspects of) the future; one may never
ascertain it—when it comes to the human sciences.
¹⁵⁵ See Luc Ferry, L’homme-dieu ou le sens de la vie, (Paris: Grasset, 1996.) In the same orientation of
ideas, one could say that one the artists who incarnates to the fullest—and almost caricatural—extent
this modern (or post-modern) idea of man/woman-turned-into-god is Cindy Sherman who constantly
makes and remakes ‘Cindy Sherman’ so that the real Cindy Sherman (without quotation marks) has
dissolved behind these numerous and compulsive self-managed metamorphoses. We will see that, in a
totally different sense, the notion of freedom—understood as the capacity of intervening upon
oneself—also carries a fundamental role in the cases of the four artists we will study.
number of specific activities or attributes of mankind: from what types of societies it creates, to what types of social behavioral pattern it evolves, or from what types of ritual, or religious, or cultural artifacts it produces, the list of all the domains of study of the human sciences would be long to establish. Whatever field one chooses in the human sciences, the question of what is specifically human—or, seen in negative, specifically non-human in order to circumscribe what is human—continues to produce the overarching orientation that brings together all these different disciplines together.

Dialogues could therefore be said to be both the contents and the form of the present work. The result of such a dialogical approach on the practice of history now remains to be seen.

*Dead History vs. Interpretive History*

Fichte wrote somewhere this wonderful sentence—up to whose aspirations the present essay will attempt to rise: “To bring life into the spirit of investigation is also a true and important science.”\(^{156}\)

The conception of history that underpins the present research owes a great debt to Alain Renaut—whose *Era of the Individual* has offered very useful guidelines and precisions about the different options available to an historian of philosophy. I very much conceive of the justification of the métier of the art historian in the same light as Renaut conceives the task of the historian of philosophy as a philosopher. The analogy lies in that both disciplines (the history of philosophy and the history of art) are “histories” of another discipline. The taxing question asked by Renaut is how to write a history of philosophy that can be philosophical (or meaningful), and not merely present a succession of non-interpreted facts or ideas? The question then is how much involvement and what type of involvement does the historian have with his object? The dilemma is essentially the following: will the historian aim only “at accurately restoring some particular corpus,” or should he/she also bring out “the meaning of history over and above its purely archaeological dimension?” The two projects are not necessarily exclusive of each other, and I would even venture to say that it is when either member of this dilemma excludes the other that some of the most reductive productions in art history occur (and clearly, this is the case in the history of philosophy too). Using Renaut’s example again, let me then be more precise about my intentions: while I certainly hold great respect for such heuristic virtues as exactness, attention to dates, and factual accuracy, I also think that these

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158 Ibid., 61.
virtues only serve ultimately in better assessing the “meaning” of works of art. To go further: the present work will not look at works of art in isolation—neither in isolation from each other, nor in isolation from works produced in other disciplines. This project will (unlike certain art historical treatises) not privilege the unique status of a work, an œuvre, or an individual artist—in a monographic (if not even sometimes hagiographical) approach. Instead, it will seek out “analogies, relationships, and kinships” in these works on three levels: a) between those produced by one artist and another; b) between those produced by one pair of artists, and another pair of artists; c) between what I might call the operating concepts, or principles, that guided the practice of these artists and analogous concepts put in use in different fields. What I hope to avoid, through this method, is to present a depiction of works of art that would seem to float as in a vacuum—or be seen as authorless, or lifeless. What I hope to avoid too, therefore, is to contribute to a dead history of art—or, what Renaut tellsingly calls a “museum history.” It is fascinating to me that, in fact, to note that

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159 I speak of this with all the more ease, as I may be held “guilty” of having produced at least one of these monographic opuses: see Joachim Pissarro, *Pissarro*, (New York: Abrams, 1993.)

160 This is a theme that was strongly evoked by Theodor Adorno, in “Valéry Proust Museum” *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), Band 10-1, 181-194: “Der Ausdruck ‘museal’ hat im Deutschen unfreundliche Farbe. Er bezeichnet Gegenstände, zu denen der Betrachter nich mehr lebendig sich verhält und die selber absterben. Sie werden mehr aus historischer Rücksicht aufbewahrt als aus gegenwärtigem Bedürfnis. Museum und Mausoleum verbindet nich bloß die phonetische Assoziation. Museen sind wie Erbbegräbnisse von Kunstwerken. Sie bezeugen die Neutralisierung der Kultur.” Part of this text is also quoted in English by Douglas Crimp, in “On the Museum’s Ruins,” *October*, no. 13 (summer 1980), 41: “The German word *museal* [museum-like] has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchers of works of art.”

161 Renaut, *op. cit.*, also describes the impact of what he calls “historicizing histories” with a metaphor that can very easily be applied to large segments of art history: he compares the results of these
the history of philosophy and the history of art have come against a similar type of challenge: meticulous efforts at reconstructing faithfully the past (of ideas, or of works of art) tend to fail “to account for the evolution of philosophy.” The practice of the history of art—more so than any other discipline—is still largely governed by concepts of “influence” and “chronological precedence” whose legitimacy—or indeed, even effectiveness—is seldom questioned. The result of this kind of methods in the history of philosophy, tells us Renaut, is something like “a gallery of great books that are all equally estimable, differentiated in the mind of the historian only by the greater or lesser enjoyment that reading them brings.” Of course, ideas are not works of art—and vice versa. Yet, five minutes spent reading Pissarro’s or Cézanne’s correspondences, or conversing with either Johns or Rauschenberg, soon suffice to confirm that ideas are essential and fuse in the making of these artists’ works, and that some of these ideas continue to be, more or less, relevant to our own ideas, and more pointedly so, to the ideas of those who continue (as indeed Johns and Rauschenberg,

“historicizing” efforts to “a kind of unoccupied palace open to the public in which no new treasures can any longer be expected to be found.” (Ibid., xxii.) Naturally, Renaut’s use of the analogy (“museum history”) should not be understood as a blanket attack against all museum practices: at least, this is not how I understand his remark. Renaut, more likely, has in mind the style of presentation of works of art that are displayed as so many curiosities, set at a remove from the viewer, prohibitively untouchable—and therefore, intangible—often ending up looking like the “rare bird” that Pissarro was describing to his son in 1883: possibly verging on perfection, but almost unreal. Renaut’s call, through this analogy with the museum world, is to revivify the bonds that tie us to ideas, and/or to works of art, by questioning their relevance to us today.

162 On this point, see the beautiful text by Michael Baxandall that incurably deconstructs the monolithic concept of “influence” in Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 58: “ ‘Influence’ is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient…. Worse, it is shifty. To say that X influenced Y in some matter is to beg the question of cause without quite appearing to do so. After all, if X is the sort of fact that acts on people, there seems no pressing need to ask why Y was acted on: the implication is that X simply is that kind of fact: ‘influential’. ”

as well as throngs of other artists do) to produce art today. These ideas are no mere abstractions floating in the idealist sky: they touch us, affect us, and make the relationships we hold to works of art, or any human productions, alive. Likewise, their works constantly solicit us, their viewers, and raise questions or issues in us that continue to be riveting, (or not), and largely are responsible for us returning, over and again, to the contemplation of those same works of art by those same artists. Let me be clear: I am not trying to extract the four artists in question and suggest that they form a kind of pantheon of “thinking artists:” indeed, many of the issues that will be seen as emerging out of these two pairs of artists could be detected, under different forms, and with different stress, in other artists’ works. The criteria of selection of the four artists was, however, made all the easier in this case as, two by two, Pissarro and Cézanne, and, Rauschenberg and Johns presented two cases of intense, and spread out artistic interchanges in the history of modern art: one can certainly, and spontaneously object that Picasso and Braque, or Matisse and Picasso, Derain and Vlaminck, not to mention the Delaunays, and closer to us, Gilbert and George, or the Blechers, or the Chapman brothers, could have held an equal or higher rank in the category of “inter-subjective artists.” The point, however, in selecting these two pairs was this: first of all, the interchange between the two French artists went on for nearly twenty years—and held as critical a role in shaping the development of future generations of artists as the brief interaction between Picasso and Braque did; but, the relationship between Pissarro and Cézanne has been far less studied. 164 Besides the

164 In quantitative terms, the state of the research on these four artists studied individually is
fact that all four artists have produced, individually, bodies of works over the years that repay many times a very close visual and intellectual engagement, these artists offer very fecund examples of inter-subjective practice—in which none of the four ever appeared to have lost their selves while continuing all the same to work closely with some one else.

* The Presupposition of Common Sense in Aesthetic Judgments

This complex balance of relations between selves and others took on an acute dimension within the arts, of course, whereby the question of originality, or one’s difference from others, was at the root of the success of any artistic enterprise. The very question of the existence of others—others that are, like myself, reasonable beings who yet stand outside myself, and are therefore, different, though similar—proportionally inverted to the number of publications on these four artists regarded together: from hundreds of titles to none. Taken individually, each artist has been the subject of numerous monographs. On Cézanne, several important monographs mention, with different emphases, and results, the relationship of the younger artist with Pissarro. They tend to share the same focus: what has this relationship meant for Cézanne? Five important authors offer notable exceptions: Roger Fry (who was the first to develop the subject of this relationship in depth)—see Roger Fry, *Cézanne: a Study of his Development*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, [1927]; see also John Rewald, *Cézanne*, Paris: Flammarion, and New York: Abrams, 1986, [1939]; Meyer Schapiro, *Cézanne*, (New York: Abrams, 1952); Liliane Brion-Guerry, Liliane Brion-Guerry, *Cézanne et l’expression de l’espace*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1966 and Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984); see especially Chapter 15, “Cézanne’s Practice.”

The situation with the Pissarro studies is asymmetrical to the Cézanne studies: very few authors raise the question of what this mutual relationship has meant for Pissarro himself. Brettell, for instance, whose dissertation topic covered this period, mentions Cézanne a dozen times, mainly in order to verify some topographical minutiae concerning Pissarro’s works. The chapter in my book on Pissarro that addresses this relationship is too schematic. Two exceptions are: an article by Christopher Lloyd, “‘Paul Cézanne, pupil of Pissarro:’ An Artistic Friendship,” *Apollo*, November 1992, pp. 284-290 and a doctoral dissertation on the theme of this inter-relationship by Christopher Campbell (under preparation for Brown University).
was a question that was first articulated by Gottlieb Fichte, in response to his reading of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*. As Fichte put it: “On this very point—how can I come to terms with the acknowledgement of reasonable beings outside myself? —Kant never explained himself; therefore his critical system is not complete…. In his *Critique of Judgement* where he speaks of the laws of reflection of our understanding, he came very close to this point.”\(^\text{165}\)

Even if, according to Fichte, Kant never “explained himself” as to this “acknowledgment of other reasonable beings” it still remains true that for Kant, the aesthetic judgment addressed the question of inter-subjectivity in a forceful way. The aesthetic judgment (e.g., “I find this object beautiful/or ugly”) takes on a definite urgency, since it requires “a necessity of the assent of all (Kant’s emphasis) to a judgment regarded as exemplifying a universal rule incapable of formulation.”\(^\text{166}\) This necessity is of a peculiar kind, since, unlike a scientific judgment, an aesthetic judgment cannot bear any proof or demonstration; and unlike a moral judgment, it doesn’t follow any particular law. In other words, the aesthetic judgment is not a universal prescriptive judgment: I can always say “no” to the “necessary assent” that is required of me by some one else who casts an aesthetic judgment. The fact is that when I pronounce an aesthetic judgment, I require others—and all, if possible—to join in and confirm my views. Whether I succeed or not, at the moment, is not


relevant; what matters is that aesthetic judgments are the sites of inter-subjectivity, or of sociability. I need others, and am needed by others when aesthetic judgments are made. Kant is very clear about this when he says: “The judgment of taste … depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense.”167 A common sense naturally presupposes a community. We begin to think in common when we are not alone—when we are two. Hence again, the two examples selected as a focus for this essay. The paradox is that we may well solicit and demand an assent from all those around us, and presuppose a common sense that will come and support our aesthetic views; this agreement, however, never quite occurs as we expect it. A frustration almost inevitably follows the exacting demand lodged inside the structure of the aesthetic judgment: “The judgment of taste exacts agreement from every one; and a person who describes something as beautiful insists that every one ought (Kant’s emphasis) to give the object in question his approval and follow suit in describing it as beautiful.”168

∗ To Be Limited by the Outside Is Not Necessarily a Bad Thing

Consider Kant again: as we’ve seen, he established the radical finitude of subjectivity in the first chapter (“Transcendental Aesthetic”) of his Critique of Pure Reason by defining sensibility (i.e., aesthetics understood etymologically—aesthesis meaning in

167 Kant, ibid., §20, p. 83.
168 Kant, ibid., §19, p. 82.
Greek: sensibility, or sensitivity) as the capacity to be affected by the outside world. As Kant explains understanding needs external things in order to enact its power—in other words, if there is nothing to think about, there is no thought:

Although understanding is a fully active power and, to this extent, an independent power, it still needs external things for its action and is limited to them... Without its external things our understanding would be nothing.  

This was not, however, what was so radically innovative in Kant’s work. What was truly unprecedented was the new kind of status and importance Kant granted to sensibility (and the realm of aesthetics.) The senses were traditionally described as essentially passive, deficient, and limited—as opposed to absolute knowledge or understanding, a divine attribute, and the realm of metaphysics. Sensibility was contingent on the limitations of the senses, and, by the same token, regarded as unreliable: this had been one of the principal axioms of classical philosophy, from Plato to Descartes and Leibniz. Where Kant was truly revolutionary is in the fact that he established sensibility (or aesthetics) with all its inherent limitation as the cornerstone of his system: rather than consider the finitude or the limitation of understanding.

169 Kant, The Conflict of the Faculties, in I. Kant, Religion and Rational Theology, trans. and ed., Allen Wood and George di Giovanni, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 291. (My emphasis.) In the same text, Kant emphasizes again the radical finitude of human understanding: “As for understanding, it is, by its form, intrinsically limited to this terrestrial world; for it consists merely in categories, that is, modes of expression which can refer only to sensible things. Its limits are therefore sharply defined: where the categories stop, so too does understanding.” (Ibid., 289.)
knowledge as some sort of human weakness, or some congenital blemish and an indication of man’s imperfection, Kant turned this argument on its head and settled that human finitude is not a mere flaw; it is an a priori dimension of human knowledge. Finitude is the unchangeable, irremediable condition of our knowledge: the outside world must come to us (passive recipients) before we may claim to form any concept or construe any knowledge of it: this is what we are, and there is no point in feeling sorry for ourselves. Put differently: no intuition (no passive reception of outside data) means no concept. This radical finitude is, therefore, posited by Kant as some sort of absolute: it is the ultimate condition of knowledge. A dire consequence of this decision, however, is that the Absolute (i.e., the identity of concept and reality, as understood in classical metaphysics) is demoted: it looses its privileged status, and becomes unreal, unrealizable—a mere idea (or “eine bloße Idee”) in Kant’s own vocabulary.

In a nutshell, the Kantian Critical system aimed at establishing the limits of the rational activity, or to put it differently, it aimed at exploring the conditions of possibility of the act of representation. With Kant, in a way, the question was not so much “what does one think?” but “how does one think?” Incidentally, the four artists under consideration here, all shared to various degrees, and with very different preferences and inflections, a deep interest in interrogating, not so much the object of their activity, as the modalities of their work: what makes their work possible, and by
the same token, the limits of their own activities became subjects of immense concern to many modernists, and certainly to all of the four artists selected for study here. Whether they consciously heeded to Kant or not is completely irrelevant: the fact is that all four of these artists took stock of the inherent limitations imposed upon themselves, and each individually, and as part of collaborative couple, went on, exploring with different media and strategies, the very limits of their “finitude.”

∗ Differences between Kant and Fichte around inter-subjectivity: the Role of Ethics in Aesthetics

What I will retain from the Kantian, and the Fichtean systems—the two foremost authors who founded what is known as the Criticist tradition—is the fact that man can only be thought of in plural—or that subjectivity is unthinkable without inter-subjectivity.¹⁷⁰

It is mainly around the problem of communication that the two systems built by Kant and Fichte met. Kant’s own analysis of the aesthetic judgment emphasized the fact that the type of communication that takes place around a work of art is direct—or, it

¹⁷⁰ As has been observed by T. P. Hohler in the opening remark of his dissertation, “the reader of the Fichtean texts cannot for long hesitate to pose the question of inter-subjectivity.” The same author goes on defining his thesis with the following statement: “the inter-subjective dimension of the I is essential for the I to be an I.” Needless to say, this statement concurs wholly with the intentions of the present work. See T.P. Hohler, Imagination and Reflection: Intersubjectivity; Fichte’s Grundlage of 1794, (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 2-4.
is not mediated through the means of a concept, e. g. a mathematical theorem, or through the means of a moral rule, e. g. the principle of charity towards others. In aesthetic contemplation, it (communication) happens directly without the help of any other concept: hence, perhaps its compelling nature. As a direct form of communication, aesthetic communication is supposed, in the Kantian system, to be the condition of possibility of the other two indirect forms of communication—the theoretical and the practical ones (or, to put it in non-Kantian terms, the type of communication that occurs in aesthetic inter-subjectivity, provides a step for a possible communication in the realm of theoretical understanding, as well as in all philosophy of action (what Kant calls “practical reason.”)) The trouble—and real flaw in Fichte’s eyes— that lies at the center of this Kantian construction of communication systems that interact with each other, is that the aesthetic communication, pivotal as it is, remains a so-called “Idee” (a mere idea)—and therefore, it cannot be taken for granted. At the end of the paragraph 8 of the Critique of Judgement, Kant produced this extraordinary text that has left many readers baffled:

The judgement of taste itself does not postulate the agreement of every one (for it is only competent for a logically universal judgement to this, in that it is able to bring forward reasons); it only imputes this agreement to every one, as an instance of the rule in respect of which it looks for confirmation, not from concepts, but from the concurrence of others. The universal assent (die allgemeine Stimme) is, therefore, only an idea—resting upon grounds the investigation of which is here postponed.\textsuperscript{172}

This constitutive role of the inter-subjective agreement around the delight of aesthetic experience, as a mere Idea, is both a weakness, and a huge strength within the Kantian system. It is a weakness because this “universal assent” is never certain to take place, or rather, it is almost certain never to take place—more precisely, its only status is through the fact that it is imputed: it is conjured up, and this is all it can be. However, it is precisely through this non-dogmatic status, that the idea of a universal voice holds today great prestige as a potential solution to overcome the aporetic heritage of deconstructivism.

However, this weakness in the aesthetic judgment is, precisely, what encouraged Fichte to look for a mutually binding communicative link that will be real: Fichte will find this link in the sphere of the law where all individuals bind themselves to each other through a contractual agreement based on every one’s agreement. What

\textsuperscript{172} Kant, \textit{Critique of Judgement}, \textit{op. cit.}, 56. (Kant’s italics; my emphasis; translation modified.)
interests me especially at this point of Fichte’s reflection is precisely the fact that his work articulated a reflection on law and aesthetics—law understood not necessarily in litigious matters, or in the set of rules that one has to obey, but in its essential contractual and effectively inter-subjective nature. This is how Fichte precisely defines ethics, and law in a very interesting text:

Ethics does not deal with any particular individual; instead, it deals with reason as such or in general. Reason, however, is exhibited in many individuals, whose force can come into conflict with, have an impact on, and limit one another within the same world. Thus, if the goal of reason is to be achieved through the unification of the individual goals of these individuals, then their physical force must be restrained and limited, and everyone’s freedom must be restricted so that they will not hinder one another and so that one person will not interfere with the goal of another and thereby thwart the overall goal of reason. The theory of right or natural law is what arises from an inquiry into how this can be accomplished. The nature of this science has been misunderstood for a very long time. It occupies the middle ground between theoretical and practical philosophy; it is theoretical and practical philosophy at the same time.\footnote{Fichte, \textit{Foundations…}, \textit{op. cit.}, 470.}
In other words, the theory of natural law has just superseded the position that aesthetics occupied within Kant’s system: between theory and practice; or between scientific and moral knowledge. This theory of right is theoretical, says Fichte, because it proceeds from a certain view on the world—certain knowledge of what is right and wrong. It is practical, however, because, unlike an organism observable by pure sciences, it does not come about by itself, “for this depends in part upon freedom.”\(^\text{174}\)

Having defined the importance of the definition of a theory of right (or of natural law) for his system, Fichte goes on asking himself what the position of another science (the science of the judgment of taste, i.e., aesthetics) is.\(^\text{175}\) Fichte proceeds first by observing a contradiction between two viewpoints: the viewpoint of the transcendental philosopher—an ideal viewpoint that produces nothing real, except speculative understanding—and the viewpoint of ordinary beings—the “real” viewpoint. There is, therefore, an apparently unbridgeable divide between the speculative viewpoint, and the ordinary one—incidentally, this divide (this tension) between a constant effort to produce an understanding of what makes one’s practice possible will be at the center of the ways the four artists under study here will be seen

\(^{174}\) Ibid., 471.
\(^{175}\) “The science in question is aesthetics. Where does this science belong?” Ibid., 472.
practicing their art—Johns, especially, has consistently sustained “an impetus to explain [the very] possibility” of his own art.\textsuperscript{176}

But the real problem that vexes Fichte at this point is that, if there is no “transition” (or no mediation) between these two “diametrically opposed” viewpoints, then the question concerning “the very possibility of philosophy” will be compromised. One easily understands why: if indeed, it can not be proven that there is some link between the ordinary man sitting at his desk (who is like all human beings) determined by the laws of nature, and the transcendental viewpoint that produces an understanding of the conditions of possibility of things, if there is no link, two immediate problems arise: 1. The transcendental viewpoint (since it is barred from any access to the real viewpoint) has no relevance whatsoever to what is real—and is, therefore, equitable with sheer madness; 2. If, indeed, there is no link between the real and the transcendental viewpoints, the question of “how a human being can elevate himself to the transcendental viewpoint” receives no answer: and if transcendental viewpoint there still is, it is not occupied by any one “real.” A very serious problem lies ahead of us.

Thankfully, however, Fichte does find the missing Mittelpunkt:

\textsuperscript{176} The expression is used by Fichte (ibid.) to define the work of the transcendental philosopher—words that apply so closely to Johns’s speculative efforts that one can easily be tempted to call him a “transcendental” artist.
…There does exist such an intermediary between the transcendental perspective and the ordinary one. This midpoint is aesthetics. From the ordinary point of view, the world appears to be something given; from the transcendental point of view, the world appears to be something produced entirely within me. From the aesthetic point of view, the world appears to be given to us just as if we had produced it and to be just the sort of world we would have produced.177

Let’s see how Fichte himself lays the ground for such an intuition:

Man becomes man only amongst men; and since he can only be a man, and would not be at all unless he were man, it follows, that if man is to be at all, there must be men. This is not an arbitrary assumption, not an opinion based on past experience or on other probability-reasons; but it is a truth to be strictly deduced from the conception of man. As soon as you proceed to determine this conception fully, you are driven from the thinking of a single man to the assumption of another one, by means of which to explain the first. Hence, the conception of man is not at all the conception of a single one, for such a one is unthinkable, but of a species.178

177 Ibid., 473.
178 Fichte, The Science of Rights, op. cit., 60-61. (Translation modified.)
In the same way as man discovers himself through his co-humanity, it will be argued that, by analogy, modern artists discover themselves as such through their co-artistry—or that art is a plural concept—and at the very least, a dual concept, as our two case studies will attempt to demonstrate.

* A Bridge Between Modernity and Modernism: the Individual

The four artists Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns, at both ends of what is commonly referred to in art history as the “modernist” era, formed two powerful associations of artists (or co-artists) who engaged in a very close artistic exchange through a period of approximately ten years, more or less, each. Not only have both of these artistic exchanges had a radical impact on the history of early and late modern art—even though neither of these associations has been much studied as such—but furthermore, both of these collaborations raised and continue to raise questions addressing the very foundations of modernism. One of the ground questions is this: what does being and working *together* mean, especially when what is at stake is the very individuality of each worker? In fact, this very notion of *togetherness*, the concept of the relation between two individual artists—goes to the core of our modernity—a time in which individuals as such came of age, as it were, and, by the same token, came to face—and acknowledge—others who had similar claims as individuals and, therefore, needed be regarded as equals, or peers. The more
individualistic one is, the more one will be seen cultivating what is unique about oneself, the attributes that one possesses undividedly, which constitute the very definition of one’s *individuality*: individualism, one would therefore assume, thrives away from others, the difference from whom is the surest clue of one’s accomplishment as an individual. Individuality being all about one’s own, one’s *self*, the *self* being the site of the individual’s uniqueness—what is not subject to replica—how can the *self* have anything to do with *others*, who too claim to be inhabited by a *self* that is unique and distinct from all? This notion of “individuality” has been the target of a barrage of critiques in the postmodern era. For now, what interests me is to question the premises and the cultural and philosophical implications of the notion of individuality, especially when offset by the notions of *otherness* and of *togetherness*.

The fact that this question of *one and another* was raised, discussed or reflected upon by Pissarro and Cézanne, and by Rauschenberg and Johns, and embedded in much of their work, as they were engaged in an active collaboration with one another is almost doubtless through the few testimonies we have of each other’s exchanges. In whatever terms these discussions took place is almost impossible to establish. The fact is that this question, acknowledged or not, lies at the core of these, and any, relationships: how do I stand in relationship to this other person? How does this person make me be more aware of myself? Etc. In fact, *being with one another* sounds as simple as *breathing*: one does it without thinking much about it or its implications. One may very happily breathe all along one’s life without ever knowing
or wanting to know what actually happens in every breath stroke, or breaking down mentally every act of inhaling and exhaling. The same thing is true of two individuals being together: no theory is needed in order to be in this situation. Yet, nothing prevents us from stopping and thinking about it—while continuing to breathe, of course.

The question of *I and others* or, as the title of this essay puts it, individualism and inter-subjectivity, lies at the core of the definition of modernity—although it is almost absent from the definitions of modernism. For this reason, it would seem wrong to economize a development on the “theoretical” or, more precisely, philosophical stakes inherent in thinking about these issues. At the same time, these issues are still riveting to us today, and involve our present, not just our pasts. By looking at two examples that span across a whole century, and two continents, our hope is that we will succeeded in addressing, through the blatant differences (historic, geographic, linguistic) that are separating two vastly distinct cultures, something like a “common truth” that could hopefully still ring valid, or plausible to us today. If at the end of a few decades of “post-structuralist” or “deconstructivist” theory that have claimed to leave us facing our own fractures, left to our own, incapable of communicating with others or with ourselves even, the possibility that artists of major stature have communicated their selves with others may open the perspective to think about individuals and others in a less pessimistic perspective.
In contrast, while taking stock of the results (or non-results) of decades of post-structuralist theory, Habermas proposes to look at Kant (as Clement Greenberg did, but for slightly different reasons) as a pioneer of modernity, and as some one who continues to afford us critical tools that might enable us to finally find a possible solution to the aporias we are left with. Habermas hails Kant as one who replaced the traditional concept of a “substantial rationality”—i.e., the belief that there lies an order of things that is inherent in reality—with a different type of rationality that he calls differential. This new mode of rationality no longer carries with it the idea of a universal order of things, imposed from above. Established on the ground that Kant discovered (that each form of judgment— theoretical, moral, or aesthetic—requires different forms of justification—Habermas’s theory opens the way for a new type of rationality that, instead of hammering that there exists a universal order, simply helps in setting up rules: be they rules of communication, or judiciary rules that help to reach a consensual solution to conflicts. According to Habermas, philosophy may now hold itself as the highest judiciary instance with respect to culture as a whole.179

Confirming the Kantian legacy of this new concept of reason, Habermas quotes a beautiful text by Kant that gives a very fine distinction to this procedural concept of reason:

179 Jürgen Habermas, Moralbewußtsein und Kommunikatives Handeln, op. cit.
One can regard the critique of pure reason as the true court of justice for all controversies of pure reason; for the critique is not involved in these disputes, which pertain immediately to objects, but is rather set in the task of determining and judging what is lawful in reason in general in accordance with the principles of its primary institution.

Without this minimum requirement of reason, Kant warns us:

…reason is as it were in the state of nature, and it cannot make its assertions and claims valid or secure them except through war. The critique, on the contrary, which derives all decisions from the ground-rules of its own constitution, whose authority no one can doubt, grants us the peace of a state of law, in which we should not conduct our controversy except by due process.\(^{180}\)

This text provides a perfect description of the sort of a priori rules that have to be set for any communal, cooperative unit involved in any form of communicative or collaborative project. Hence this “due process” is eminently relevant to a discussion of the conditions of possibility for the two artistic interchanges in focus here. This due process cannot but take place if the project (or the interchange) is simply to begin. But this process requires a free and benevolent participation of its members:

again, the rules cannot be imposed from above; one of the two participants cannot arbitrarily decide that he is the boss or the judge without immediately threatening the whole enterprise. Provided this process is duly observed by free participants, there can be no losers in it, even in cases of quarrels. Here is what Kant says:

What brings the quarrel in the state of nature to an end is a victory, of which both sides boast, although for the most part there follows only an uncertain peace, arranged by an authority in the middle; but in the state of law it is the verdict, which, since it goes to the origin of the controversies themselves, must secure a perpetual peace.\(^{181}\)

Whether it be a group of two or of two million, the same basic rules apply: if one wants to leave the “state of nature” dominated essentially by violence and fear, one can only choose to “submit [oneself] to the lawful coercion which alone limits our freedom in such a way that it can be consistent with the freedom of everyone else and thereby with the common good.”\(^{182}\) This somewhat fragile state of peace can only exist under one condition: that the freedom of all participants to be as critical, and cast their doubts if need be, be respected.

\(^{181}\) Ibid.  
\(^{182}\) Ibid.
To this freedom, there also belongs the freedom to exhibit the thoughts and doubts which one cannot resolve oneself for public judgment without thereupon being decried as a malcontent and a dangerous citizen. This lies already in the original right of human reason, which recognizes no other judge than universal human reason itself, in which everyone has a voice.\textsuperscript{183}

It is essentially from this cue that Habermas himself has developed in a very complex set of concepts the edifice of “discourse ethics” that theorize the procedural rulings that organize our validity claims whenever we enter into a conversation, or begin to communicate, and/or cooperate with any one on a given project. While there is no way I can summarize the habermassian enterprise here, it is true that it offers a particularly rich perspective on the common ground upon which our two pairs of artists must have agreed. For sure, we have virtually no insights at all as to the empirical sets of rules that each pair of artists must have set between themselves; but, what may be certain of, is that without certain rules, freely accepted, by which they would each respect, and encourage the freedom of speech and thought of the other, neither of these collaborations would have survived very long at all. What Habermas, via a detour through Kant, enables us to understand therefore is, indeed, the a priori conditions of possibility of Verständigung (mutual understanding) that cemented both of these artistic interchanges.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
I have already pointed out that thinking about artistic production in plural terms (with several agents, rather than one) is not usual in art history: monographic studies, often invaluably specialized and detailed, tend to prevail over studies that place an emphasis on interactions between individuals—or on inter-subjectivity, per se.\textsuperscript{184} Given that the task of art history has long been, and, to some extent, continues to be, dominated by a drive towards establishing an exhaustive comprehension of the unfolding of individual artistic accomplishment that leave a noteworthy “mark” on its time and on History, it is understandable that individuals tend to be the main subject of focus of the largest number of studies dedicated to the history of art. This became all the more true in the history of modern art given that modernism is largely regarded, among many other things, as the hotbed of individualism. Greenberg himself in a series of exhibition reviews in 1952, entitled revealingly “Feeling is All,” hails those artists, such as Hans Hofmann and, even more so, Barnett Newman who exhibit both “nerve and truth” and illustrates this statement with the following maxim: “Humility is owed to the truth inside and outside oneself… one has to have the nerve to impose \textit{one’s truth} in art.”\textsuperscript{185} Likewise, characterizing broadly the


\textsuperscript{185} Greenberg, \textit{Collected Essays}, III, 103.
direction of art since the cubists, Greenberg stated that “Tautness of feeling, not “depth,” characterizes what is strongest in post-Cubist art.”\(^{186}\)

Counteracting what was seen as the excesses of an emphasis on individual achievements, and the occasional near-hagiographical undertones that could derive from such close studies on special artists—the makers of the canons—a very important trend in the studies of modern art developed in full strength a few decades ago by placing an emphasis on the context that saw those individual artists grow and acquire the importance that they assumed. Known largely as “social art history,” and developed mainly in British and American academic circles during the 1970s and 1980s, this movement also contributed considerably to the advance of the understanding of modern art by allowing the context of production of works of art—whether social, or economic—to become visible, and by allowing for a richer, more complex perception of the process of formation of a work of art.

Neither trend of art history, however, (neither the one privileging individual or authorial studies, nor the one emphasizing contexts over authors, or systems of external forces over individual achievements, and therefore, de-emphasizing individualism) indulged very much at all in thinking about interactions between artists, nor, a fortiori, in thinking about the signification of such interactions: the

\(^{186}\) Ibid., 102. One occasionally tends to categorize Greenberg too fast under the label of an unrepentant formalist, thus omitting that Greenberg also paid much attention to individual marks, and “feelings” through the development of modernist art.
capacity for an individual artist to transcend his own individuality by opening up to another individual artist—and the significations of such interactions remained marginal, or tangential to mainstream art history. Given the empirical importance of such interactions, especially in the last two hundred years or so, throughout the development of modern art in the Western world, it is in fact surprising that this question has not received more attention than it has. It is all the more ironic as that notion of inter-subjectivity, or of communication between individuals, has received a rich and fruitful treatment in most other branches of the human sciences. In fact, the question of the presence of the other for oneself has been at the center of two hundred years of reflection in the human sciences and their big sister, philosophy. One certainly doesn’t need philosophy in order to enter into the realm of communication: everyone does it, with or without having ever thought of what it means to be at least two—or, more than one—individuals together. If one doesn’t need to be a philosopher to be communicating with others, philosophy, at the very least, may help towards a clearer comprehension of what goes on in such interactions. As Fichte put it, in words that both curtail and sharpen the realm of philosophical ambitions:

Philosophy is not necessary for the fulfillment of [the] vocation [of a human being.] It is necessary, however, for a clear, distinct, and complete understanding of the nature of this vocation.  

Various Aspects of the Antinomy of Modernism: Pursuit of the Self vs. Share with Others; Humanity vs. Schools (Zola)

Inter-subjectivity begins with a simple act of recognition of a subject by another subject, and vice versa: as Fichte suggested, the conception of individuality (“here I am” + “here he/she is, as another “I” or another self”) that results from this act of recognition is neither mine, nor his/hers: it is both mine, and his/hers. Out of this mutual act of recognition stems a conception “wherein two consciousnesses are united into one.” Simple as this beginning observation may sound, its ramifications soon become frightfully complex. Thinking about the “I” and the “other” in relationship to each other is at the core of any reflection on all forms of inter-subjectivity.

This problematic is especially alive in modern artistic collaborations wherein strategies of expressing the presence of the “I”—or various devices of affirmation of the individual—are at the forefront of most modernist art practice. If the story of modernism in art can largely be summed up in terms of a pursuit of the “self,” what then if the self decides to share that pursuit with some “other?” This is how Castagnary, one of the early champions of the school of the Independents (as the

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188 This is what Richard Shiff called “technique of originality” in his Cézanne and the End of Impressionism.
group of artists that were to become known as the impressionists, were first known) defined the task of new art as early as 1863: “The ideal is the free product of each person’s consciousness put in contact with external realities, in consequence an individual conception which varies from artist to artist.” If, to pursue Castagnary’s equation, modern art is constituted with as many variations as there are individual artists, what can be the common denominator between all these variations? The same question will, of course, be all the more pressing when it comes to close collaboration between two artists. The mere variations between individual artists must then give way to some “constant”—some common ground that allows these artists to communicate and share their problematic together.

The same modernist stance was described by Zola in a critical text that (like most texts written by Zola had a great impact on the impressionists, especially on his childhood friend, Cézanne, and his close associate, Pissarro):

I am not for any school, because I am for the truth of humanity, which excludes every clique and every system. The word “art” displeases me; it encompasses certain ideas of necessary arrangement, of an absolute ideal. To

make art, is this not to do something outside of man and nature? For my part, I want people to make life; I want people to be alive, to create anew, outside of everything, according to their own eyes and their own temperaments.190

Humanity prevailing over schools, and systems: here is another simple and apt way to summarize the enterprise of early modernism. We must note, here again, the serendipitous echo of this statement with Rauschenberg’s definition of his art—an act that functions within the gap between life and art. Thus, in both situations, we see a definition of art as standing by the side of “art:” verging on creating a performative contradiction, art (through both Zola and Rauschenberg) carries out a function that is critical—or, at the very least, removed from—art. The contradiction disappears when one introduces two different layers within the definition of art: a traditional and conservative layer vs. a critical layer representative of the vanguard. Two antinomic definitions of art function within a general definition of art—that definition includes the two opposite points of view. The constant vituperations of Pissarro and Cézanne against schools, from beginning to end, are enough proof of the importance of this motto. I will reserve for later a fuller discussion of this essential text. For now, it is worth observing the extreme paradox—and one that remains acutely alive today—

190 Emile Zola, “Mon Salon,” (1866), Mon Salon, Manet, Ecrits sur l’art, ed. Antoinette Ehrard, (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1970), 60. We will see in the third section of this essay some of the measurable effects of such a text on Cézanne, and Pissarro. Incidentally, this repulsion for traditional school model also found an echo in some of the declarations of Johns and Rauschenberg. The traditional “school” was fought as a symptom of an heteronomous value system, imposed ‘from above’ and having no other use than that of squashing the creative and original impulses of the individual.
within Zola’s definition of art: “to create anew, outside of everything.” Zola, in his own literary language, offers another definition of what Pissarro and Cézanne, and, much later on, Johns and Rauschenberg, will reclaim: the position of standing out—whether it be within an unbridgeable gap, or within an unsolvable relationship.

How can two individuals affirm their individualities together through shared artistic practice or mutual awareness and absorption of each other’s efforts is the question that leads us now to think about issues attached to inter-subjectivity. These issues (those of the “I” and the “other” and how they both recognize and communicate with each other without losing each their identity) closely parallel those inherent in the impressionist/symbolist enterprise. More specifically: the impressionist claim of expressing a new truth draws upon the same paradox that has been at the core of the reflection on inter-subjectivity: How can an artist produce an original, and even unique, vision, while yet reaching out to others by revealing some sort of universally available truth?

This is how Richard Shiff described this paradox, while focusing on Cézanne:

…Any genuinely innocent or original artist works independently of others, perhaps as removed from the institutions of a modern society as is a “naïf” or a primitive. He is thus in a position to render truths that he alone can know;
others, not sharing his experiences, may not be able either to discover these truths or to comprehend them. But if others do comprehend, if wholly effective communication is achieved, the artist who claims a naïve and original vision—the impressionist—through an independent struggle to express himself, to paint “what he sees,” comes (in effect) to express universal truths, truths recognized by all others.191

The conclusion reached by Shiff at the end of the first part of his critical study on Cézanne’s position within the impressionist/symbolist ideological framework will be taken for granted here. In a large sense, I can say that the purpose of the present work is to analyze the conditions of possibility for the second part of Shiff’s conclusive paragraph in his monumental study on Cézanne: how do others comprehend a creative act that is by essence fundamentally individual, or a work of art that was created “independently of others?” Describing Zola’s critical enterprise on Manet’s work, Shiff noted precisely the extent of the problem at hand: “…Zola hedges on this question, which involves a conflict between a theory of unforeseen, original vision and a communal practice of painting.”192

I would like, however, to add a few observations that stem from my reading of Shiff’s work and from my dialogue with the author more recently. Shiff provides ample and

192 Ibid., 30.
indubitable evidence to the fact that negotiating the fragile equilibrium between “subject” and “object” (to use Laforgue’s own distinction, itself borrowed from Schopenhauer, and the whole of the German idealist tradition before him) constituted much of the ideological program of the impressionist and the symbolist enterprise.\(^{193}\)

While at first, this paradox (evoking one’s inner voice, while reaching out to others with the claim of uttering a universal language) summarizes much of the program of symbolist painting, the very same paradox was observed at work within the corpus of writings by or about impressionist artists as well. While taking different turns and emphases, the impressionists articulated a very close problematic to that of the Symbolists, as Shiff amply demonstrates. An implication that I see to Shiff’s observations is that there is a subtle dividing line between the effectiveness of the impressionists’ outward aims (which could never fully take place in that, by painting “what he sees,” the impressionist artist could never quite achieve to express a truth “recognized by all others”\(^{194}\)) and the constitution of these aims as mere orienting points of focus.\(^{194}\) In other words, I would suggest that the aim of reaching out a universal language articulated on the premises of the expression of a particular vision could never, in reality, reach “wholly effective communication;” at the same time, the impressionist artist could never let go of that very strong claim that was constitutive.

\(^{193}\) Ibid., 28. Schopenhauer, in many ways, had established as his program to further resolve in his own terms some of the problems that had been laid before him by Kant and Hegel.

\(^{194}\) Having recently discussed this idea in a telephone conversation with Professor Shiff, he explained that these remarks precisely develop an implication inherent in his own text.
(though unrealizable) of the whole of the impressionist program. A mere idea, in other words, but an immensely useful one, too.

The question that will then have to be decided ultimately will be the following: what is the status within modernism of that (often fragile) balance between individualism and inter-subjectivity? What is the outcome of the exchange between selves and others? Out of the two types of relationships that form much of the exchanges: inwardness and outgoingness, which does prevail eventually? Do the selves appear closer to themselves, or do they come out “altered” (closer to their others) in these exchanges? All such questions will form the core of the conclusion of this essay.

Given that these relationships broke up, it will be interesting to ask what happened to inter-subjectivity to all four artists studied after their separation. The example of Cézanne, especially, will be a close subject of interest: does individualism regain its claim against the imperatives of communication? Can one turn into a misanthrope after having fully engaged in an intense exchange? The first line of one of the last testimonies on the life of the artist written by two artists themselves, R. P. Rivière and J. F. Schnerb will serve as a useful reminder that legends on Cézanne, and his much debated misanthropy, were already rampant during his lifetime, and may be worth revisiting:
Il y a des légendes sur Cézanne qui en ont fait un misanthrope, une sorte
d’ours inabordable. Longtemps avant sa mort, on racontait que ce peintre ne
peignait plus, qu’il fallait lui arracher ses œuvres d’autrefois. Les gens les
mieux informés ne pouvaient renseigner que vaguement sur la résidence du
maître, sur son genre de vie. Même un ironiste avait pu dire que Cézanne était
une être mythique sans existence positive.¹⁹⁵

The ironist to whom these two authors suggests that Cézanne’s withdrawal from the
rest of the world had resulted in creating a doubt as to whether Cézanne really
existed. The implication of this remark is that no contact with others results in some
kind of death, or non-existence. If I don’t exist for others, I don’t exist at all, in other
words. I will try to show in the second section of this essay that, in fact, this myth of
the lonesome Cézanne was greatly exaggerated, and that Cézanne did not entirely
lose himself-for-others even as he developed the signs of a certain misanthropy
towards the end of his life. He certainly did not forget either the powerful relationship
he had held with Pissarro for twenty years—nor had he forgotten the importance of
communicating with others as we can judge from his intense and often very moving
late correspondence.

Schnerb had paid a visit to Cézanne in Aix a year before his death and was published a year after the
artist’s death, in La Grande Revue, 25 December 1907.)
Process of Communication vs. Fabrication of Labels

The artistic dialogues will demonstrate admirably this to-and-fro process of exchanges, given that, in each case, both partners are artists and act in turn as giver and taker, speaker and listener, artist and viewer. These examples offer especially rich examples of the above intuition: one thinks, acts, creates all the better with others. Kant expressed this point with a very special cogency in the passage selected as an epigraph to this essay: “…how much and how correctly would we think if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we communicate our thoughts, and who communicate theirs to us!” The present work will also demonstrate that, in fact, one doesn’t only work better with others, but that one rethinks oneself through the other at every step of a fruitful dialogue. What therefore is at question throughout this process is the notion of firmly set categories that purport to define the role and identity of anyone for good. The process of opening up to an other in the two artistic dialogues under review here is one that may lead to a process of self-transformation as well. As Ian Hacking commented in an article suggestively entitled “Making Up People,” the process of producing “labels” (e.g., “impressionists,” “French School artists,” “homosexuals,” “New York school artists” used to “describe” these four

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196 See note no. 1.
artists) are far from exhausting the complex reality that binds two individuals working together. As Hacking puts it,

Suppose there is some truth in the labeling theory of the modern homosexual. It cannot be the whole truth, and this for several reasons, including one that is future-directed... The future-directed fact is that after the institutionalization of the homosexual person in law and official morality, the people involved had a life of their own, individually and collectively. As gay liberation has amply proved, that life was no simple product of the labeling.198

It is not, of course, that this labeling-process has not, in many cases, produced very useful results. No one could deny either, not even Nietzsche, that these labels are indispensable tools of all cognitive activities. However, a) these labels do not exhaust the complexity of each different individual, and b) by their very static nature, these labels cannot begin to account for the dynamics of a dialogue that, by its own force, necessarily transcends the boundaries imposed by such general labels.199 These

198 Ibid., 233.
199 The work that has been accomplished in the Gay studies in America on both Johns and Rauschenberg has generated huge interest, and I regard the efforts produced in this field as complementary and parallel to the present essay. Among examples of the most serious work done in recent years, see Jonathan Katz, “The Art of Code: Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg,” in Significant Others, eds. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1992), 189-206; by the same author, also see “Lovers and Divers: Interpictorial Dialog in the Work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg,” Frauen Kunst Wissenschaft, 25; and “Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War American Art;” also see “John Cage’s Queer Silence; or How to Avoid Making Matters Worse,” GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, (Duke University Press, vol. 5 no. 2 1999): 231-252. The distinction between the vantage point of this
dialogues will, therefore, be seen as complexifying or desimplifying the two *selves* involved in each dialogue. This is in fact one of the mottoes of the phenomenological, and critical traditions: the incapacity for the human subjectivity of closing upon itself.\(^{200}\) Since subjectivity is incapable of remaining closed in itself, it logically follows that it remains open—open onto what is not itself, onto the outside world, and onto others. Whether it be Kant or Levinas, Fichte or Jaspers, or Merleau-Ponty, the criticist and the phenomenological traditions both view the subject as inherently open on what is not itself: on others. In this sense, it appears to be a valuable exercise to map out briefly some of the chief concepts at work in these various efforts to define inter-subjectivity in order then to decide how these efforts may in turn help to orient our own understandings and fuller appreciation of these two cooperative pairs. The question that needs to be addressed through this inquiry is what is at stake in the process of opening.

* Selves Taking Risks

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essay and that of Jonathan Katz is more than anything one of position: on the whole, Katz argues how Rauschenberg, and Johns, as well as Cage, Cunningham, and Warhol have negotiated their position within the boundaries of the American art world of the ‘50s and ‘60s within the hostile homophobic context of the Cold War; the premises of my work are the fact that both Rauschenberg and Johns, as, in different ways and in a different context, Pissarro and Cézanne, set out to break apart the boundaries (of any sort) imposed upon them as budding artists in their respective media, and according to their respective individuality. The union between these two pairs of artists involved two moments: 1. an act of mutual recognition that each other was ready to forge ahead with new creative forms and challenges; 2. a decision to join forces and support each other mutually each in his respective position. The perspective sketched above and mine are, therefore, not at all incompatible, but complementary.\(^{200}\) See Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. A. Lingis, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987). Also see Alain Renaut’s chapter “Phenomenology and the Problem of Ethics” in his *The Era of the Individual*, 161-166.
The fact that these individual artists were able to transcend their individualities and open up to others, might have been seen as instances of “slippage” during which the individual artists might have been at risk to lose their individualities, or to lose the distinctively unique mark of their selves.

In fact, these relationships between selves and others were very much part of a broad modern aesthetic experience by which individuals are revealed to themselves insofar as they are in touch with others. The selves in question very much tended to develop—at least at some point of their careers—through their experiences and interactions with others. There are, of course, two sides to any aesthetic relationship: a passive one, and an active one—or, a contemplative one, and a productive one. One may look at a work of art—and enjoy it or dislike it—this is the passive end (although as will be seen later, this passive end can also take a very active, even aggressive, turn, especially in a close inter-subjective context, such as a shared studio); one may also produce a work of art—and enjoy it or dislike it. Contemplating one’s own work of art is a very different kind of experience from contemplating a work of art produced by some one else. Similarly, contemplating a work of art takes on a very different significance if one is alone, or if one is with some one else—all the more so, if the work of art under scrutiny is one’s own. In the latter case, the stakes of the common contemplation, and of the discussion that follows, are much higher. There is a certain element of risk involved in any aesthetic act: whether viewing a gallery of
17th century French paintings at the Louvre with a friend, or whether, as an artist, opening the door to an outside visitor, one’s own identity, as a viewer, or as an artist—as an individual is at stake: what will the other think? And what if, his/her views are irreconcilable with mine? Each aesthetic action can therefore be defined, as an act through which one may lose—and the worst thing to lose, of course, is oneself. The risks are all the greater when one’s self as an artist and as a viewer, is both the subject and the object of an aesthetic discussion, whose protagonist is another artist, whose work is done in correlation with one’s own. This is precisely the complex context that unites the two pairs of artists in this essay: both members of both pairs (all four artists) will be seen as acting at both ends (the passive and the active ones) of the aesthetic act.

This risk-taking experience, however, is not gratuitous: it is constitutive of the artistic self. Through my opening up to the other, whether a viewer, or a co-artist, I stand a chance to lose the argument each time we begin a discussion. Yet, through this exchange, this participation, this opening to the other, this risk-taking experience also solidifies me and helps me in regaining myself each time. Aesthetic relationships between selves and others can be described as an ongoing dynamic of oscillation between an inward, self-oriented, self-seeking force, and one that is directed towards the other—one that is best understood as a gift, as an opening to the other. The story of modernism that will unfold, here, does not claim to shed light on the truth of each
individual artefact fostered by each one of these artists. Rather, what is of interest is how individuals artists—and very forceful artists at that—happened to be willing to face other individual artists, and engage in an active collaboration with them, without losing sight of each of their individualities. The significance of each individual artist’s achievement is examined insofar as it was produced by an individual in relationship with another individual. That movement of facing one another, that dynamic of confrontation of two individuals, with all its excitements and disappointments, its risks and promises, its expectations, and frustrations, its euphoria and its depressions, is nowhere more tangible, nor more obvious than when two artists share their experiences together, as both artists and viewers. This double drive (or might one say, this “double bind”) towards self-realization, and towards openness to others, constitutes a pivotal force within the two examples studied here.

* Fichte’s Paradox: Being at One with Oneself, or Outside of One’s Self?

In 1794, in a series of lectures given at the University of Jena, that came to be known as the lectures on “The Vocation of the Scholar,” Johann G. Fichte declared two things that, even today, continue to sound paradoxical, if not ambivalent:

The highest drive in human beings is … the drive toward identity, toward complete oneness with one’s Self, and, in order to be identical with one’s Self,
toward oneness of everything outside of the Self with one’s own necessary
concepts of it…. All concepts that lie in my Self should have an expression in
the Not-Self, a corresponding image. This is the nature of the above human
drive. 201

So, in other words, what guarantees the unity of the self is two things: the self being
in harmony with his/her self—or the self reaching a state of completeness, and of
self-harmony; and, the fact that the self be in harmony with its conception of the Not-
Self, or the outside world: when I conceive of a chair, for instance, it is essential that I
should not be actually thinking of a house: “there should come something into being
that corresponds to one’s concepts.”202 What I think must correspond precisely to
what it is that I think. Yet, on the following page, Fichte seems to leave behind this
“highest drive in human beings:” being at one with oneself; instead, he now tells us
that:

It is one of the fundamental human drives to assume the existence of rational
beings outside of one’s Self. This is possible only under the condition that one
will, in the sense defined above, form a society with them. The social drive,
therefore, belongs to the most essential human drives. It is the vocation of

201 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, The Purpose of Higher Education, trans., Jorn K. Bramann, (Mt. Savage,
202 Ibid.
human beings to live in society. We ought to live in society. One is not a true human being, and one contradicts one’s Self, if one lives in isolation.\textsuperscript{203}

The paradox is only apparent and finds its solution when one puts together these two paragraphs in sequence. One may, therefore, deduct the following: given that the completion of one’s Self (or being at one with oneself) is one of the highest human drives, given also that one would contradict oneself—and therefore prevent the completion of one’s Self—if one were to live “in isolation,” it appears very clearly that the surest way to reach one’s Self is to live with others.

\textit{* Working in Society, or Entering into a Reciprocal Activity According to Concepts*}

Kant also couched the paradox of the individual in the context of society in his \textit{Reflexions on Anthology}\textsuperscript{204} in which he juxtaposed the two facets of what he saw as the potential for man’s perfection—or more precisely perfectibility: on the one hand, man was created for what he called the “social whole;” on the other, he cannot depend on the social whole to perfect himself, but must attain the greatest perfection in himself, as an individual per se. Reaching one’s Self in society with others corresponds, for our own purpose, to a pair of artists that brought a considerable part of their oeuvre to completion through being and working with one another: this, in a

\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{204} Kant, \textit{Reflexionen über Anthropologie}. 
nutshell, will appear to be the kernel of the present study. Put differently, what will be investigated here is how two pairs of artists lived and worked in close interaction, or in society with each other. I borrow here the term (Gesellschaft) that Fichte himself had borrowed from his mentor Kant: “a reciprocal activity according to concepts, a community based on purposes.” This is what he calls a society: in this sense, Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns very much formed societies of their own.

This “reciprocal activity according to concepts”—i.e., commonly accepted definitions, and mutually agreed rules of procedures, were in full action through the two artistic interactions under focus here. This toing-and-froing between selves and others may not be an exclusively modern reality: humans have always needed others, in their being human. But what is specifically modern is the blatant recognition of the fundamental importance of others for the selves, and consequentially, the high stakes placed on the value of such relationships. Of course, before Kant and Fichte, one knew that others existed: but the question of the co-existences of all these others as so many selves themselves was never addressed without a third party, a kind of unifying concept that bound all these little individuals together, almost in spite of themselves. It is impossible, here, to retrace a theory of individualism and inter-subjectivity before the modern era, and, for sure, it would be difficult to summarize pithily the very rich theoretical developments that the concept of inter-subjectivity has received ever since

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Ibid.
Kant, and until now. A simple fact is that, before Kant and Fichte, the co-dependence of selves and others had never really been addressed as an object of study in itself. How individuals communicated with each other—or understood the same thing when they used the same concepts, for instance—could only be understood by resorting to a third party, i.e., God, who acted as a guarantor of the harmonious relationships between myriads of individuals who could never conceivably have reached any common understanding, nor communicated with each other without God’s intervention. The gradual erosion of traditional religious beliefs is co-extensive with an awakening of “inter-subjectivity:” both phenomena are symptomatic of the beginning of the modern era. The fact that the concept of ‘iner-subjectivity’ has gained tremendous importance in quantities of fields and has become today a touchstone in numerous fields of the human sciences only adds proof to this point. One of the key paradoxes of modernity could thus be expressed: while the modern era has witnessed a considerable explosion of the values of individualism, the soaring development of individualism could not be achieved at the expense of others. Moreover, it is with and through others, seen themselves as individuals that I may fully reach my self. Others, in other words, help me in the task of completing my self. This complementary tension between selves and others, that is constitutive of modernity, in its highest aspirations and accomplishment, and its lowest and most frustrating failings offers a broad contextual foil for the present work. Indeed, there was between these artists a lot of “reciprocal activity” oriented according to
commonly agreed rules and concepts. Naturally this notion of “reciprocal activity” that is at the center of the concept of “inter-subjectivity” as defined here will receive different inflections according to the particular context in which it will operate, and according to the particular actors chosen.

* Two People, Two Functions: Four Roles

Within the relationships between Camille Pissarro and Paul Cézanne, and that between Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, two key functions (viewing and making) will be seen as the factors of an ongoing dynamic of exchange. In these two case studies, the viewer is not just somebody else who passes by a studio, or a gallery, and casts an opinion on what he/she sees, but, in this case, the viewer is an artist himself—who works in relation with another artist whose art he is viewing. The two roles (viewing/judging vs. making a work of art, or, to put it differently, the receptive and the productive ends of the art work) are, therefore, reversible; each person alternatively carries both roles, one after the other. The creative self (artist A) is not merely facing an other who may (or not) pass comments (favorable or not) on the work he sees; but that other is himself a self, a creative self (artist B) who, in turn, may solicit artist A as an other who may have something to say too, on what artist B is doing. The self and the other, the maker and the viewer are not one person each, but two. Not only does each individual embody two functions, but two individuals carry
out each function, as well. Here is, therefore, another paradox we face: two people: two functions (making/viewing): four characters, given that each person carries on two functions. One will be artist A or viewer B; the other will be artist B or viewer A. Both individuals engage in a mutual exchange in which they switch roles consecutively, being both successively actors or spectators, artists and audience. In his or her passive roles, however, each artist cannot separate himself wholly from his active role: it is as an artist that each viewer is looking at the other’s work. This situation confers upon both artists (artist A and artist B) a special critical weight: each knows better than anyone what the other is up against. Each receives from the special quality of this exchange the capacity to play a critical role—although very seldom can both functions and roles be carried out simultaneously. It seems almost impossible that either artist could view his colleague’s work and work on his own at the same time. There is, therefore, a passage from one function to the other, although neither function (viewing or making) cancels the other one out.

Let’s imagine the following scenario with two artists: friends and colleagues closely working together, and alternatively viewing and discussing each other’s works, and engaged in producing their own. In effect, we are attending there a completely reciprocal set of relationships: each artist is in turn viewer, and maker—sometimes both simultaneously—whereby the viewing by artist A of what artist B has just done, will possibly condition or impact what artist B will be doing next. By the same token,
what artist A will soon be doing will also be subject to the same treatment: having
just viewed and critiqued what artist B was doing, his own next work will likely carry
traces of his thoughts and comments on what artist B was doing, although soon
enough what he is doing is also going to be viewed and critiqued by artist B. Another
cycle will soon begin, opening a new page in the ongoing creative dialogue between
A and B. Now, of course, this is an ideal construction, and the “real” scenarios
between artists actually working together may never quite occur this way. The
sequential relationships between the two practitioners, however, are unlikely to
change very much: what changes is the identity of who is at either end of the chain of
relationships: A or B, notwithstanding the fact that A and B may both stand at the
same end of the relationship, for instance when A and B view, critique and discuss
the same work by B. What is certain is that the result of any of these relationships is
unknowable: there is an element of unpredictability lodged in the moment when A (or
B) decides to show his work to B (or A). What happens at that point is never certain,
never decidable. Or, to put it more accurately, all expectations, and predictions may
be shattered each time. Each time, rules partly have to be reinvented—hence, again,
the idea of homogeneous rules imposed once and for all throughout each of these
interchanges, would have made no sense at all.

Establishing links with others—or communicating—is an inherent component in
aesthetic judgments, as well as in setting up an artistic collaboration. A distinction
must, however, be established between judgment and production: This takes the form of a paradox in that, even though any aesthetic action (whether an aesthetic judgment, i.e. contemplating a work of art, or an artistic production, i.e. creating a work of art) is irremediably individual and distinctly mine, it inevitably implies or postulates a response from others, and preferably a response in accordance with mine (as we have clearly seen above.) If I judge that this artistic object is beautiful, I somehow will expect to find some agreement with my views. This expectation will be all the higher if the object of judgment is my object. As a producer of works of art, there are therefore three situations in which I will expect to find the accordance of others:

- If I simply view a work of art by anybody, I will seek some confirmation of my judgment;
- If I produce a work of art, I will seek some attention, or some response from members of an audience—even if this audience may only be imaginary;
- If I pass a judgment on a work of art that I produced, judgment and production are here intertwined, and the stakes are necessarily quite high.

When involved with another artist, this threefold situation where an artist can either be 1. judge; 2. producer; 3. judge and producer is mirrored and compounded in ways that almost defy the imagination.
If we give ourselves the following premises: A & B (two artists) view the same work of art x at the same time; here are then some of the possible results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A’s response</th>
<th>B’s response</th>
<th>Result 1</th>
<th>Result 2</th>
<th>Result 3</th>
<th>Result 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A likes x</td>
<td>B dislikes x</td>
<td>Discussion/disagreement: refusal to compromise</td>
<td>A and B may see in x a source of interest for their works.</td>
<td>B comes to terms with A’s views and sees x differently</td>
<td>Both A and B find some middle ground between each other’s original views and see x differently from their original positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A likes x</td>
<td>B likes x</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td>A and B are indifferent to x.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dislikes x</td>
<td>B dislikes x</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
X, the work of art, may be by anybody. If now x is a work of art by either A or B, one sees immediately the vast complications that may follow: casting a negative judgment on the work may inevitably result in offending the author of the work of art; at the same time, the premises of a truthful collaboration is inevitably based (as we have seen with Habermas) on the respect of the other’s right to express himself freely, and honestly. A complex dilemma results from this new situation. Now, on the reverse, if A or B is too enthusiastic about x, might this not betray a self-oriented interest on the part of the beholder who might want to “borrow” the types of artistic solutions exhibited in x.

I am only, here, attempting to sketch some of the many risks involved in such a dialogue, just in order to emphasize the inherent a priori difficulties of such an exchange, and the ensuing need for both participants to agree upon a minimum set of discursive ethics in order to avoid all possible rifts. Naturally, the positive side of such a decision is also considerable: otherwise, why would any artist consider entering into such a cooperation? It is these very positive returns that we will be considering in the third section of this essay.

* Two Examples
Let us immediately look at two examples, taken from the careers of these two pairs of co-artists. These two examples will function as virtual exceptions, it appears as if viewing and making are *almost* superimposed: making one’s own work, that is, while viewing another’s work. It also appears as if one of the selves surrenders himself to the other, through either an act of humility (Cézanne dutifully “copying” a painting by Pissarro) or through an expression of admiration (Johns eulogizing the brilliance of a particular pictorial gesture by Rauschenberg.) Far from abandoning themselves, however, in each case, the admiring selves in fact assert themselves through their acts of recognition of another’s great contribution.

1. The first example is Cézanne having executed a painting after a painting by Pissarro executed in Louveciennes. [See Ills. 9-15] There, viewing the other’s work almost became indistinguishable from making one’s own. Nevertheless, a reservation needs to be introduced: had Cézanne produced an indistinguishable copy of Pissarro’s painting, one could indeed argue for the complete assimilation of the two activities: viewing the other’s work and making one’s own would have fused into one and the same result. The

206 Paul Cézanne, *Vue de Louveciennes d’après Pissarro*, c. 1872, (R 184). My interpretation of this couple of works by both artists stands in open disagreement with John Rewald’s assessment that “it was by faithfully reproducing this work that Cézanne was best able to initiate himself into his friend’s technique of accumulated small touches and broken colors.” (Op. cit., vol. I, 144; my emphasis.) I will aim at corroborating, through detailed observations made on the physical examination of each painting, that each work addresses a wide gap between the two individuals. It was, in fact, by getting so close on Pissarro’s own ground, while already retaining much of his own idiosyncratic manière that Cézanne could feel so comfortable in producing (not “reproducing”) this particular painting, by articulating his own language together with that of his colleague into his own painting.

Cézanne painting would then be a mere reproduction (or copy) of the Pissarro. But, in fact, the two works are conspicuously different: Cézanne’s painting, for one thing, is of a smaller format, the motif is not exactly cropped in the same places as in the Pissarro, and the layout overall varies slightly as a result. His impasto, his brush strokes are thicker than Pissarro’s—the application of the paint on the surface of the canvas is more forthright, less “careful” than in the painting of the same motif by Pissarro; Cézanne’s palette is warmer, his color contrasts starker than his older colleague’s who seemed to have favored a more subtle and harmonized unity of tones. One cannot therefore conclude that one is a copy of the other. Rather, one was made, in every sense of the word, after the other and, even in this extreme case, Cézanne was not so much painting a Pissarro, as he was painting a Cézanne after a Pissarro, affirming his self through looking at an other’s painting. In the extremely interesting case of these two paintings, Cézanne, in his work, stood back from Pissarro’s example: very close at first sight, the Cézanne painting, in fact, reveals a subtle, though definite, critique of his elder’s example.

2. Another exception when viewing and making could almost be regarded as one and the same gesture comes from looking at the works by Johns and Rauschenberg. Both artists were invited to take part in a performance. As a canvas was hanging from the ceiling, each artist proceeded in working on
either side of the canvas: Johns proceeded in covering his side with lines; Rauschenberg covered his with circles. Johns remembered later on the stroke of brilliancy that Rauschenberg displayed by thinking of a new device to paint “circles” on his side of the canvas: Rauschenberg apparently began to dip one pot of paint into another and applied the rim of the pot, wet with paint, straight onto the canvas, thus leaving the imprint of a perfect circle. Here again, this example provides us with one of the closest examples whereby viewing and making can be assimilated to the same gesture.

*Inter-Subjective Practices do not Suppress Moments of Individualism*

Through both of these examples, what appears evident is that the self and the other are in a constant relation of complementarity—a systematic give-and-take process in which one gives as much as it takes. Each of the selves is in a constant dialogue with an other. This correlation between selves and others, in which each finds himself through this exchange with the other, is precisely what will be called “inter-subjectivity.” The problems attached to these paradoxical correlations are twofold, and symmetrically opposed to each other: a) how to give as much credit to the other, when the main purpose of artistic research is the pursuit of the self; b) when opening up to the other, how may I retain myself? To put this latter question in negative terms, how may I not lose myself in my admiration for the other? The two above examples
illustrate well the latter paradox: how did Cézanne retain, and furthermore, assert his own individuality, while “copying” a painting by Pissarro? How did Johns pursue his path and continue to paint stripes after having established the brilliance of Rauschenberg’s decision to imprint rim-marks on his side of the canvas? The fact is that both Cézanne and Johns continued to develop a very strong individual path that in many ways owed very little to their ongoing involvement with their other co-artist. The stories that will therefore be found in the following chapters will not be stories of total fusion of selves in others. On the contrary, both cases of co-relationships will prove at the end that the selves will only come out stronger, in their own individuality. Inter-subjectivity—i.e., the relationships with others—, contrary to what one could have expected, does not suppress individualism—i.e., the reduction of myself to my absolute ego, as Husserl could have said.208 It is, indeed, Edmund Husserl who first made extensive use of the concept of “inter-subjectivity”—Inter-Subjektivität in German. Essentially the notion that will be central to this essay emphasizes that two authors or “subjects” confront one another, and interact with one another through their subjectivity.

* Others Are not just Intended in Me: They Are Others

Let us, therefore, briefly review how Husserl dealt with this problem. The whole problem of the relationship between selves—Husserl calls them “egos”—and others is exposed in the § 42 of the Fifth Meditation under the title: “Exposition of the problem of experiencing someone else, in rejoinder to the objection that phenomenology entails solipsism.”\textsuperscript{209} Husserl begins with considering what happens to my self when I am restricted to “the stream of my pure conscious processes;” the philosopher then abruptly asks: “what about other egos, who surely are not a mere intending and intended \textit{in me}, … but, according to their sense, precisely \textit{others}?\textsuperscript{210}” This question, in its almost naïve directness, and with the infinitely complex ramifications that are inherent in it, sets the foundation of the present work. What is essential in the formulation of the problem of the presence of others for egos, as put by Husserl, is precisely that it takes the form of a question rather than a pre-determined set of answers.

While extraordinary simple in its immediate evidence: “there is some one else down there,” this evidence also contains infinitely complex ramifications. The confrontation of the self and others, the juxtaposition of individualism and inter-subjectivity, as seen at the very core of our two artistic interchanges, takes the form of two propositions, set side by side: 1. The images and ideas I have of the world outside are “mine” and mine alone. These images or representations correspond in effect to “the

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.
whole world… constituted ‘immanently’ in the ego.”

2. In strict parallel to this first observation (my ideas are mine, and therefore my own representation of my ideas or visions are necessarily unique too), comes this second observation that is just as irrefutable as the first. Husserl puts it in this way: “Accordingly can we avoid saying likewise: “The very question of the possibility of actually transcendent knowledge—above all, that of the possibility of my going outside my ego and reaching other egos (who, after all, as others, are not actually in me but only consciously intended in me)”?”

In other words, when I remain in myself (when I meditate or work in isolation) I am “immanently” to my ego—all pure inwardness. On the contrary, when I stretch beyond myself towards others, I transcend myself. The whole question raised by the two examples we just saw is this: how was it possible, for Pissarro and Cézanne, for Rauschenberg and Johns, to conjugate immanence and transcendence, inwardness and outwardness, self and other?

Just in order to gather a summary sense of the complexity involved, here is how Husserl perceives originally the problem of how to grasp the presence of this other, who, like myself, is also a self (or an ego):

My “transcendental clue” is the experienced Other, given to me in straightforward consciousness and as I immerse myself in examining the

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211 Ibid., 89-90.
212 Ibid., 90.
noematic-ontic content belonging to him (purely as correlate of my cogito, the particular structure of which is yet to be uncovered). By its remarkableness and multiplicity that content already indicates the many-sidedness and difficulty of the phenomenological task. For example: In changeable harmonious multiplicities of experience I experience others as actually existing and, on the one hand, as world Objects—not as mere physical things belonging to Nature, though indeed as such things in respect of one side of them. They are in fact experienced also as governing psychically in their respective natural organisms. Thus peculiarly involved with animate organisms, as “psychophysical” Objects, they are “in” the world. On the other hand, I experience them at the same time as subjects for this world, as experiencing it (this same world that I experience) and, in so doing, experiencing me too, even as I experience the world and others in it.  

One possible metaphor that might elucidate this text and make more clear the complex implications that it points out would be to imagine a couple of mirrors facing each other: each of the two mirrors, facing the other, reflects that object hanging outside as a mere object; at the same time, the mirror also reflects that other mirror as a support (--if it was conscious, one would say that it was a “subject”) casting its reflections: the reflections are reflected in the first mirror, and vice versa, ad infinitum. We have all made this almost dizzy-making experience of looking between

\[\text{213 Ibid., 91.}\]
two mirrors, and never being able to get to the bottom of the ultimate reflection. In the same way, it will not be more possible to reach an exhaustive account of these two dense artistic interchanges. I need, however, at once to introduce the objection Fichte himself used against the use of the metaphor of a “mirror” in order to depict matters of consciousness:

The I, as described by previous philosophers, is a mirror. But a mirror does not see, and this is why these philosophers are unable to explain “seeing” or intuition. All they posit is the concept of mirroring.214

It is difficult not to think here of Jasper Johns’s games with the inclusions of mirrors in some of his works, such as Souvenir I, or Souvenir II, and furthermore, knowing precisely of Johns’s intentions and interests in investigations on the limits and meanings of representation, to see in these works a critical (or, why not, a transcendental) intention not very distant at all from the one that animated Fichte in this critique. The relationship here between Johns and Fichte is all the more relevant as Fichte used the example of a mirror elsewhere as a metaphor of language in general.215 This conception, needless to say, will probably sound positivistic in

215 See Philonenko, La liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte, op. cit., 35 : « Pour Fichte toute forme d’expression manifeste une même puissance de l’intelligence symbolique et comme Leibniz il croit que la raison se réfléchit dans le langage comme en son miroir. » Fichte, in this sense, had a much more democratic conception of language than Kant did, the latter being somewhat diffident of

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inspiration to a 21st century reader familiar with linguistic theories that have precisely deconstructed the idea of “language” as a faithful mirror within which things would come and reflect themselves. This being said, Fichte did not appreciate all languages equally. To him, the language of hieroglyphs was the most efficacious—and one could get to know it without having to learn it, since there the sign and what it signifies are almost the same thing.\footnote{We need to set the terms of what Fichte, here, “common language” and discriminating it from the pure mathematical language. (\textit{Kritik der reinen Vernunft}, (A), 713 sqq.)} Incidentally, this is exactly how much of Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s early works proceed: presenting the objects themselves, not through the detour of any sign (be it pictorial or linguistic), although, of course, Johns especially will be interested in balancing the effect of this direct presentation against what the sign does to it. The superiority of the hieroglyph-based language has to do also with the fact that it sets in motion the whole mind of the speaker, and is at the same time, much easier to learn because it does not have to deal with the intermediary role of the arbitrary sign—with the hieroglyphs, in other words, the sign and the thing are almost fused into one: “Durch eine solche Sprache mußten die Menschen gar bald weiterkommen, weil die Tätigkeit des Geistes dadurch ganz befördert wird. Eine solche Sprache wird auch verstanden, ohne gelernt zu sein, weil keine Willkür stattfindet.” See also Philonenko, \textit{Op Cit.}, 35, who discusses the distinction of the conception of language between Fichte and Kant. Kant continues to grant the mathematical language a superiority over any other language; whereas for Fichte, every form of expression may reveal the same symbolic intelligence. The question then becomes for Fichte to choose the best form of expression—the most accurate language—that which acts like a mirror to reflect what we think, given that the signs always distort to some degree the activities of reason. It will be especially relevant to bear in mind this excursus on the function of language, conceived of as a mirror, in light of Johns’s use of mirrors in his work (e.g., \textit{Souvenir I}, or \textit{Souvenir II}), or of Rauschenberg’s treatment of his work generally as a reflecting surface: this is very much how he conceived and described his \textit{White Canvases} for instance; one could say by the same token how he conceived works such as \textit{Barge}, which carries on graphically the same function as \textit{White Canvases} do in silence: both works are impregnated with what goes on around them. The difference is that in \textit{White Canvases} this process is ephemeral and transitory: it comes and goes with the movements of the by-passers, whereas with \textit{Barge} samples and fragments of the ‘world’ around us have been selected by the artist and ‘transferred’ onto a 32 feet-long canvas. The question of the relationship of the sign to what it designates (or signifies) is absolutely crucial to both Johns and Rauschenberg as will be seen in Section III. For now, one could summarize the difference (and the tenor of their dialogue) by saying that, prolonging the Fichtean dream of a mirror-like language, Johns pushes the sign as close as he can to look like the thing that it designates (e.g., \textit{Painted Bronze}, or \textit{Flag}), whereas Rauschenberg takes the thing itself and turns it into a sign (e.g., \textit{Painted Cans}, \textit{Monogram}, \textit{Odalisk}, etc.) Here we find another relevant parallel with the authors who have elaborated in the last four decades what is known as the ethics of discourse and linguistic pragmatics. Karl-Otto Apel, (following in this Charles Peirce) stated that thought and sign are inseparable, and at the same time, this thought-sign link does not take
quite severely calls an “error”—an error of which Kant himself is not innocent. This error, Fichte tells us, can only be rectified if one uses a correct concept of the I. The I (according to Fichte—and he certainly did not mean to produce the pun that can only occur in English) “is not a mirror; it is an eye.” Failing this concept of consciousness, it is impossible to “understand how the eye is able to see anything at all.” Fichte, however, concedes to his adversaries that “the eye, however, is a self-mirroring mirror.” Then follows a beautiful text that can well provide a commentary upon Jasper Johns’s procedure and reflection on the specular structure of the act of painting, as an extension of an act of consciousness:

It is the very essence of the eye to be an image for itself, and to be an image for itself is also the essence of the intellect. By means of its own seeing, the eye itself—like the intellect itself—becomes an image for itself. An image is reflected in a mirror, but the mirror cannot see the image. The intellect, in contrast, becomes an image for itself. What is in the intellect is an image and nothing else. But an image refers to an object: wherever there is an image, there must also be something that is portrayed [by this image]. An image is something that is only subjective. The ideal activity therefore requires an object, something that it copies; and this is the real activity. The ideal activity

place unless it is for some one: this triangular structure: ‘thought-sign-some one’ is equally central to the problematic of both Johns and Rauschenberg ever since the incipient moment of their career. The difference between them will be one of inflection, or stress on one particular element or the other.

217 Ibid., 151.
has also been described, therefore, as an act of imitating or copying.

Whenever a consciousness is assumed, an object of consciousness is also assumed.\textsuperscript{218}

Fichte thus concludes by establishing that the I holds neither intellectual power, nor practical power based on intuition, but both at the same time.

\textit{Time: the Relationship of the Same with the Other (Levinas)}

In this particular form of dialogue, two kinds of roles (viewing or judging, and making art, or seeing and producing: one essentially passive, the other, essentially active) are intertwined and interchangeable. Viewing and judging the other’s works become part of a dynamic in which making one’s own art is, partly at least, predicated upon seeing the art of someone else. One immediately perceives that this situation implies a certain consecutiveness and a temporal dynamic: the two actions of viewing the other’s work and making one’s own can hardly be simultaneous—even in the case when two artists work side by side, or in the same studio—the two types of actions inevitably call for a sequence or for a certain temporality: this constant passage from the situation in which one is viewing the other’s works, to that in which one is making one’s own implies time. More specifically, it implies a certain

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 152.
conception of time—and therefore, of history, that will in many ways appear to be in dire contrast to the prevailing conception of history at work in many histories of modern art. Thinking and working with others not only necessitates time, but engenders a particular conception of time that goes some way in refuting the idea of a linear sequence of momentous achievements, one calling the next, as so many links in a chain, all neatly identifiable products of isolated subjects. Rather than borrow a conception of time drawn from such an historicist model, still largely prevailing in history of art in which sequences of events follow the structure of yearly calendars, the conception of time that permits to think about inter-relationships owes more to that evoked by Emmanuel Levinas in his series of lectures given at the Collège de France, in 1946-47 under the title “Le temps et l’autre.” There he said: “…le temps n’est pas le fait d’un sujet isolé et seul, mais […] il est la relation même du sujet avec autrui.”  

Let us clarify this point further: it is not just because of the sequential nature of the dialogical exchange between one and the other that the notion of time, and history, are conjured up when one thinks about inter-relationships. It is also, and primordially, in the fact that the other of that dialogue has to be thought of in his radical alterity, and that this alterity is never to be reduced to its opposite: the same, or the familiar. In other words, the other as other throughout the dialogue that links him with a self cannot be pre-guessed. It is, by essence, impossible to know in advance what the dialogical exchange between two artists will result in. Levinas

explained that the type of conception of time required in order to think about otherness is one in which:


The conception of time that is conjured up here is one that is open: the structure of time that evolves through these dialogues can be more aptly visualized as an asymmetric zigzag than as a straight line. Such a model counters an evolutionary understanding of time, as it remains the dominant conception of time at work in much of history of art: time takes the form of an ongoing give-and-take exchange, not that of a pre-determined vectorial force. The model of history derived from such observations is therefore an anhistoricist model: one in which the end result is not known at the beginning, just as in a conversation. The conclusion of a conversation, provided the interlocutors are free and do not enter the conversation under some coercion, can never be known in advance. I must here immediately confess why I have developed a strong attachment to the notion of “dialogues” in the history of modern art, and how this interest in itself has to a large extent “shaped” my own theoretical approach to the production of art in the last two centuries. Monographic

²²⁰ Ibid., 8.
reconstructions of works of art by artists of the past, notwithstanding their enormous historical value, and their indispensable function as reference works, often result in creating a seamless impression of works of art having been produced in the isolation of a studio, in a kind of vacuum. The type of historical reconstructions that monographies usually convey does not encourage readers to conceive of the process of creation that led to these works of art as a living one: seen as a solid set of artifacts, much of the history of modern art continues to proceed on the assumption that great works of art are produced in isolation, and great artists, at least when it comes to creating their masterpieces, do not need much contact with the outside world.

Whether it be in the field of French impressionism, or of the New York School, the trend to produce books and especially exhibition catalogues that are solidly monographic continues to be an overriding orientation in the art book industry.221

What troubles me most in this “closed” monographic approach to art history is, not only the fact that each artist is studied in a vacuum, but that each subject of

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221 If one looks at the last twenty year period for instance, the major impressionist exhibitions that took place in the main European and American metropolitan centers have largely been concentrating on monographic exhibitions: Pissarro, 1980-81,(Hayward Gallery, London; Grand Palais, Paris; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); Manet, 1983 (Grand Palais, Paris; Metropolitan Museum, New York); Renoir, 1985 (Hayward Gallery, London; Grand Palais, Paris; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); Degas, 1988 (Grand Palais, Paris; National Gallery of Ottawa, Ottawa; Metropolitan Museum, New York); Gauguin, 1988 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Grand Palais, Paris); Caillebotte, 1995 (Grand Palais, Paris; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago). Monet is the only artist who appears to be too big for such monographic treatments. He, as a result, has been carved out into several slices of time—besides a multitude of Monet shows organized largely for commercial reasons, various exhibitions took place on either themes or places specific to Monet’s career: Monet’s Years at Giverny: beyond Impressionism, (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1978); Claude Monet at the Time of Giverny (Paris: Centre Culturel du Marais, 1983); Monet and the Mediterranean, (Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum and New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1997); Monet in the 20th Century (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1998); Two exceptions are two large retrospective exhibitions that took place in Paris: Hommage à Claude Monet, (Grand Palais, 1980) and in Chicago: Claude Monet, 1840-1926 (Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 1995).
investigation appears cut off from our own present-day concerns. It is as if our own current problems had nothing to do with the homogenizing historical reconstructions—museum exhibitions, for instance—that we go and visit for our own enjoyments and cultural edifications. In other words, it is not excessive to say that on the whole, when one steps inside one of these palatial art installations that features the works of one of the canonic artists of the last two hundred years, one largely feels as if entering a space totally removed from the media-invaded space of our daily lives. There we seem untouched, shielded from our round-the-clock, round-the-globe unstoppable news apparatus. We are protected from the polluting noise that aggresses us mercilessly—whether it be the frantic, stressful buzz that furnishes our existence, or the far more worrisome flow of tragedies, wars, catastrophes that seem the fatal lot of humankind’s present. There, while, say, watching a Cézanne or a Johns exhibitions, for instance, or even, though to a lesser degree, a Pissarro or a Rauschenberg exhibitions, one seems untouched by what goes on outside. The sense of closure, the beautifully reassuring atmosphere that inculcates this sense of being removed is doubtlessly a large factor for the continuing success of these exhibitions. This says nothing about how important many of these exhibitions have been in revealing works utterly unknown to many of us by some of these artists, or in furthering our knowledge, and challenging preconceived ideas we may have had about each of these artists. Having said this, I also believe that these artists, on the whole, did not create their art in isolation: neither were they cut off from one another,
nor were they closed to the outside world. The typical monographic “portrait” or summary one receives of any modern artist is, therefore, necessarily distorted. The present work will therefore essentially articulates two levels of “openness” within the art production of the four artists that will be examined: openness to one another—the intense and multifarious dialogue that both pairs of artists developed with one another will, of course, provide a prime case in point; but also, this openness to the other will be seen in combination with an openness to what lies outside the studio: this essentially modern stance will provide, as we will see, for a very rich compendium.

Both selves and others are open to what is other than them in this process, and to whatever lies outside of them, beginning with what surrounds them on the walls of their studios. Hence it will be no surprise that studios will appear an important source of images and reflection on the practice of painting in the case of both pairs of artists.

*Openness to Others is Preserved by Time*

Through this process of openness, each of the selves at work through these ongoing dialogues will become a self and an other alternatively. This otherness is never reducible to the same thing as the self: others are not to be assimilated, or, literally, turned-into-the-same-as-I. Time, therefore, works here as a modality that preserves relationships to others in their complete alterity; time will not erase the radical differences between each moment of the exchange, but on the contrary, expose these
differences. History (what one could call a dialogical history) would therefore not be modeled on eternity—an eternity that would confer upon each single moment its truth, its “sense,” and its raison d’être, or an eternity that validates each single moment in view of what its future destiny will be, or that presents the past as announcing the concealed truth of the present. Each moment, characterized by given works of art, is then announcing the next, and so on, ad infinitum—this is the sort of “movement” that Levinas refers to as “dégradation de l’éternité” (subversion of eternity). As Levinas warns us, time is not a subversion of eternity, but time should be conceived

…comme relation à ce qui, de soi inassimilable, absolument autre, ne se laisserait pas assimiler par l’expérience ou à ce qui, de soi infini, ne se laisserait pas com-prendre… Relation avec l’Invisible où l’invisibilité résulte, non pas de l’incapacité de la connaissance humaine, mais de l’inaptitude de la connaissance comme telle—de son inadéquation—à l’Infini de l’absolument autre, de l’absurdité qu’aurait ici un événement tel que la coïncidence. 

Impossible de coïncider, (my emphasis) in-adéquation, qui ne sont pas des notions simplement négatives, mais qui ont un sens dans le phénomène de la non-coïncidence, mais aussi ce toujours de la relation—de l’aspiration et de l’attente : fil plus tenu qu’une ligne idéale et que la diachronie ne coupe pas ; elle le préserve dans le paradoxe d’une relation, différente de toutes les autres
relations de notre logique et de notre psychologie… Ici, relation sans termes, attente sans attendu, aspiration inassouvissable.  

Reading this admirable text, how can one not think back again about Johns’s text, as quoted above?

The relationship between the object & the event. Can they be separated? Is one a detail of the other? What is the meeting? Air?

The two texts, in more ways than one, appear to echo one another: the very questions raised by the “relationship between object and event,” the gap between object and event, constitute the very essence of time. This point is essential in the conception of time delineated by Levinas, and provides a very fruitful model. What Levinas calls a “relation without terms, a wait without expectation, an unquenchable aspiration” is precisely what Johns seems to be addressing in this text. One also assumes that this relationship without terms characterized Pissarro and Cézanne when they would set off on one of their many country excursions in search for a “motif,” [Ill. 1] or

222 Ibid. pp. 9-10.
Rauschenberg and Johns when they sat, viewed and discussed each other’s artistic productions in their respective studios in New York [Ill. 2]: all there was, in either case, was “an unchartered future before me.”

Two things deserve to be noted here: it seems irrefutable that neither Pissarro nor Cézanne quite knew what they were going for when setting off on one of their several-mile walks [see ill. 59] They could not be certain of what they would be searching for in advance; they could be even less certain of what would come out of the palette, colors and brushes at the hands of the other. The very same applies to the example of Rauschenberg and Johns, who, as Johns expressed through telling the anecdote of them both working on the same canvas, could never tell what the other was about to do next. Thus, a fundamental element of surprise is lodged inherently within these two joint adventures—and one may well suspect that this is inherent in almost all co-human endeavors. The next surprise in store is, of course, what responses each artist will obtain from the other. And the responses to the responses. And so on. Each of these two pairs of artists kept the other one guessing: that must have been part of the fun, and of the anxiety, of these fascinating exchanges.

Even if the two pairs of artists will be seen as offering numerous analogies, not to mention the unexpectedly high frequency of themes, or concepts that appear to have played an anchoring point in the works by both pairs of artists, these two are, however, also separated by nearly a century. The most evident divide between the two pairs is what one might call the “crisis of history.” The simple and bleak fact, as Levinas as well as throngs of authors and thinkers of the latter part of the twentieth century have pointed out that

The unburied dead in wars and extermination camps make one believe the idea of a death without a morning after and render tragic-comic the concern for oneself and illusory the pretension of the rational animal to have a privileged place in the cosmos and the power to dominate and integrate the totality of being in a self-consciousness.  

The biggest difference between these two pairs of artists is that, as Adorno pointed out, after Auschwitz it would no longer be possible to hum a hymn to the glory of mankind.

* “Relationships:” A Central Concept for Human Sciences

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We have now reviewed several key aspects of a simple fact: it is difficult to think about individuality without also thinking about a community. A community begins, in essence, with just another individual: being with someone rather than on one’s own. The results of this relationship depend, not on me, nor on that other individual alone, but on me AND the individual who “has entered into a community with me.” The centrality of the concept of “relationships” has long been acknowledged in numerous fields, among human and social sciences—but somehow only partially or marginally heeded in the discipline of art history: the spectacular reception given to Jürgen Habermas’s monumental work in the last two decades, not just in philosophy, but in ethics, economy, law, political science, sociology, anthropology, in the theory of international relations, offers a clue as to the impact and importance of concepts such as those of “inter-subjectivity,” “communicative action,” and “reciprocal perspective-taking,” for instance, in current debates over human rights, nationalism, multiculturalism, and the viability of supranational political institutions. All these issues share the fact that they are dealing with the question of individuals, their rights and duties towards others. It is not, of course, that art history in the recent past has not been paid attention to others, or to interrelationships, but it seems as if such interests have, on the whole, remained marginalized, or practiced on the periphery of the departments of art history—being the special interests of women studies, gay studies, or particular ethnic studies. In fact, this simple observation describes the present distinction between the history of art and its sister disciplines in the human sciences:

226 Fichte, op. cit., 72.
in the former, *relations with others* remains a topic that is tangential to its practice, whereas, in the latter, this topic has become of prime importance. Consequentially, the practice of art history continues—despite noteworthy counterexamples—to operate in its self-made vacuum, with little interest in what is not its mainstream curriculum. The studies of European art, to a large degree, continue to operate according to the uncritically accepted criteria of distinction established since art history came to be an academic discipline: the Renaissance studies continue to be polarized according to an arbitrary geographic line between North and South, even though increasing evidence is proving that the contacts between the “northern” artists and their Italian counterparts were more intense than at any other period, until the modern period. The studies of impressionism continue to be unabashedly gallo-centric: I mean, that even though the principal production of books on impressionism comes from the US and England, these books continue to focus mainly on the French impressionists, and seldom do more than pay lip service to the existence of competing, contemporaneous groups of artists. Certainly, studies of competing forms of non-French “impressionisms” outside France have flourished lately—but they have done so, in isolation from, and almost in competition with the studies of French impressionism, as if to say: “See, we are as good as, if not better, than the French impressionists.” This may well be the case, but what would be more interesting (in my humble opinion) is to work out a way to integrate these studies of concurrent forms of art *together with* (rather than in opposition to) the studies of French
impressionism. This dialogue could only occur on the minimum condition that both fields (on French and non-French impressionism) would willingly entertain an invitation from the other to cooperate with each other. The list could go on and on.

* Menschen Do Not Work in Isolation

This preamble only serves to introduce the point that one of the motivations behind this work is the conviction that men (in the sense of Menschen), including great artists, or canon makers, do not work in isolation, and that, furthermore, different periods ought not always to be studied in isolation of each other: despite substantial historical and cultural distinctions between late 19th century-France and mid-20th century-America, I will argue that the same ideological vocabulary constituted a common reference to both contexts in which the two associations of co-artists studied here happened to live. This shared horizon consists of such concepts as those of freedom (too readily taken for granted today); an emphasis on creativity and originality; paradoxically, this claim to originality seems countered by both the impressionist and the New York artists in that they conspicuously favored representing objects (a banal hillside, a house, a tree, a flag, a “dirtscape”…) that appeared, in each context, disarmingly simple, provocatively ordinary, shockingly unaesthetic. At the same time, this emphasis on individual creative initiatives, in each case, is accompanied by a deliberate effort to create new rules—rules which, in order
to be perceived as such, need to be appreciated, or understood by others. At this juncture, each individual is seen as needing an other in order to have the rules work. The game then starts in which each player, once active, once passive, or, even sometimes, both active at the same time, makes a move, countered, or complemented by another move by his partner.

* Freedom and Reason Are Assumed of Each Other

A pre-condition to the game beginning to take place, however, is a process of mutual recognition that introduces a few complex determinations. In a paragraph of The Science of Rights, titled “But I must assume that all rational beings outside of me will in all possible cases recognize me as a rational being”, Fichte thus explicates what this process of recognition means:

All that needs, therefore, to be proved now is, that no consciousness of individuality is possible without this recognition, or that the latter necessarily results from the former. We proceed to establish this proof.

A. I posit myself in opposition to C as individual only by ascribing exclusively to myself a sphere for my free activity, which sphere I deny him.
I posit myself in opposition to C as a rational and free being only by ascribing also to him freedom and reason, hence only by assuming that he has also chosen a sphere of his free activity different from mine.

But I assume all this only on the presupposition that he, in choosing his sphere, has taken my free choice into consideration, and has voluntarily and with fixed purpose left my sphere open to me. (Only by positing him as treating me like a rational being do I posit him at all as a rational being. My whole judgment proceeds from me and his treatment of me, as could not well be otherwise in a system which has the Ego for its basis…

This marked emphasis on the role of the ego (or the individual) by leaving room for the other to be, and exert his freedom and reason, finds two immediate points of anchorage: 1. a practical one in the way Pissarro described his own corelationship with Cézanne; 2. a further theoretical development in the work done by Levinas.

* Pissarro and Levinas: To Think the Other in the Self, and Vice Versa

Pissarro himself observed this factor of togetherness when retrospectively reflecting on the “kinship” (parenté) between his work and Cézanne’s during the 1870s:

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227 Fichte, op. cit., 70.
Ce qu’il y a de curieux c’est que dans cette exposition de Cézanne chez Vollard on voit la parenté qu’il y a dans certains paysages d’Auvers, Pontoise et les miens. Parbleu, nous étions toujours ensemble! mais ce qu’il y a de certain, chacun gardait la seule chose qui compte, « sa sensation »…228

In its clumsy French prose, this short text in a letter written by Pissarro to his eldest son, embodies the paradox around both couples of co-artists:229 Pissarro’s observation could apply just as well, a century later, to Johns and Rauschenberg: they were “always together.” One saw “a kinship” between certain works by one and certain works by the other. “But what is certain, is that each kept the only thing that mattered:” Pissarro calls this, in the impressionist vocabulary, “la sensation.”

Rauschenberg and Johns would have no doubt found a different word to qualify what was singularly unique about each of their art. The point, anyway, applies equally well to both pairs of people and takes the form of a paradox that can be phrased through the juxtaposition of various oppositions of terms such as kinship/originality, collaboration/contemplation, common style/unique style, dialogue/monologue.

Pissarro sums it up very well: this paradox presents something highly “curious.” But


229 It has not often been observed that, in fact, Cézanne himself echoed indirectly Pissarro’s testimony about their artistic interchange in very comparable terms—except that he did not name Pissarro. In a letter to the artist Charles Camoin, Cézanne was obviously alluding to Pissarro when he wrote: “Subiriez-vous momentanément l’influence d’un plus ancien que vous, croyez bien que du moment que vous ressentez, votre émotion propre finira toujours par émerger et conquérir sa place au soleil.” Cézanne, Correspondance, 307.
Pissarro never elaborated about what was “curious” in this paradox. Taking the cue from Pissarro, I propose to elaborate on this curious phenomenon. What is all the more curious, in fact, is that this paradox is far from unique or rare: Pissarro/Cézanne, Rauschenberg/Johns are but two of many possible examples in the history of modern art where one is conjugated with two. One is not alone as soon as one is two; two is the smallest plural unit. It offers the smallest platform of inter-subjectivity. Minus two, one is alone. Above one, one is with some other. The reason why I decided to focus on pairs of artists rather than groups (that could have equally provided a field of study for inter-subjectivity) is that the dynamic of the group is far less balanced than that of a pair: in a group (with three artists and above), the individual is always in a minority, even if he is the leader: one always has to speak or show his work in front of two or more. Whereas in a pair, the dynamic is much more balanced: there is one and the other. In turn, one becomes the other, and vice versa, as the artistic dialogue and exchange evolves. Nobody could describe better than Emmanuel Levinas did what goes on in this dialogue between one and another:

The main task behind all these efforts consists in thinking of the Other-in-the-Same without thinking of the Other as another Same.
La tâche principale qui est derrière tous ces efforts, consiste à penser l’Autre-dans-le-Même sans penser l’Autre comme un autre Même.\textsuperscript{230}

We now are facing the symmetric question to an earlier question. The first questions were: How can two artists share a common trunk of artistic concerns and practices and remain original, unique in each of their ways of making art? Or, to express what is at stake in a more dramatic tone isn’t there a danger that each artistic \textit{self} might lose out by sharing with an \textit{other}? The new question presents the same urgency: how not to lose the other in one’s self? How not to assimilate him into one’s own, turning him into an alter ego, a reflection of the self? How can I, or must I preserve him in his alterity while remaining myself at the same time? These are all the, increasingly complex, questions that are implied in Levinas’s formulation of the problem. Doubtlessly, this kind of problematic was at the core of the two artistic associations studied here.

This principal paradox automatically opens the door to questions inherent in any reflection on our modern condition. Essentially, the problem can be put this way: how do we negotiate our positions or roles in society between our individual selves and others? The study of these two pairs of co-artists will highlight all such questions that drive to the heart of general philosophical reflections on modernism, understood as

the gradual process of independence of individuals from the past yoke of tradition and
religion. This process of emancipation (that essentially took off since the
enlightenment) led simultaneously to a gradual appropriation of the self, a liberation
of the individual that was immediately accompanied by a host of other questions,

namely, how can individuals gain recognition as such, and communicate with each

other without the relay of tradition or religion? In a way, traditional societies or
religious orders made things relatively easy by ascribing to each his/her function, role
and rank in society. Once individuals had established a legal and political base for the
recognition of the equal rights of all, the process of recognizing others as all equal to
one’s self, yet never identical, and therefore, irretrievably others, became a driving
force behind the constitution of early Western democracies.

* The Tabula Rasa of the Post-Enlightenment Age

All four artists share first and foremost the same historical background: they are all,
within their own specific differences, born in the modern era, or are all products of
the post-Enlightenment age. This modern age, brought up and symbolized by the two
revolutions at the end of the 18th century, is characterized by the fact that all values,

rules and norms that were guaranteed by tradition and by religious systems, became
subject to question, or to critical enquiry. Suddenly, man—whether on the American
continent or in Western Europe, at the end of the 18th century—claimed the right to
check the validity claim of almost any principle or rule inherited from tradition. The definition of Enlightenment given by Albrecht Wellmer is useful here for its clarity and concision:

Enlightenment means the discovery that seemingly guaranteed norms of correct living, the ‘justification’ for which lay in the order of things, the will of God, or the authority of tradition, have no conceivable foundation other than in the will of men.\(^{231}\)

This was, of course, especially true in the field of politics, ethics and aesthetics, whose rules are by definition more open to question and discussion than scientific laws. Modernity, in the definition adopted here, begins with an act of radical critique that sweeps through all established values: nothing can be taken for granted. In the field of artistic practice, this critique often led to a kind of *tabula rasa* and, as we will see in the examples of the four artists under scrutiny, each of them, in different ways, and with different results, went through a phase of radical critique and self-critique that established a new base or starting point for their own art: we will see in a later chapter the modalities and the impact of this *tabula rasa* policy that characterizes these four artists’ incipient artistic practices. For now, what matters is to see that all

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four artists participate to the age of modern art, as Jean-Marie Schaeffer coined this expression.

∗ To Be Modern = To Be Critical

There is something rather frightening about such an act of universal doubt or of radical questioning. This skepticism can only lead to an almost nightmarish situation in which everything, and anything becomes subject to the same questioning—a position that may only lead to cynicism, the dark side of skepticism. Wellmer describes quite evocatively the somewhat terrifying and somewhat exhilarating senses that resulted from this critical enterprise, at the onset of the modern era:

…this discovery must have induced a sense of vertigo in those who first made it, a sense of vertigo in which a wide variety of factors may well have been present. They would have felt that their existence was being shaken to its foundations. They would have glimpsed a freedom, which was either chilling or exhilarating.232

On the whole, there seems to be some consensus among the different and competing interpretive systems of modernism around the point that modernism begins with

232 Ibid.
criticism. This sweeping critical force is not, however, without a certain orientation, nor is it without a subject. In fact, its subject and its orientation point are one and the same: man. The particular site of this generalized critique is man—who can also be described as the author or the subject of this critical enterprise. Man is also the goal, or the motivation of this effort insofar as everything that passes through this critical lens is judged as to whether it is suitable to the ends of man. Needless to say, modernity being equivalent to a general critical enterprise, the primacy of the position of man within this enterprise had to be a subject of critique as well. Much of the efforts of postmodernism have been bearing on this point, pushing to the ultimate limits this radical questioning of all values attached to man, regarded as a center of values, and as the subject of his own representations and his own actions. In a way, the program of modernism and post-modernism unfolds according to a remarkable logic: having subjected everything, and every value, to the same critical examination (the task of the enlightenment,) there could ultimately only be one task left to carry forward: to criticize the very subject or author of this critical enterprise, i.e., man himself, together with the instrument of his own critique, reason. Both the notions that the human subject was autonomous (or fully in control of his own powers) and that reason (the powerful instrument of the critique) was infallible became the principal targets of this second wave of critique, that became largely characteristic of the postmodern era, although it is quite possible to find sources of such a critique in the 19th century, with Nietzsche, for instance, or later on, with Freud. The hundred or
so year old critique of humanism led to the debunking of reason on the assumption that reason, in fact, soon turns into its other, and hides its irrational essence, and by the same token, the case was made that the powerful autonomous subject, the user of reason as an instrument, was, therefore, impotent, and unable to deliver his promises. We will see how Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns, respectively at the beginning of the modernist era, and on the edge between modernism and postmodernism, all engaged in their own vocabularies in a critique of the existing conditions of practice of their art. One may be critical, and even hyper-critical, without being deleterious or iconoclastic—even though Rauschenberg himself came very close to the latter point when he decided to erase a drawing by Willem de Kooning. The erased drawing, however, has not been annulled: it still exists as an object, and, furthermore, carries now the marks of two hands. The faint, though still visible, remnants of de Kooning’s old drawing, and the trace of the agitated eraser in the hand of Rauschenberg as he proceeded to rub off the drawing by the older artist.

**The Example of Speech Act Theory**

This critique of critiques that largely fed the postmodernist age, under the flag of Deconstruction, found an unexpected obstacle to its totalizing enterprise, and that is the fact that there exists language. What happens in the communicative relationship between a speaker and an interpreting hearer? “A speaker comes to an understanding
It may be tempting, although ultimately also limiting, to compare our two inter-relationships to an ongoing artistic conversation, in which the medium of the conversation consists in works of art rather than spoken words. A caveat is required, however, in order not to take this analogy as anything other than a point of conceptual reference. If speech act theory may sound somewhat complex or overwhelming at times, I will argue that the case is even more arduous when it comes to grasp the multi-faceted nature of artistic collaborations. The difficulty inherent to speech act theory when it comes to describe what goes on in a normal conversation will give a sense of the problems we are about to tackle here.

John R. Searle introduced a lecture in 1981 with the following remarks:

Traditionally speech act theory has a very restricted subject matter. The speech act scenario is enacted by its two great heroes, “S” [Speaker] and “H” [Hearer]; and it works as follows: S goes up to H and cuts loose with an acoustic blast; if all goes well, if all the appropriate conditions are satisfied, if S’s noise is infused with intentionality, and if all kinds of rules come into play, then the speech act is successful and nondefective. After that, there is silence; nothing else happens. The speech act is concluded and S and H go their separate ways. Traditional speech act theory is thus largely confined to single speech acts. But, as we all know, in real life speech acts are often not

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like that at all. In real life, speech characteristically consists of longer
sequences of speech acts, either on the part of the speaker, in a continuous
discourse; or it consists, more interestingly, of sequences of exchange speech
acts in a conversation, where alternatively S becomes H; and H, S.234

Partly defective as it may be, speech act theory has at least contributed to paving the
way towards an empirical description of what happens when a conversation between
S and H takes place. There is, in art history, alas no such thing as an “art act
theory”—and even less an “art interchange theory.” The multitude of facts and
functions that come into the constitution of a speech act is formidable; when it comes
to describing what goes on in a normal conversation, it is, of course, even worse. One
can barely imagine what it would take to produce the equivalent of a speech act
theory to describe art production phenomena. Searle, describing the problems
inherent in giving accounts of conversations, sounds a precious warning of
humility—which I will adopt wholeheartedly:

…the question naturally arises: Could we get an account of conversations
parallel to our account of speech acts? Could we, for example, get an account
that gave us constitutive rules for conversations in a way that we have

234 John R. Searle, “Conversation,” a lecture given at the University of Campinas, Brazil at a
conference on Dialogue in 1981. This was published in (On) Searle on Conversation, by John R. Searle
constitutive rules of speech acts? My answer to that question is going to be “No.”

The answer will be all the more negative when applied to art collaborative practices. Let it be said, however, that interestingly each of the four artists were or are greatly versed in conversations, or correspondences. The examples of Pissarro and Cézanne are patent: Pissarro especially always readily engaged in discussions with friends or adversaries on artistic issues of concern to him—he would then transcribe the contents of these discussions to his eldest son Lucien. The example of Cézanne, (despite his reputation to the contrary) is equally telling: even though he was much more moody, and offered a much more brittle personality than Pissarro’s, Cézanne clearly occupied a “critical” (in every sense of the word) position within the Impressionist circle, and, after he had broken up with Pissarro (after 1885), he spent essentially the last twenty years of his life paradoxically in isolation while striving to communicate to others what his art was about. The situation with respect to Rauschenberg is no less convincing: he, as an artist, is profoundly communicative, even though his being dyslexic led him to cultivate spoken, rather than written, communication. As for Johns, the ample volumes of published interviews that he has given through the last five decades is nothing short of impressive: nobody could

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235 Ibid., p. 7.
236 See the five volumes of CP/IBH, op. cit.
238 Barbara Rose, Rauschenberg, (New York: Vintage Books, 1987) offers a particular cogent example of Rauschenberg’s great clarity as a communicator of his aims and ideas.
question Jasper Johns’s warm propensity to engage in socializing and act inter-subjectively.239

* Transferring one’s self?

But engaging in an art collaboration is different from engaging in a conversation, even though some rules of procedures may resemble the two activities: I am especially thinking of the notion of what Habermas called “ethics of discussion.” The question, though, soon becomes more complex and perplexing when one introduces the fact that, in sharing in the process of making art, artists agree to share a mode of expression in which what is at stake is each of their selves: what is at stake is the fabrication of their artistic identity. So, why should it take more than one individual to create or to address what is essentially individual? Indeed, throughout the modern era essentially, artistic expression became more and more clearly rooted in the pursuit of the expression of the self—each artistic production thus becoming the mark of an individual, unique and, therefore, not to be duplicated. The first paradox that one encounters as we raise our first question takes the form of another question: how can the pursuit of the self—what we share with no one—be the subject of a shared experience? Or, how can others help us find our selves? We know, at least since Freud, that working with some one else often helps us to retrieve, at least in

239 Jasper Johns, *Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996) will offer some insight as to the artist’s readiness to talk about his art.
part, our broken selves. In what he coined “transference” Freud had described the phenomenon through which an analyst acts as a “catalytic ferment” by drawing upon him/herself the affects of the patient who finds him/herself liberated in this process. The father of psychoanalysis thus described the process of transference:

The patient… directs towards the physician a degree of affectionate feeling (mingled, often enough, with hostility) which is based on no real relation between them and which—as is shown by every detail of its emergence—can only be traced to old wishful phantasies of the patient’s which have become unconscious.

Even though according to Freud “transference arises spontaneously in all human relationships,” it is clear that this process is anything but mutual. Besides, the psycho-analytical approach of dialogues presupposes “a strict and universal application of determinism to mental life,” which is totally out of place here in order to understand the complex make up of artistic interchanges: these, and the examples that will be examined suppose the opposite: that the exchange of information, and the gains (and losses) are mutual—if but necessarily unequal—and that these exchanges leave room for unpredictable results. In other words, in order for

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241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid., 58.
these exchanges to take place successfully, the results of any given exchange cannot be known in advance. Each of the participants may well guess what his co-artist’s next move (as in a game of chess) will be like, but in order for this exchange to take place, the possibility for the other to do something contrary to one’s expectations must be guaranteed. This is not to say, of course, that certain salient points that occur through the process of a psychoanalytical cure will not be seen in operation through these interchanges. Nevertheless, the aims, as well as the presuppositions inherent in psychoanalysis will be different from those found through the process studied here.

The vast difference, however, between a psychoanalytical cure and the type of interchange under study here is that in the latter, both participants (if the exchange is conclusive) help each other in reaching their artistic selves: each is in turn “shrink” and “patient” in other words. The reciprocal nature of this exchange implies that both participants are givers and takers, simultaneously, or alternatively: the exchange can only work if it goes both ways, if it really is an exchange. If one prefers to use a judicial metaphor, both artists are successively judges and parties.

*Discourse Analysis*
Another form of investigation that offers a possible model of research is what is known as “discourse analysis” in the field of linguistics.²⁴⁴ A more apt analogy than the type of dialogue offered by psychoanalysis could probably be found in the branch of linguistics that studies the ordinary day-to-day conversational exchanges. Such studies attempt to find an answer to such questions as:

How are successive utterances related; who controls the discourse; how does he do it; how, if at all, do other participants take control; how do the roles of speaker and listener pass from one participant to another; how are new topics introduced and old ones ended; what linguistic evidence is there for discourse units larger than the utterance?²⁴⁵

The model offered by a casual conversation will probably prove to be the closest analogon of what goes on in an active exchange between artists. To the same extent that conversations are likely to vary greatly in length, intensity, in topics, as in “style” between different protagonists, working collaborations between artists will greatly vary as well, according to a multitude of factors. For the same reasons that the study of conversational exchanges has proved a difficult one to accomplish, the study of

²⁴⁴ The term was first used by Zellig Harris in “Discourse Analysis,” Language, 1952, no. 28, p.1 where it is defined as “a method for the analysis of connected speech (or writing)” whose purpose is to further “descriptive linguistics beyond the limits of a single sentence at a time” and to “correlat[e] “culture” and language.” (p.2). See also The Linguistics Encyclopedia, ed., Kirsten Malmkjær, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 100-101.
artistic exchanges has probably dissuaded many historians to tackle this as a topic. There are, of course, notable exceptions, which I have mentioned above.\footnote{I am thinking especially about Yve-Alain Bois’s book on Matisse and Picasso, \textit{(op. cit.)} whose central argument is structured almost like a conversation, or a theatre play.}

As a material for linguistic analysis, ordinary conversations have proved to be difficult because this is:

the most sophisticated and least overtly rule-governed form of spoken discourse… In normal conversation, for example, changes of topic are unpredictable. Participants are of equal status and have equal rights to determine the topic… [In addition] a speaker can always sidestep and quarrel with a question instead of answering it, thus introducing a digression or a complete change of direction. …Thirdly, the ambiguity inherent in language means that people occasionally misunderstand each other; more often, and for a wide variety of reasons, people exploit the ambiguity and pretend to have misunderstood:

Father: Is that your coat on the floor again?

Son: Yes. (Goes on reading)\footnote{Sinclair and Coulthard, 4-5.}

It is clear in the latter exchange that the son’s reply either acknowledges the father’s question and rudely discards it by the same monosyllabic response, or plays the
linguistic game that the interrogative sentence—meant as an order, but phrased as a question—puts in play by introducing a note of irony in the dialogue.

The difficulty described by Sinclair and Coulthard in tackling the study of ordinary conversations lies in the fact that the conversational material is the “least overtly rule-governed form of spoken discourse.” Real as it is, this difficulty has not stopped an exponential upsurge of linguistic or semiotic studies in the last thirty years dedicated to an in depth study of practice of conversation—or of illocutionary logic.248

This difficulty, however, is compounded by the fact that the exchanges under study here are even less governed by rules than conversations are. Furthermore, much of the shared motivations that will be seen as determining the two actual artistic exchanges consisted in grappling with established rules of artistic practice. In fact, it is effectively one of the common denominators that will unite the two pairs of protagonists under study: both couples of artists were very intent on questioning the very rules that governed the artistic codes and conventions of practice of their respective times and places. For this reason, the material under study here would lend

itself even less readily than the already complex conversational material in discourse analysis.

If conversations may be described as the “least overtly rule-governed form of spoken discourse,” how could one then characterize an artistic interchange in which the existent rules are likely to be challenged at all times, and where new rules are to be reinvented, and superseded by yet other rules constantly? No wonder then if the field of artistic communication has so far received relatively little attention. Conversations have been part and parcel of the process of communication under study here—but it can in no way be reduced to it. Furthermore, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct it. The field of communication that will be examined here is both broader in scope, and less “rule-governed” than the speech-acts as observed through conversations.

* Group Communication Experiments

What physicist David Bohm observed at work in the formation group communication offers us a closer point of comparison to what is at stake within these two artistic interchanges. Bohm explored “the problematic nature of day-to-day relationship and communication.” Interestingly David Bohm’s work was known to Robert Rauschenberg through his experiment with Klüver.
Having decided to study modes of communication between his lab colleagues around a particular research project, Bohm thus described the process of one of his group communication experiments that he carried out:

In the beginning, people were expressing fixed positions, which they were tending to defend, but later it became clear that to maintain the feeling of friendship in the group was much more important than to maintain any position. Such friendship has an impersonal quality in the sense that its establishment does not depend on close personal relationship between participants. A new kind of mind thus begins to come to being which is based on the development of a common meaning that is constantly transforming in the process of the dialogue. People are no longer primarily in opposition, nor can they be said to be interacting, rather they are participating in this pool of common meaning which is capable of constant development and change. In this development the group has no pre-established purpose, though at each moment a purpose, which is free to change, may reveal itself.249

The process of artistic interchanges observed through this study reveals a deeply personal quality, contrary to what Bohm observed in his group experiments. However, his description of the process through which a common meaning is being developed, with no pre-established purpose, proves to be of useful application within

the present context. In fact, it seems as if one of the biggest problems in theorizing the problem of what John R. Searle has called “collective intentionality” is that either the “I” is sacrificed (as in Bohm’s analyses) or the “we” is ignored—and we then obtained a “we” that is a mere collection of “I”s. “Why, asks Searle, are so many philosophers convinced that collective intentionality must be reducible to individual intentionality?”

It must be said that the same argument applies to studies in art history where the monographic genre still largely dominates the rate of production of new books. Searle then proceeds in explaining that this incapacity to think about a collective intentionality is based on a fallacious argument:

The argument is that because all intentionality exists in the heads of individual human beings, the form of that intentionality can make reference only to the individuals in whose heads it exists.

Searle then explains that the other branch of the dilemma would have consisted in accepting the implausible concept of a “collective consciousness” or some “super mind floating over individual minds” à la Hegel. Searle rightly argues for a solution that offers an exit to this fallacious dilemma, and proposes to think the proposition “we intend” not as an extraneous proposition, posited outside each

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251 Ibid.
252 Ibid.
individual, but simply as an individual utterance itself. This provides a very useful rectification against some previous simplifications: I would add to this that the “we intend,” as it is uttered by an “I” is therefore necessarily different from the “we intend” that my partner will utter. I would also add to this formulation that the individual who utters, “we intend” may also return (almost at any point) to the mere “I intend,” thus breaking the—necessarily always fragile—contract between the two “I’s. In effect, in order fully to respect the ever so fragile equilibrium between myself and the other as involved in a mutually acknowledging partnership, the “we” that is common to both individuals really needs, however, to be uttered by an “I.” The source of the utterance of the communal “we” (the very site of the interaction between the two individuals) remains, and cannot but remain the “I” in its individual presence. In other words, the very fact that I may utter “we” has me reflect upon myself (it is necessarily I, and not some one else, who says “we”) and at the same time, in the same gesture of reflection upon myself, I open myself as this site where the other is conveyed. I think it is this double-edged process that reflects best the complex, and fragile dynamics that is consistently at work within the two artistic interchanges studied here.

It is important at this point before closing for now the debate on the various conceptions of the process of communication (that forms the focus of this essay) to establish the distinction between two main competing models: the intentionalist model (represented chiefly by Searle) and the inter-subjectivist model (represented by
Habermas, Apel and others.) Habermas drew this distinction with great clarity in an article he wrote on Searle in order to specify their differences. I will only briefly sketch the tone of these differences. Habermas begins by stating that all analyses of the communication processes are based on intuitions. The intentionalist view is fairly straightforward: speaker S stands in front of addressee A. S has a meaning destined to A (intention1); S’s goal is also to have A recognize his intention to communicate this meaning (intention 2); if he succeeds in both, the intentionalist view is that S has performed a successful speech act.

The inter-subjectivist view is different: it assumes that “S successfully performs a speech act if he reaches understanding (sich verstündigen) with an addressee about something in the world.” The inter-subjectivist is not so interested in making sure that his/her intentions are clearly recognized as in attempting to reach an agreement upon an utterance x. By uttering x,

S allows an addressee the possibility of taking a position with a “yes” or a “no” to something concerning which he wishes to reach agreement with her. The model in this case is not that of transmitting ideas but that of bringing about a consensus with regard to some (in principle disputed) matter.

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254 Ibid., 257.
Language is not conceived as a means for transmitting subjective contents but as a medium in which the participants intersubjectively share an understanding of a given matter. The sign x is not a tool that an individual can use, and with which S gives A to understand something by prompting her to recognize his meaning or intention; rather, the sign x is an element of a repertoire used in common that permits the participants to understand the same matter in the same way.\textsuperscript{255}

This clarifies the distinction between these two families of understanding of the communicative process. We could put it differently by saying that the intentionalists carry an instrumentalist conception of language: x the sign is here as a bridge to carry the intention of S to A; whereas the inter-subjectivists have a very different conceptions of language—one that one could call participationist: to them, x is a site (a medium) within which different Ss share a role in order to produce an agreement between themselves. Out of the four artists under review here, it is probably tempting to draw the line between them on this conception of pictorial language: one could say that Pissarro and Cézanne, who still have a message to carry across, are more attached to an instrumentalist conception of painting, than certainly Rauschenberg and Johns are because the latter two deal with language, not as an instrument, but as a site of experimentation—the experimentation works if it raises enthusiasm from A (the Addressee who soon turns into S.) Although there is inevitably an element of truth to

\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 257-58.
this division, Cézanne and Pissarro did not limit their use of the pictorial language to an instrumental use—it will be possible to verify through looking at the example of the two Louveciennes paintings for instance, that both artists were looking at x (here, any pictorial sign) as one of many elements of a repertoire “used in common that permits the participants to understand the same matter in the same way.” This is equally true of both pairs of artists. I would add an important qualification to the inter-subjectivist argument, however: that is, that the goal of reaching an understanding “of the same matter in the same way” is never quite feasible, in art. Even if they got very close to each other—for instance when they painted side by side and produced over the years a set of very close depictions of the same landscape [See illustration Dossier: Dialogues, nos. 5-37], Pissarro and Cézanne never lost their individual “sensation,” as Pissarro was keen to remind us. The same can be said even more firmly about Johns and Rauschenberg, whose work overlapped with each other—and we know that, at times, each work by either Johns or Rauschenberg could elicit serious enthusiasm on the behalf of the other, but not to the point where each would remotely loose his distinction.

∗ Ambivalent ‘we’

There is, undoubtedly, a lot at stake in two artists looking at a work of art together, or in community with each other. Kant, while yet (as we saw) only focusing on the
recipient end of the aesthetic judgment (and leaving aside the artistic productive problem) was the first to lay out clearly the crux of the aesthetic judgment as it oscillates between a highly individual assertion, and one that claims an inter-subjective agreement from a confirming “we”, when he wrote in 1790:

How is a judgment possible which, going merely upon the individual’s own feeling of pleasure in an object independent of the concept of it, estimates this as a pleasure attached to the representation of the same object in every other individual, and does so a priori, i.e. without being allowed to wait and see if other people will be of the same mind?256

The present study points to the tension between these individual forms of judgment and their claim to reach out to others. To put it in more concrete terms, ‘Pissarro and Cézanne’ as a pair affected both the individual Pissarro and the individual Cézanne—separately and together. The very same appears true about Rauschenberg and Johns. A comparative study of these two intense and wholly engaged—and engaging—artistic collaborations will enable us to highlight some of the key constituents of much of the modern and post-modern reflection on aesthetics. By the clarity of their examples, the cogency of their collaborative productions—at one end and the other of the modernist spectrum—Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns open up a question that continues to be of daunting importance: is it possible to think and

act aesthetically, without thinking with others? This question assumes certain urgency when one applies it to the contemporary art scene today. Yet, this question is not new. Listing up a few maxims that would help in elucidating “the fundamental propositions” of the judgment of taste, Kant again mentioned three rules: “1. to think for oneself; 2. to think from the standpoint of everyone else; 3. always to think consistently.” It is precisely the fascinating toing and froing between thinking for oneself, and thinking for others that the two examples of collaborative forces can be studied.

As we saw, works of art lie at the nexus of a whole mesh of relationships that involve their authors, their works of art, and their audience. One of these primordial relationships is that between an artist’s “own feeling of pleasure” in front of an art object (be it his own, or some one else’s) and the representation that others have of that particular object. Among all others, certain characters may acquire a very significant role, and become especially significant in the exchange in which they enter with the artist in question.

* Judges and Parties, or Givers and Takers

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257 Kant, op. cit., § 40, p. 152.
The peculiarity of this tension between these four artists begins with the fact that each of the four individuals alternately become as selves and others: selves when they confront their own works, or confront the works of others in relationship to theirs; they will turn into others when their own works are seen and judged by their friends. The situation will be compounded by the fact that the four individuals will appear as judges and jury. They will not only appear as aesthetic judges, but as defendants as well—defendants of their own works, but also occasionally of the works of their working partner. Pissarro will be a very vocal defendant of the works by Cézanne; and Johns, of the work by Rauschenberg, for instance. Indeed, Kant was right, the judgment of taste (“I find this object beautiful/or ugly”) begins with a stubbornly individual statement of opinion, and if I don’t like this object, nothing, not even the arguments of the most respected art critics of Mercure de France, or the New York Times, nor the agents of the time-honored tradition of taste, or the so-called universal criteria of beauty—museum curators or art historians—will make me change my mind.

If anyone reads me his poem, or brings me to a play, which, all said and done, fails to commend itself to my taste, then let him adduce Batteux or Lessing, or still older and more famous critics of taste, with all the host of rules laid down by them, as a proof of the beauty of his poem; let certain passages particularly displeasing to me accord completely with the rules of beauty, (as set out by
these critics and universally recognized): I stop my ears: I do not want to hear any reasons or any arguing about the matter. I would prefer to suppose that those rules of the critics were at fault, or at least have no application, than to allow my judgment to be determined by *a priori* proofs. I take my stand on the ground that my judgment is to be one of taste, and not one of understanding or reason.\(^\text{258}\)

But the symmetric reverse is just as true: I will not tolerate any one attacking my aesthetic convictions—even though Kant seems to have omitted to mention this latter point. In other words, I will not be convinced by others, but will not let myself be unconvinced by others either. Here is a good example of what I mean: Pissarro and Johns, convinced of the validity of the works of their partners—Cézanne and Rauschenberg—did not hesitate to lambaste those who either were too tepid, or downright critical of their close colleagues’ works. Pissarro’s response to Joris-Karl Huysmans offers a good example of this: even though the critic had been eulogizing Pissarro’s own work, he had been less than lukewarm about Cézanne’s work. Pissarro, forgetting to be grateful, didn’t easily forgive Huysmans for having missed out on Cézanne’s genius. Similarly, Johns’s first published piece was targeted against Hilton Kramer who had been critical of both Rauschenberg’s and his own works—

\(^\text{258}\) Kant, *op. cit.*, § 33, p. 140.
Johns also took the defense of all the artists who had been a subject of attacks by the same critic.  

* The Critique of Critics: I cannot let the judgment of others determine my own

At the root of the aesthetic judgment is, therefore, a ruthless attachment to autonomy: contrary to what happens in mathematics or in sciences, nobody can lay the rules nor determine the content of my aesthetic judgment. Nobody can think for me. “Taste lays claim simply to autonomy.” Allowing others to make up my mind, or to influence—or attack—my judgment would be exactly antithetical to the nature of an aesthetic judgment. “To make the judgments of others the determining ground of one’s own would be heteronomy.” This doesn’t mean, of course, that I may not open myself to the views of others: in fact, as we have seen with Kant, thinking with others, or from the standpoint of others is the second step and one of the fundamental principles in casting a judgment of taste—but, if and when I do so, it has to be on my ground, out of my own will, not under the coercion of some *soi disant* indisputable argument, or some overarching concept. Surely the authority of art schoolteachers, art

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259 See Correspondance de Camille Pissarro, ed., Janine Bailly-Herzberg, Paris: (PUF and Editions du Valhermeil, 1980-91), vol. 1/1865-85, p. 208. [Henceforth referred to as Pissarro, 1980-91]: Pissarro thus accuses Huysmans: “D’où vient que vous ne dites pas un mot de Cézanne, que pas un de nous n’admette comme un des temperament les plus étonnants et le plus curieux de notre époque et qui a eu une influence très grande sur l’art moderne?… ” Also see Jasper Johns, Writings, 19. Jasper Johns takes offense against the fact that “[Robert] Rauschenberg, [gets the label of] the OFFENSE WHICH IS DELIGHT; and I, the DADA WHICH IS NOT DADA.”

260 Kant, *op. cit.*, § 32, p. 137.

261 Ibid.
critics, or scholars will have little weight on my judgment, for “the judgment of taste is not founded on concepts, and is in no way a cognition, but only an aesthetic judgment.” At the root of all aesthetic activities, therefore, is a refreshing call to humility: whether on the receiving or the producing ends of the aesthetic chain, whether an onlooker or an artist—or both—I am on my own. At the same time, there is something slightly terrifying about being on one’s own—hence, part of the impetus of finding a kindred soul has to do with the fact that finding aesthetic agreement provides a formidable source of solace. If I decide to turn to others for discussion or advice, it is up to me only to do so: I am responsible for my judgment:

...every judgment which is to show the taste of the individual, is required to be an independent judgment of the individual himself. There must be no need of groping about among other people’s judgments and previous instruction from their delight in or aversion to the same object.263

Another aspect of this antinomy of taste that is not frequently mentioned is that while universal assent is required as part of any judgment of taste I pronounce, I, however, must think by myself: I need to be original in what I state about a work of art, and my statement claims to be shared by all. The solution of the antinomy (as all solutions in the Kantian system) is that the two propositions would appear in dire contradiction of

262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
each other if they were uttered from the same point of view. They become compatible if one and the other is uttered from different points of view: the point of view of the senses (I love this work of art) and the point of view of reason (wouldn’t it be magnificent if all would agree? And therefore, surely, they all must agree with my judgment.)

Kant might as well have had Paul Cézanne or Jasper Johns in mind, and each of their early biting critiques of art critics, when he wrote:

Hence it is that a youthful poet refuses to allow himself to be dissuaded from the conviction that his poem is beautiful, either by the judgment of the public or of his friends. And even if he lends them an ear, he does so, not because he has now come to a different judgment, but because, though the whole public, at least so far as his work is concerned, should have false taste, he still, in his desire for recognition, finds good reason to accommodate himself to the popular error (even against his own judgment).  

Neither Cézanne, nor Johns a hundred years later, ever conceded to “lend an ear” to their institutional critics: in both cases, their “desire for recognition” could not conceivably make concessions to “accommodating oneself to the popular error.” In fact, both Cézanne and Johns turned very aggressively against art critics, or

\[\text{264} \text{ Ibid.}\]
authorities that proved to be belligerent, or that were simply exerting negative pressure on the views of the public through their authoritative stance. Although we will have an opportunity in the second section of this work to look at Johns’s two caustic sculptures deriding art critics, it is very relevant here to mention two of the artist’s earliest sculptures: *The Critic Sees*, and *The Critic Smiles*.

* In Human Interchanges, $2 \neq 1 + 1

Paradoxically, in human artistic activities (as with all activities that depend upon communication) being two does not quite equate being one plus one, individually and separately. Togetherness colors individuality, and, to a large degree, transforms it. To a large extent, it looks as if individuality calls for togetherness—if only for the fact that each artist, especially in the modern era, demands a certain form of recognition, and can no longer obtain it from the old system that has been rejected. In this context, it seems difficult to remain alone facing one’s work in silence. Whether it be uttering an aesthetic judgment, or producing an art object, an aesthetic action sets us in relation to others, seems to require the presence of others. “Relation is reciprocity,” noted Martin Buber, almost echoing Fichte. And he explained:

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My You acts on me as I act on it. Our students teach us, our works form
us…How are we educated by children, by animal! Inscrutably involved, we
live in the currents of universal reciprocity.\(^{267}\)

The examples offered by the works of Pissarro and Cézanne, and of Rauschenberg
and Johns illustrate with remarkable clarity these currents of reciprocity.

* Difference between the assertion “everyone will agree” and “everyone ought to
agree” *

We know that an aesthetic judgment—e.g., saying “this object is beautiful”—is one
that presupposes free and universal communication, even if this communication can
never quite be attained de facto: the presupposition and the attainment of this
presupposition are two different things. “In all judgments by which we describe
anything as beautiful we tolerate no one else being of a different opinion,” Kant
explains.\(^{268}\) He immediately develops this assessment by saying that these taste
judgments of ours only lay upon feelings, and not upon concepts. They are therefore
not verifiable—although this does in no way diminish the strength of their claims.
Who hasn’t felt bitterly disappointed at the thought that some one refuses to see the

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\(^{267}\) Ibid.
\(^{268}\) Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, § 22, p. 84.
beauty in one of our favorite works of art! And imagine what it would be like if our favorite work of art has been created by our partner or best friend.

The assertion is not that every one will fall in with our judgment, but rather that every one ought to agree with it. Here I put forward my judgment of taste as an example of the judgment of common sense, and attribute to it on that account exemplary validity. Hence common sense is a mere ideal norm.  

Aesthetic communication cannot possibly be coercive: you cannot force some one to agree with you on the fact that your favorite painting is beautiful. Not only that, but also this judgment, if it must be the object of a consensus, must become a point of mutual and free agreement, although nothing guarantees that this consensus will actually take place. Therefore, as Kant pointed out, this consensus or this “indeterminate norm of a common sense” is nothing more than a presupposition on our parts; it is certainly not a fact.  

Yet this consensus, merely virtual as it may remain, is always presupposed in our discussions of works of art: one expects to find some degree of agreement about the objects one finds beautiful, or aesthetically pleasing or “interesting.” One is unfailingly disappointed if one cannot reach even a shadow of an agreement about

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269 Ibid.  
such matters with others. This process points to the receiving end of the aesthetic spectrum: it deals with our responses as viewers, or visitors of a museum, an art gallery, or an artist’s studio—or indeed, as admirers of a beautiful landscape. It says little or nothing about the other end of the aesthetic spectrum: the productive end—which doesn’t seem to have interested Kant quite as much. What happens to a judgment of taste when makers and viewers, or artists and judges are conflated? Surely, there too, the mere possibility of an agreement may never be more than “the indeterminate norm of a common sense” and this indeterminate norm leads, doubtlessly, to ever more uncertain, unpredictable, and frustrating even, results. For an artist to presume or presuppose that another, however close, will (rather than ought to) agree upon any of his own artistic values is often the immediate cause for the end of their relationship: think, for instance, of the relation between Gauguin and Van Gogh. The stakes tend to become much heavier when an aesthetic relationship takes place between artists. Thus, they each endorse in turn the roles of potential critics and defenders of what they see. While they retain the same function as we do in any given art space—they function as viewers—these viewers are also producers: the information they draw as viewers is necessarily going to be processed—or instantaneously rejected—as of possible use for their work as producers of art. An artist standing in the same room as another artist, looking at the other’s work, doesn’t just “experience” the other’s work: he stands in relation to that other artist and his/her work. That other artist is not a mere ‘him’ or ‘her’ who remains innocuously remote.

271 With the exception of §32 of The Critique of Judgment.
or absent. The other artist is a ‘you’ and may suddenly turn into an ‘I’ if he too has anything to say about the other’s works, or about his/hers. As Martin Buber pithily put it:

The human being to whom I say You I do not experience. But I stand in relation to him, in the sacred basic word. Only when I step out of this do I experience him again. Experience is remoteness from You.\textsuperscript{272}

And Buber further explains what he has in mind with an example borrowed from the Fuegian:

And the Fuegian surpasses our analytical wisdom with a sentence-word of seven syllables that literally means: “they look at each other, each waiting for the other to offer to do that which both desire but neither wishes to do.”\textsuperscript{273}

This will be precisely the point: not so much an examination of how each of the four artists studied here “experienced” each other, but how they were “in relation” to each other, and each other’s works—a relation that to a very large extent changed each of these artists as individuals before they entered into either of these relations. In order to appreciate how these changes operated on each artist, it appears opportune here to


\textsuperscript{273} Buber, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 70.
“present” each of the four individuals and underline how they were each ready to engage in such an intense act of interchange.

* The Opposition Between Modernism (Dogmatism) vs. Post-Structuralism/Deconstructivism (Skepticism) Or: Does it Have to Be All or Nothing?

In the field of human sciences—which includes art history—one could have thought that there would be more of a consensus on when modernity began. Even there, however, opinions and views differ largely—the difference, however, is accountable in mere hundreds, rather than billions, of years as modernity is defined in astrophysics. In philosophy, however, most agree upon the fact that the emergence of the concept of *history* in philosophical treaties marked the beginning of the modern age. History carries inherently the notion that every human action is subject to change and transformation, and the notion of change is principal, indeed inherent, in the definition of modernity. History was not always a philosophically acceptable concept. Every one knows that Hegel was its champion, but it surely began before him. Leibniz alone offers a powerful example of an attempt to reconcile human action, in its transient contingency, with the divine will through historical categories. If the philosophy of history can be equated with the concept of modernity, then, finding the first philosopher of history will de facto give us the date of departure of modernity.
Even on this question, there is no consensus; some philosophers do not agree with themselves even, as to when it started. Take Max Horkheimer, for instance, who certainly thought a great deal about history. In a text entitled “Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History,” Horkheimer first saw in Machiavelli “the first modern philosopher of history.” Then, later on, Horkheimer decides to bestow the same distinction on Vico, who with his *Scienza Nuova* (1725) is referred to as “the first veritable philosopher of history.”

There seems to be a common thread that runs through human sciences around the question of who the first modernist was. For Greenberg it was Kant who was the first modernist. Greenberg, however, (unlike Horkheimer) did not have in mind Kant’s conception of history (which is very thin, and until recently, not very well known.) Greenberg was more thinking of modernism as being characterized by its power to generate its own criticism—hence the reference to Kant. As will be seen in Section 2, however, this power to criticize led Greenberg to mould the evolution of modern art into the form of a particular historical model that has resulted in the system known today as ‘modernism.’ In other words, the criticism of the past follows a certain inherent logic which itself orientates the development of history—the history of

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modern art. The notion of history—or of historical changes—is therefore key to both modern philosophy and modern art. The question that will be asked in Sections 2 and partly in section 3 is what kind of understanding of modern art has this historical logical model permitted?

More interesting than knowing who the first modernist was, is the question of what criteria were retained in order to evaluate the effectiveness of those who defined the modern age. One explanation given by Horkheimer of Machiavelli’s early modern stance goes like this:

The greatness of Machiavelli was to have recognized, on the threshold of this new society, the possibility of a new science of politics whose principles corresponded to those of modern physics and psychology, and to have expressed its fundamentals with simplicity and certainty.\(^{276}\)

If these two attributes (simplicity and certainty) are indicative of Machiavelli’s style of exposure of his ideas, then one might venture to say that Greenberg was the Machiavelli of modernism (in art). The latter phrase “expressing the fundamentals [of a particular discipline] with simplicity and certainty” applies remarkably well to the author who edified an enterprise of production of sense and explanations out of modern art. Above all, however, the real analogy between Greenberg and Machiavelli

\(^{276}\) Ibid., 316.
is the temptation to elevate two essential domains within modern societies that were traditionally not the objects of theoretical speculations (art/Greenberg and politics/Machiavelli) into the objects of a possible science, with its own laws, evolution, and history. Greenberg was not the first to be tempted to draw a parallel between art and science. In 1921, Walter Hasenclever, playwright and editor of a Dresden avant-garde periodical, Menschen, interviewed Einstein on the common links between art and science. Here were the question and answer between this editor and Einstein:

Hasenclever: “I believe in the unconditional relatedness of artistic developments and scientific results within an epoch. For me there lies in the experiments of the painters and poets of our day an intuitive premonition (Vorahnung) of your discoveries. Would it be too immodest to ask you to give our magazine a few lines on that affinity?

Einstein: Where the world ceases to be the stage (Schauplatz) of personal hopes, wishes and will, where we confront it as free creatures, admiring, questioning, contemplating, there we enter the realm of art and science. If what is contemplated and experienced is pictured in the language of logic, we practice science; if it is mediated through forms of which the connections are inaccessible to conscious thought, yet recognized intuitively as meaningful,

we practice art. Common to both is the loving devotion to the super-personal, the remote from will.\(^{278}\)

I believe that Einstein’s careful choice of words would not have been disavowed by Greenberg. This devotion to the super-personal (one of the links that Einstein sees between art and science) was very much a belief held by Greenberg as well. Insofar as art operates in a super-personal realm of meaning (or connections intuitively recognized as meaningful), there surely was no room for “dialogues” that are by definition inter-personal—not super-personal. This is where I will draw a dividing line between modernity (in art) and modernism: modernity is a particular era (to which we still largely belong) characterized by a questioning attitude towards the past, and itself: modernity is therefore essentially a process of reflection that is eminently sharable with others: one can ask a question to oneself, but it is easier to share that question with some one else. Modernism recognizes this questioning attitude and the changes that result from it, but turn these changes into steps of a pre-conceived logic (or moments of an equally pre-conceived history) that radically expunge all dimensions of reflection, spontaneity, communication out of these changes. Modernity can be summarized by this often quoted text by Kant:

\(^{278}\) Quoted and translated by Meyer Schapiro, *The Unity of Picasso’s Art*, (New York: George Braziller, 2000), 49-50.
Our age is the genuine age of **criticism**, to which everything must submit.

**Religion** through its **holiness** and **legislation** through its **majesty** commonly seek to exempt themselves from it. But in this way they excite a just suspicion against themselves, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination.279

One could prolong the series of objects of suspicion in Kant’s list by adding an ideological trait central to modernism that consists in removing the findings of its own discipline from the field of criticism because its methods are deemed true and objective. The uncritical attachment to the truth of one’s findings can often turn into some form of faith: it is first based on the conception that the world of art history is a transparent structure, and, secondly, that it is fully accessible to the tools of human knowledge. Such a set of beliefs does not leave much room for reflection, or discussion by free questioning minds about what options to select and explore. It leaves room for confirmation and approval of its results.280 Modernism, therefore, looks at modernity through the tainted glasses of a scientist and historicist—both combined into one. The details of this approach will be reviewed in the second section. However, a will to criticize *everything* can also, in turn, lead to a different

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kind of faith of which the deconstructive or post-structuralist imperatives have offered scores of examples in the past fifty years. This is why, incidentally, Kant has proved to be so popular among a few mainstream postmodern authors such as Derrida and Lyotard. Kant did say that everything must submit to criticism—deconstruction can easily recognize in this an early summon for the task that they have been advocating. But Kant, on the other hand, did not exclude the possibility of reaching out representations that could claim a universal validity. This is where I find that the Criticist system erected by Kant offers such an fruitful way forward (towards a horizon that could be called, somewhat facetiously, post-post modern): it retains as its pivotal force a strong engagement in the critical power of reason. It escapes, however, two downsides of the modernist and post-modernist era: 1. scientism, i.e. an uncritical acceptance of the full validity of the premises and results of one’s inquiry (e.g. the modernist belief in the irrefutable development logic of modern art); 2. skepticism, i.e. an uncritical acceptance of the belief that nothing sustains the grinding, pulverizing motor of deconstruction, and that it is impossible to communicate or to reconstruct anything that makes any sense, or holds up any value (moral or aesthetic). Modern art history, in the last few decades, has very much oscillated between one and the other of these two extremes: between, say, modernism and post-structuralism. One of the motivations behind the present work is to explore a third way that would claim that it is possible to establish aesthetic values, and create sense out of what one sees (here, I therefore, partly endorse the modernist belief); but these values are not
based on some “super-personal” historical foundation or objective ground (here I leave the modernist camp, and join the deconstructive trend.) These meanings and values are based on the possibility of creating an assent between free-willing participants who confer to these meanings or values their validity claims (here I leave both the modernist and the post-modernist camps.) Thus, the two dangers that have, to some extent, marred the studies of modern art could both be avoided: the dogmatic trend through which the whole orientation process of modern art has been set in stone; the skeptic trend through which the validity claim of all values have been systematically turned down. The third way begins by opening up an arena of discussion in which the two above principles that are based on contradicting the premises of both the modernist/dogmatic and deconstructivist/skeptic camps: no specific validity claim can pretend to hold universal truth (this is the anti-modernist or anti-positivist stance); all validity claims are legitimately entitled to be heard as expressing the interests of a particular individual or group of individuals, and validity claims (for truth statements or value judgments, especially in art) are communicable and may form the object of a consensus. (this is the anti-post-modernist stance.) It is only out of a free-willed and open confrontation of various validity claims that a possible accord (or disaccord, as the case may be) can be reached about the validity claims that will be retained by the larger group of discussants who are examining these claims. This third way—which is essentially covered by what is called the pragmatics of communication—is neither universalist nor nihilist: it negotiates its
way through a neither-all-nor-nothing space that allows for art values to be agreed upon while also remaining open to criticism and transformations. It may not be as comfortable a position as either the modernist/dogmatic position, nor its counterpart the deconstructive/skeptical position—but it certainly opens avenues of reflection that will offer an exit for some of the aporias that have characterized the field of modernist art history of the last decades.  

Indeed, whether defending or attacking modernism, from whatever vantage point, the question of the preponderant role assumed by New York, for instance, having taken

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281 Needless to say the paradigms of communication discussed by several authors (some have been mentioned above) are not immune against the facetious cynicism of much post-modern literature that sees itself as probably under attack—whereas it is, in fact, not so at all. Discourse ethics do not attack, they invite an adversary to join a debate or confrontation. This requires that one admits it might be worth one’s efforts to join in. Baudrillard clearly does not see the point—the communication era (or what he sees as its travesty) is a disaster that has replaced another disaster: “But today the scene and mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold—the smooth operational surface of communication.” Jean Baudrillard, “The Ecstasy of Communication,” in The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster, (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 126-7. My only question to Baudrillard would be: does he not expect to have made his point clear and that some of his readers may well have understood, and even agreed with what he had to say? If so, isn’t this a successful example of an act of communication? I would like to offer the beginning of a response to the incurable skeptics (such as Baudrillard) through an excerpt of a quote of an article written on one of these four artists: “This speedup and saturation in communications has not only shrunk the world but crowded it. Connectivity increases and tangles in a small world: politically speaking there are no more “far places.” In magazines, editorial matter and advertising interlock, producing not a double image but a composite. Every aspect of our culture is touched by this coalescence of once separated place and events. The avant-garde is precipitated straight into public, and the audience can’t wait. Taste is not stable, possessed at leisure by its originators, to judge from the resentment teenagers are supposed to feel about their parents’ acceptance of rock ’n’ roll. Artists in New York, in the past six years, have contributed to this running-togetherness, both by their versatility and by their pursuit of mixed media art, such as Happenings of combines.” The article was written in 1965 with Rauschenberg in mind although these words apply with equal conviction to Jasper Johns. What I find interesting in the juxtaposition of these two quotes by Baudrillard and by Alloway, is that they at bottom both stem from the same observations—of the state of society around us, although, with the same premises, they come up with radically different conclusions. See Lawrence Alloway, “‘The World is a Painting’” Rauschenberg,” Vogue 146 no. 7 (October 15, 1965): 157.
over the position held by Europe, and in particular Paris is seldom contested—even among die-hard European nostalgists. Consensus exists around certain facts. As soon as one tries to qualify this fact, one is forced to introduce value judgments. Controversy (and therefore discussion) are inevitable as to whether this fact—the established preponderance of New York on the art world—is a good thing or not. Clement Greenberg, one of the heralds of modernism in art, clearly thought that it was a good thing. Serge Guilbaut introduced a very different tone in the discussion with his book whose title itself seemed to invite an open confrontation: *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. Likewise, even though Greenberg often presents his statements as enunciations of facts, the argument that underpins his definition of modernism is ultimately a moral distinction too. He is not talking about thefts and thieves, but about lies and truth. In a nutshell, prior to modernism, art was used to conceal art. With modernism, on the contrary, came a period of truth, frankness, honesty—all these axiological markers are used to describe what Greenberg points out as a movement “to call attention to art” rather than to continuously disguise itself. In other words, there was something dishonest about pre-modernist art, whereas modernism is all about revealing itself under its true colors, as it were, and making its intentions and its signs clear (to speak like an intentionalist). Modernism came out of the closet to unveil pre-modernism’s act of concealment.

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Greenberg explained that the physical limitations imposed on the métier of making a painting—the flatness and particular shape (often rectangular) of the support, and the properties of color—were regarded as “negative factors” by the Old Masters, whereas they became “positive factors” with Modernism. The fact that the Moderns are open and frank about their activities, therefore, stems from the fact that they no longer feel ashamed of their limitations, since these are now “positive.”\[^{284}\] Let us now see what consequences this gesture of honesty had upon the analysis of our four artists, and why, out of the four, Cézanne ended playing by far the lead role.

\[^{284}\] Ibid.
SECOND SECTION

Modernism: One by One
“In the long run there are only two kinds of art: the good and the bad.” Clement Greenberg

“Painting had begun to move fast in Pissarro’s day, faster than it had in three hundred years; he in particular must keep pace with it. The Method, if discovered, would consummate and at the same time stop the development of art, just as the fulfillment of socialism would, according to Marx, stop history. Pissarro believed in the possibility of the Method because he believed in the nineteenth century.” Clement Greenberg

“Suffice to say that it has been radically misunderstood by those critics who argue from Cézanne’s example that volume—or “plasticity”—is the end-all and be-all of painting. If anything, the case is exactly the opposite with regard to Cézanne’s historical effect, for his example as much as anyone’s has strengthened the modern tendency toward flat painting.” Clement Greenberg

“But the “abstract expressionists” all started from French painting, got their fundamental sense of style from it, and still maintain some sort of continuity with it. Not least of all, they got from it their most vivid notion of an ambitious, major art, and of the general direction in which it had to go in their time.” Clement Greenberg

“…currents running against the tide of Abstract Expressionism began to manifest themselves. The first such counter-current to become noticeable in a programmatic way was that embodied in the art of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, which represents a culmination of Abstract Expressionist technique and at the same time a canceling out of the vision of Abstract Expressionism: the Abstract Expressionist way of handling paint is preserved and even exaggerated, but it is applied to the representation, both pictorial and sculptural, of man-made object or signs that are normally produced by mechanical procedures.” Clement Greenberg

“Since Kant, the philosophers of esthetics have tended to get rid of the question of bad art by saying, well, bad art is not really art… Well, that’s a cop-out.” Clement Greenberg

“Admittedly, this historical rundown simplifies far too much.” Clement Greenberg

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291 Greenberg, “Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties,” op. cit., IV, 296. First delivered as part of the first in a series of annual lectures on contemporary art in memory of John J. W. Power, at the University of Sydney, Australia, on 17 May 1968. An unrevised version of this talk was then published in Studio International, April 1970.
Given that modernism—understood as an enterprise of comprehension and evaluation of modern art that culminated with the writings of Clement Greenberg—has established the roles and positions of the four artists of this essay, it would be difficult not to spend some time looking at the mechanisms through which each of these artists gained his place in the pantheon of modern art.\footnote{One of the main problems attached to some theories of modern art is that the concept of modernity is often confused with a dating device: “modern” would then simply mean “new” or “recent.” See, for instance, Silvio Gaggi, Modern/Postmodern: A Study in Twentieth-Century Arts and Ideas, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 17: “It may be that the term postmodern is unfortunate, for the obvious reason: if modern is used to describe that which relates to the present or the most recent, how can anything (except the future) be postmodern?” I emphasize the expression “for the obvious reason” as I see nothing obvious there at all myself. The simplest counter-proof of this is that one can very much be part of one’s time and yet hold anti-modern positions. Modern, therefore, does not mean “which relates to the present or most recent” because everything does. More to the point, “modern” relates to the consciousness of a difference between the present time and what precedes. As Habermas points out, “aesthetic modernity is characterized by attitudes which find a common focus in a changed consciousness of time.” In this sense, one understands why people at the time of Charlemagne in the 12th century considered themselves “modern,” or why the famous “Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes” took place in France of the late 17th century—a time where the consciousness of a new epoch brought with itself the question of the relationship to the ancients. See Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project,” in The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster, (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 3-15. The term “modern” is, therefore, not a ‘modern’ concept (in the sense of ‘recent’ or ‘new’): it has quite a long history going back to the late 5th century when its Latin form (“modernus”) was used to designate the new officially Christian era with the intention of distinguishing itself from the old Roman pagan past. See Hans Robert Jauss, Ästhetische Normen und geschichtliche Reflexion in der Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, (Munich, 1964).

Since the Enlightenment, however, modernity has taken on a very different dimension. It principally has designated a period that has characterized itself by a general detachment from an uncritical acceptance of traditions, and from heteronomy. Modernity has, therefore, become equitable with the gradual conquest of autonomy at the hands of individuals. The question is, therefore, not so much when it happened as how it happened for whom: according to different schools of thought, and according to the criteria selected in evaluating the development of autonomy, the modern period can begin with the Renaissance (this is the usual understanding of modernity held among medievalists, for instance), or it can refer to the period of the Enlightenment and the late 17th and 18th centuries whereby the conditions were being created for the two major democratic systems to take form. This is an application of modernity that is prevalent among political philosophers, but also among most cultural historians of this period. In the field of art history, see Thomas Crow, Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995). Altogether the question of modernity has to be dissociated from that of modernism around the theme of the distinction between what is and what ought to be. It is a primordial concern of all the moderns that what is is not what}
through the modernist enterprise may be, this analysis will not lead me to apply an uncritical stamp of approval on its methods and results.

The principal orientation of this essay is to keep this questioning position neither from a pre-modernist standpoint—by soliciting a return to the good old solid, but lost, values of the past where communication was guaranteed through a pre-established order—nor from an uncritical post-modernist standpoint—by observing and eulogizing the irretrievable loss of all meaning, the unsolvable fragmentation of discourse and communication, and a general, post-Nietzschean reign of confusion.

Modernism did not really find a mid-way between these two alternatives and in a strange way, as I will briefly explain in the next section, it carries some odd remnants of a pre-modern stance. Unlike their intellectual successors, however, the modernists attempted to endow what modern artists had been doing for a century or so, with

ought to be. This gap determines precisely all the room for action that characterizes modernity. Modernism is oriented by an historicist logic towards an explication of the successive changes that took place in modern art. Historicism rejects the notion of a distinction between what there is and what there ought to be insofar as historicism exposes a concept of history in which what ought to be becomes real. Facts and values, what is and must be become one and the same thing. There lies perhaps the most fundamental distinction between modernity and modernism. Modern art (and modernity) are animated by a logic of surprise; modernism, by a logic of foresight and prediction. The latter imposes a universal sense on the actions of individual artists that thus form an historic chain; the former begins with the private meaning of an individual artist who works his way through a common space of interaction. With modernism, meanings are imposed from above; with modernity, each different meaning arises from below, and reaches out to other possible individual meanings. On the early usage of ‘modernism,’ in Britain, see Charles Harrison, English Art and Modernism, 1900-1939, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 46-48. It must be added that the term ‘modernisme’ was first used in France in France by Huysmans although in a meaning that did not differ very much from ‘modernité’: “Nous sommes enfin arrivés aux peintres de la modernité. Qu’on me permette tout d’abord de citer un document inédit sur la vie contemporaine…. Il y a de cela quelques années un artiste étranger, … rencontra Fromentin, … et la conversation s’engagea sur le “modernisme”. ” (J.-K. Huysmans, “Salon de 1879,” L’Art moderne/Certains, (Paris : UGE, Collection « 10/18 », 1975), 48.
meaning—a meaning essentially derived from its historical sense. Modern art, through History, appeared to be clear, and became explicable. History had a general direction, and it was relatively easy to reconstruct the order of procedures that artists followed: thus they were producing sense as they were making their art—even if that sense was nothing more than a vectorial sense, or a mere direction. Modernism pointed to a certain way. The metaphor of the ‘road’ that leads modern art to a full realization of what its means are about is therefore very apt. This enterprise, while it produced a lot of sense, was carried out at a great cost: the cost was that the artists no longer seemed to be in charge. They did not know themselves what they were doing, and did not need to know either, given that History (modernist history, that is) was taking care of the course of things, and people. Cézanne, to give but a brief example of how modernism proceeded, thought that he was producing volumes when he painted, and so did the cubists. In fact, unbeknownst to them, they were adding a major contribution to the history of the vast reconciliation of painting with its own flatness. What was lost in modernism was, therefore, freedom—or, to be more precise, Cézanne, for instance, was free, but his freedom did not matter, nor did it mean anything, since history, in a sense, did the thinking for him, and history knew better than Cézanne, where he was going. If there was no freedom, there was, of course, no communication either, given that communication is an exchange that takes place between two free individuals. A true communication can only take place between two people (at least) ready to respond (responsible) and willing to accept the
other’s responses as well. Any act of communication begins with the mutual recognition of each participant: there is, therefore, something unpredictable at the core of any act of communication. Therefore, any free mutual communicative exchange was utterly gratuitous. Now, it would be wrong to think that within this modernist construction there was no communication at all between the main actors of history: there was, but, just like freedom, it happened almost unbeknownst to the actors of history. They communicated without knowing, via the voice of history: thus Cézanne communicated with the Byzantines, and with Pollock, perhaps more so than with Pissarro. This is what one might call ‘transcendent communication.’ Again, let us briefly consider the example of Cézanne. It did not matter very much to history that he and Pissarro worked together and exchanged works from each other for several years. What mattered was that Cézanne reenacted a major event in the history of modern art: he reintroduced the hieratic flatness of the Byzantines within a modern language, and, just as importantly, he transmitted this message to the successive generations that further evolved this concept—until this concept reached its climax at the hands of Pollock and Rothko. Finally, this whole seamless evolution came against a stumbling block when some disrupters (the champions of “impact art”) came and instilled confusion for the sake of confusion: this is where Johns and Rauschenberg come in. We will see in this section in greater detail in what consisted the modern enterprise, but the general sense is that each artist is just carrying on the task bestowed on him by history; he is eventually ‘recognized’ by history. In the next
section, I will attempt to demonstrate that these artists, in fact, did not always think about History, or about what History held in stock for them—although, of course, this was not absent from their consideration. I will be showing how each of them in fact made his own little personal history, out of his own works. Each sought and found recognition, not just through History, but among themselves, with an other who had as much to say, and was ready to listen and look as much as each was.

Among other things, I hope that the present work will contribute an effort towards solving some of the more perplexing aporias (the theoretical cul-de-sac) inherited by several decades of ‘deconstructive’ theoretical practices or allegiances in the field of art history. This being said, this entire essay is animated by the firm conviction that it is impossible to articulate a form of discourse from a position that stands outside one’s present and historically determined situation. Therefore, in this sense at least, my critical position is well within the post-modern world: I do not renounce my historical position, nor do I hope for an impossible, and, to my eye, aberrant, nostalgic regression. By opening up some of the questions that have long concerned me in art history, I hope—not so much to hum another mourning hymn to the death of modernism—but, in fact, to observe the persistence of certain features that have characterized modernity, even amidst the very “heterogeneous games of language” (to use Lyotard’s catch phrase) that have tended to characterize the scene of the arts of the last few decades. Through looking at the examples provided by the two pairs of
artists studied in this essay, one paradox has especially arrested my attention: if modernity can be characterized by an unprecedented thrust of the values held by the individual, and at the same time—everything being measured by the yardstick of the individual—by a generalized practice of criticism since the individual can, in essence, stand up to any system of beliefs or values, this prevalence of individualism has undoubtedly taken on a radical form in the last decades and has been characterized by an intensified process of fragmentation of the art scene, and an increased isolation (or monadization) of the individual. A simple proof of this process would be the disappearance of all the ‘isms’ for instance. While very real, this process of atomization of the art world (of which numerous parallels can be found at all layers of society) has paradoxically not erased all traces of inter-subjectivity. In this light, the two examples of these four co-artists will appear especially meaningful: these artists managed to embed this paradox in their art while pushing the individual marks of their persona to the fore while yet collaborating in the formation of very powerful pieces of art that often seem to have been made as if they might be responding to one another. On the other hand, some might argue that traces of inter-subjectivity, such as those experienced by Cézanne and Pissarro, or Johns and Rauschenberg, have become far scarcer than was the case at the onset of the modern era, half a century or a century ago, when modernity was still pregnant with promises. It may also be argued that the type of communicative interactions, and their premises have considerably changed after the advent of the last world war, and the brutal revelation
of the singularity of the 20th century: totalitarianism. It seems that almost all avant-garde artists of the last few decades have taken Adorno’s forewarning for granted, i.e., that after Auschwitz, it has become impossible to sing a hymn to mankind. This dire historical divide certainly constitutes one of the steepest distinctions between the two pairs of artists. I would amply concede to both arguments. It still remains that the thrust for communication is not dead—and it has never been. The possibility, frail though it might be, of engaging in a “reconstructive identity” understood as the modern or contemporary capacity to link up with other identities, is not extinct. 293 Not only is it not extinct, but this possibility to establish dialogues took on new and striking dimensions within one end and the other of the modernist era with Pissarro and Cézanne then, and with Rauschenberg and Johns later. Even by the most pessimistic account of our present condition, it is difficult (even impossible, in my opinion) to deny that communicative practices or expectations still bring individuals together in all stripes of society. Concretely, these practices may all be doomed to fail; or they may be partly illusionary. Nevertheless, these illusions, or these expectations are not nil. One thing is certain: these practices (contrary to what the detractors of discourse theory would have us believe) uncoerced as they are, do not stem from some kind of die-hard dinosaurian idealism, but offer an example—a method (in the transcendental sense)—for searching and constructing the meaning of our world “in community with others.” The mere idea or expectation (understood, as

Kant would say, as a guiding-thread)\textsuperscript{294} of a possible accord between these scattered individualities continues to anchor relationships, despite, and perhaps, because of all the dramatic differences blatantly characterize the world in which we live. Thus, the need to establish some commonly agreed, uncoerced meaning, some mutually recognized and autonomously established perspectives is not an empty or vain cry. Artists, by the nature, of their occupations, articulate this dynamic opposition constantly: create a meaning, or an expression, an object that is very much their own, while yet, appealing to the response of others. Thus, a constant dynamic between individualistic practices and inter-subjective interchanges constitutes the crux where many modern, and post-modern artistic creative experiments have been, and continue to be produced.

One thing is certain, though: the production of artistic interchanges, vivid a phenomenon as it has been throughout the modern and contemporary periods, has, on the whole, largely escaped the grip of the modernist system. It seems important to ask why—before articulating in the next section the actual contents of each of these interactions. I therefore propose to examine here how these four artists’ roles were shaped and defined within the modernist narrative. Even though the question of their dialogue is seldom addressed, each of them plays an important part there. The aim through this expose is not only to explore what the champion of modernism, Clement Greenberg, had to say about people such as Pissarro or Rauschenberg—with whose

\textsuperscript{294} Kant, \textit{The Critique of Judgement}, “Introduction,” V; Meredith translation, p. 25.
names he is seldom associated—but also, and mainly to expose the ideological ground that made the question of “mutual influence” (to borrow Pissarro’s slightly naïve expression when describing his relationship with Cézanne) appear gratuitous, or unimportant within the modernist narrative. What will be a subject of focus, therefore, is why each artist, through modernism, seems to have had to be studied *one by one*. Let’s be clear about this: I will certainly not be denying that each one of these individual artists was *separately* as great an artist as they were as involved in their co-artistic collaboration. Nor am I, therefore, going to argue that what made the art of these four artists great, was the fact that they worked *two by two*. More simply, the present and the following sections of this essay stem from this observation: strong individual artists that they were, Pissarro, Cézanne, Rauschenberg, and Johns were, each as an individual, also capable of entering into a deep and highly meaningful artistic interaction about which not much has been said within the critical or historical literature about these artists considered, not just *one by one*, but also *two by two*. The present section is asking the question: “why this silence?” and the following section: “how to rectify this silence?”

Given that with historicism (the ideological fuel of modernism), it is the end result that confers the truth to its beginning, there is nothing wrong, while looking at the mechanisms of modernism, in beginning by the end of the modernist enterprise before moving towards its beginning. Nevertheless, one of the chief critiques
addressed to modernism will precisely touch this radically historical way of thinking about history, by which the present only makes sense under the light of a distant future. As Karl Löwith put it:

To want to be oriented by history while standing in its midst would be like wanting to hold on to the waves during a shipwreck.\textsuperscript{295}

Looking at what Greenberg had to say about Rauschenberg—whom Greenberg may well have envisioned as the beginning of the shipwreck of modernism—should then help us better understand what he had to say about Pissarro. I will first be arguing that one of the reasons for this silence is the dogmatic temptation to which modernism has often been prey—i.e., the temptation to hold a discourse whose intent and content leave the subject who holds the discourse untouched, or unaffected by it. In order to claim, as Greenberg did, that he knew the firm distinction between good art and bad art\textsuperscript{296}—a very different statement from arguing why he felt, possibly with passion, that a painting by Kenneth Noland was more beautiful than a combine by Rauschenberg—Greenberg had to claim a position where his own discourse could not fall prey to this form of binary judgments: Greenberg’s discourse (with its Manichean structure) had to remain beyond “good” and “bad.” Likewise, the critic, who


\textsuperscript{296} See epigraph no. 1 in this section.
monitored the course of modernist history, had to resort to a genre of critical discourse that claimed a position outside of the vagaries of history, fashion, or change in order to sustain lasting pronouncements about the “orientation” of history. This contributor to the history of modernist art had to stand by and watch at a remove the unfolding of history, while the principles of the history that he enunciated were made clear—possibly too clear—as each style, and each individual succeeded one another with the same rigorous necessity as the unstoppable succession of the stages of life. The artists Greenberg thus discriminated needed have nothing to do with each other: all they needed was to attempt to make sure that they were in the right category: the good vs. the bad. They needed to stand in a “class apart” from the rest, but, once this was established, the artists needed not worry about opening up to each other. In fact, this might have compromised their integrity or their competitive force to ensure that they would obtain the proper rank.

One of the guarantees of validity for this discourse to take effect was that the enunciator of the discourse, Greenberg, had to stay on the side, and stand beyond history, and beyond values—his own discourse not being affected by what it said. To Greenberg, discrimination counts far more than enthusiasm, and, towards the end of his critical career, he would, somewhat condescendingly, reproach “the people … who throng exhibitions of contemporary art” to lack the former and only possess the
latter. Greenberg conceived of his role as that of a truth teller—or, as one who could discriminate between good and bad, and whose function, therefore, was to guide others who were caught up in the midst of the vagaries of fashion and opinion, and who were left to the confusing signals of their own enthusiasms and, therefore, could not “discriminate” what history was going to do to them because they were in the midst of it all. Hence, Greenberg’s tone often is assertive, direct, closed to questions, doubts or hesitations: truth knows no such things. Characteristically, Greenberg once declared after going through a show of contemporary art organized in Ireland and titled “Rosc” (meaning “poetry of vision” in Gaelic) that works by de Kooning, Rauschenberg, Lester Johnson, and Bontecou, looked “muddy.” Greenberg then continued: “Nevertheless, the very best paintings in Rosc 1967, which were also the most luminous ones, did come from the hands of three Americans and one Englishman.” In his own ranking order, these works were a Composition by Mark Tobey, of 1963, that “stood out radiantly,” a work by Noland that was luminous, and one by Nicholson. The art critic’s final verdict is most revealing of his methods and confirms that Greenberg indeed seemed to regard his role as that of the defender of truth vs. all false notions. He was there to tell us the difference between truth and lies, between light (the epithets he uses to describe the works that meet his approval all have to do with the quality of light) vs. mud, darkness, or confusion. This is precisely

298 Ibid. One may observe here that the attribute used by Greenberg to criticize the works by de Kooning and Rauschenberg (“muddy”) is reminiscent of the vocabulary of contemporaneous critics of Pissarro and Cézanne when describing their paintings (dirty/sale).
in terms of “truth” that he couched his estimation of Tobey’s contribution to that show: “his truth seems to be enhanced by the contrast with it made by the “impact” art of the sixties.”

Understand: “impact art” is that which may well shock or startle its viewers at first, but carries no depth, and has no “truth” to reveal. Needless to say, among the artists accountable for what Greenberg calls “impact” art counts Rauschenberg. The other two artists capable of “truth” (and who were not there just to show off, nor to create some “impact”—today, one would say “sensation”) were Noland with an equilateral diamond of 1964 titled Swing. Added to these, Greenberg conceded, “[p]aintings by Newman and Nicholson also stood out; together with those by Tobey and Noland, they formed a class apart at this show.”

I find this text interesting in that it reveals the critic’s fragile position at the end of modernism, and the need he feels to resort to dichotomous classifications that leave room for no alternative, nor any second thoughts. This text pitches clearly those artists who hold the “truth” against those who seek to create some “impact”—according to Greenberg, of course; but it further demonstrates that what Greenberg is chiefly concerned to do is to declare the winners vs. the losers: now why did a winner win? This requires as few words of explanation as the reasons why such or such a horse won a Derby race. The best is the best. Good is good. It is simply a matter of taste. Taste serves in establishing what good/or true is versus bad/or false. Even though Greenberg never quite resorts to calling the works by Rauschenberg ‘false’ (vs. ‘true’—the term he

299 Ibid., 286.
300 Ibid.
uses to emphasize the “luminous” quality of Noland’s work), when the critic uses the term “impact art” to designate Rauschenberg, the implication is simply that the impact is a surface effect vs. the truth that does not erode against the impact of the moment. Greenberg is sure of his assessment.

The reason for the success of such assessments—despite their simple binary oppositions—is largely that the public who conferred fame to Greenberg, needed such assessments. In front of Abstract Expressionism, and even more so, of the various movements that came after, there was a strong general need for clear-cut guidance, to be told what was right and was not with the same assurance as one would know what a good action was vs. a bad action: Greenberg fulfilled that need admirably. One needed, in front of works by Tobey, Noland, Newman and Nicholson to be told what was right and what was not. Even if today it might surprise most of us to find out that the great art critic of American painting gave Newman the third rank on the podium, the point is that Greenberg delivered what was expected of him: he helped to distinguish the good from the bad. Using a sort of Manichean system of distinctions, he also divided those who had something to say from those who did not. Greenberg, in the same article, listing the artists who resisted “impact” art (and Rauschenberg, and the art of the sixties), he confided that he felt a moment of surprise when he saw “how good the three paintings by Alechinsky looked” given that Greenberg had never until then held Alechinsky in high esteem. He then added: “Tapies, too, looked good,
but that was no surprise.” Of course, the Greenbergian system, had it been a mere binary system, would have probably soon worn out even the least fastidious members of its faithful audience. Greenberg complicated the system, somewhat, by adding sub-categories, thus making the “discriminating” process more interesting, and apparently less facile: there is good and bad, we know this. There is also, above all, major and minor. One may have a major artist producing occasionally bad paintings, although being a “major” artist: this is the case with Pollock at the end of his life (according to Greenberg); and likewise, one may also have a minor artist producing occasional good paintings: this is the case with Tapies. He looked good, but not “good enough to be more than minor.” And the chain of binary judgments continues: Vasarely is seen as “[a]nother good minor artist,” although he “could have been better represented than he was.” 301 This could go on. The irony today is that some of these rather terse pronouncements appear, at the very least, debatable, if not completely “off.” A true dogmatic, Greenberg could not admit nor foresee that his own views and statements—like all of ours—are conditioned by the historical moment in which they are uttered, and necessarily, contingent upon the conditions of their own time.

Besides its endemic dogmatism, I see two more problems with modernism as it encapsulates each artist in a particular position. As I briefly mentioned, the end confers meaning to the whole enterprise. The whole process of development of modern art is conceived and analyzed as a long teleological process that unfolds

301 Ibid.
almost automatically. It is only when the *telos* (or the final goal) of this process is at sight that the whole journey gains its full meaning, and that the origin of this odyssey receives its raison d’être. The other problem I see with modernism is that it requires (as all historicist systems do) the role of an expert to check that all is going as planned, and that history is unfolding properly. The presence of this practiced eye has long tended to be blissfully and uncritically accepted. It is true, this “practiced eye” performed a major service for those who discover(ed) the contemporary art scene half a century or even a century ago: these expert comments provided meanings, explications, clarity—even if these meanings might appear today to have been arbitrary, and dogmatic. These comments responded to a genuine demand on the part of the new public of these avant-gardes—a demand to understand. Hearing or reading these public experts’ comments, the course of history appeared to gain sense. History cannot go backward; there is only one way forward: that is the right way. This simplistic scheme of understanding was precisely the one exposed by Greenberg himself. Modestly describing himself, the champion of Abstract Expressionism once said (perhaps with a touch of narcissism):

> The practiced eye tends always toward the definitely and positively good in art, knows it is there, and will remain dissatisfied with anything else.\(^{302}\)

\(^{302}\) *Collected Essays*, IV, 120.
The second problem I see with historicism (and its modernist version) is that, given that history is conceived in the shape of a Derby racetrack, there is only room for winners and losers; and, as we know, there is never room for more than one winner at the same time. Historicism conceives of the progression and the development of art as a line of individuals that are advancing one by one. (Of course, here again, there are all the complex subtleties that can occur on a racetrack: one horse may pass another, or it may get tired; it may even appear that there is a tie; there are imponderable surprises, but a good expert can, on the whole, surmise fairly closely what will happen.) Needless to say, this one-by-one process leaves little room for the fostering of inter-subjective links. In fact, this one-by-one process is pretty lonely. It dons some of the features of the mythological figure of Cassandra: predicting the future, in the end, is a very lonely form of activity. This is how Jasper Johns describes an artist who has been of great importance to both Johns and Rauschenberg (and can therefore be considered as a factor of inter-subjectivity between these two artists and many more):

Marcel Duchamp, one of this century’s pioneer artists, moved his work… into a field where language, thought and vision act upon one another. There it changed form through a complex interplay of new mental and physical materials, heralding many of the technical, mental and visual details to be found in more recent art.
He said that he was ahead of his time. One guesses at a certain loneliness there.\textsuperscript{303}

Johns concludes this argument with a quote by Wittgenstein that suggests that time (unlike the modernist notion of time) has more than one direction. This will offer the cue for the next section. Let us, for now, review these four individuals as they feature, \textit{one by one}, within or at the margins of the modernist cannon. In the system erected by modernism, one of them holds a central position: Cézanne. Beforehand, however, let us focus on the book-ends that initiate, or announce the beginning of modernism (Pissarro) and its end (Rauschenberg and Johns). Whereas the role of Pissarro, if and when mentioned,\textsuperscript{304} is often described as that of an initiator (this was very much the tone of Roger Fry’s analysis), or some one who benevolently taught or gave generous and mild paternal advice to some of the major figures of early modernism (from Cézanne to Picabia, via Gauguin, Seurat, and Matisse).\textsuperscript{305} The roles of Rauschenberg and Johns, on the other hand, have often been described as those of agents who

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\textsuperscript{303} Jasper Johns, “Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968),” \textit{Artforum} 7 no. 3 (November 1968): 6. \textit{Writings}, 22. Interestingly, just a year before this text was published, Leo Steinberg thus defined what he called a pioneer spirit: “… a pioneer spirit characterizes neither the condition nor even the aspiration of institutionalized art history at this moment.” Steinberg, “Objectivity and the Shrinking Self,” October 1967, \textit{Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 308.

\textsuperscript{304} Ironically Pissarro was mentioned far more often by Greenberg than he was by an early modernist critic, much closer to him, like Emile Bernard.

\textsuperscript{305} For an excellent survey of the different literary portraits written on Pissarro, see Françoise Cachin, “Looking at Pissarro,” in \textit{Pissarro}, (Exh.), (London and Boston: Arts Council of Great Britain and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1980), 38-58. Cachin emphasizes that Pissarro was barely forty years old when he became known as “le père Pissarro.”
\end{flushright}
contributed to the “landing” of modernism.\footnote{306} Taking stock of Greenberg’s imprecations at the end of the modernist enterprise against what he called “impact art” focusing mainly on the works of Rauschenberg, it is interesting to look back at what he said about Pissarro almost twenty years before:

Shock and immediate effects are sacrificed for the sake of subtleties, passages, modulations, the mediations of contrasts.

Later on, the New York critic insists further on the fact that Pissarro’s art is deprived of “high-flown verbiage or spectacular paradoxes.”\footnote{307}

Such a comment gains far greater meaning once it has become clear what use will be made by the same critic of the concept of shock, and impact as a dismantling factor that threatened the modernist enterprise. Pissarro, at one end of modernism, established a system of pictorial subtleties that Rauschenberg, through the “impact” of his art began to bring down. Greenberg’s intuitions can often sound particularly apt, especially when he describes the works by an artist whom he appreciates. A pithy

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\footnote{306} The metaphor of aviation, and landing strips is certainly not foreign to Rauschenberg, at least, since John Cage described the latter’s \textit{White Paintings} with these words: “The white paintings were airports for the lights, shadows, and particles.” See John Cage, “On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work,” \textit{Metro}, (Milan), no. 2 (May 1961), 36-51; reprinted in John Cage, \textit{Lectures and Writings by John Cage: Silence}, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 102. This famous quote is frequently alluded to, although not always accurately transcribed: see Walter Hopps, in \textit{Robert Rauschenberg The Early 1950s}, (Houston: Menil Foundation, 1991), 65, where the \textit{White Paintings} become “‘landing strips’ for dust motes, light, and shadow.”

sentence like this: “Everything is to the point” does manage to say a lot about Pissarro’s work at large.

Greenberg’s attention to Pissarro’s treatments of details, for instance, reveals a particularly acute sense of observation:

And little masterpieces are to be found complete in themselves in the dozen or so brushstrokes with which such a detail as a cab is indicated.\textsuperscript{308}

His text on Pissarro would deserve to be quoted more often than is the case among texts written on Pissarro, so sensitive and responsive to the artist’s work Greenberg appears to be. A couple of brief excerpts will suffice to prove this point:

[Pissarro] allowed his perception of the free atmospheric diffusion of light to hush and merge all silent features… He could be a great draftsman, as his work in black and white shows. And he had a certain innocence of eye which permitted him to love phenomena the way no other painter of his time could. His relish of the pictorial, his fresh sense of what a picture does and how it relates to that which it pictures, gained him some of the qualities of primitive art without its liabilities. Pissarro was simple but not poor.\textsuperscript{309}

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
Thus while Camille Pissarro may be credited for setting the base for the modernist enterprise, Johns and Rauschenberg may be credited for the symmetric opposite. To give but one among scores of testimonies as to the fact that the end of the ‘50s and early ‘60s saw the end of an era, and the beginning of a different, and at the time almost entirely unaccountable era, we may turn to Arthur Danto’s recollection:

By 1964, Abstract Expressionism was doomed as an art movement, and indeed its dismantling began as early as 1957 through the work of Johns and Rauschenberg, who used some of its forms to disguise the fact that they had begun something new and incompatible with its own preoccupations and premises.\(^{310}\)

The roles of Johns and Rauschenberg in the demise of modernism have been amply commented upon. Mel Bochner sees Johns’s role as having introduced a Post-modernist sensibility by having rejected two aspects of modernism: what he calls “sense data and centristic personality as the basis for art.”\(^{311}\) In other words, the supremacy of a sensorial-based aesthetic experience was replaced, at least to some extent, by a (more complete) experience that appealed to both the mental and


sensorial faculties of the viewer. Secondly, the central role of the subject as the maker of the work of art was very much put into question—it is indeed true that both Johns and Rauschenberg attempted to discard their own roles or presences in the making of their early works—and this is perhaps the principal feature that keeps them at a far remove from the practice and the theory of Cézanne and Pissarro whose aims were always openly to “realize” themselves or their ‘sensations’ through their art. The question, however, whether Johns and Rauschenberg succeeded in staying absent from the making of their art (once asked by Steinberg) remains, I think, very pertinent.

Greenberg himself dates to 1962 the demise of modernism—or its latest great manifestation Abstract Expressionism—at the hands of the Johns/Rauschenberg enterprise:

In the spring of 1962 there came the sudden collapse, market-wise and publicity wise, of Abstract Expressionism as a collective manifestation. The fall of that year saw the equally sudden triumph of Pop art, which, though deriving its vision from the art of Rauschenberg and especially Johns, is much

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312 For another conceptual analysis of the role of Johns as riding both horses at the same time (idea-based art, and sense-based art), see Kosuth’s statement: “Johns and Reinhardt are probably the last two painters that were legitimate artists as well.” Joseph Kosuth, “Art after Philosophy,” I and II, Studio International, (October and November 1969), reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed., Idea Art, A Critical Anthology, (New York: Dutton, 1973), 83.
more markedly opposed to painterly abstraction in its handling and general
design.\textsuperscript{313}

Throughout the modernist narrative, it appears that Johns and Rauschenberg began to
unpave the road that Pissarro had started paving largely for Cézanne’s benefit; in
between Pissarro and Johns and Rauschenberg, Cézanne rode the highway of
modernism—or, to put it in more general terms, with Johns and Rauschenberg (as
well as others) a period, whose dawn had arisen with Pissarro and impressionism, was
coming to closure. Essentially, the main thrust of modernism had been to emphasize
the planar attributes of painting: to this cause, Cézanne’s art contributed in a major
way. This cause reached a climax with abstract expressionism, but soon found its first
hurdles with some one like de Kooning who began to explore the logical
contradictions of painterly abstraction by cultivating “a plastic and descriptive
painterliness that is applied to abstract ends, but which continues to suggest
representational ones.”\textsuperscript{314} This is in essence the definition of Greenberg’s famous
notion of “homeless representation” a notion he later readily applied to the works of
Johns, and Rauschenberg who both, though in different ways, were indebted to de
Kooning for introducing the logical contradiction between representation and


\textsuperscript{314} Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism,” \textit{Collected Essays}, IV, 124. This fundamental text that began quite a debate, was first published in \textit{Art International}, 25 October 1962.
abstraction within his art, thus feeding in to the force of counter-currents against Abstract Expressionism.

The first such counter-current to become noticeable in a programmatic way was that embodied in the art of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, which represents a culmination of Abstract Expressionist technique and at the same time a canceling out of the vision of Abstract Expressionism: the Abstract Expressionist way of handling paint is preserved and even exaggerated, but it is applied to the representation, both pictorial and sculptural, of man-made objects or signs that are normally produced by mechanical procedures. 315

Johns and Rauschenberg are occasionally brought together by Greenberg under the rather hybrid label of “Proto-Pop” artists 316 who share with throngs of artists an interest in cultivating the “far-out” in and of itself. The definition of the “far out” is that which borderlines between art and non-art. In other words, it pushes the explicatory thrust of the modernist historicizing orientation to its utter limits. These limits are mainly tested by the fact that the number of possibilities opened by this new thrust can barely be summarized: it goes in all directions. Greenberg doesn’t give up,

315 Greenberg, “America Takes the Lead, 1945-1965,” Collected Essays, IV, 214-5. First published in Art in America, August-September 1965. This is incidentally one of the very few texts where Johns and Rauschenberg are associated together. What is significant, though, is that what brought them together in Greenberg’s eye is not so much how each could contribute to the other’s art, as the fact that they form a major factor in these counter-currents (variously referred to as impact art or the far-out logic) that were held responsible for the demise of the culmination of American art.
however, but gives signs of being out of breath accounting for all the forms of art that
suddenly explore this post-historical phase:

Assemblage, Pop, Environment, Op, Kinetic, Erotic, and all the other varieties
of Novelty art look like so many logical moments in the working out of this
problem, whose solution now seems to have arrived in the form of what is
called Primary Structures, ABC, or Minimal art. The Minimalists appear to
have realized, finally, that the far-out in itself has to be the far-out as end in
itself, and that this means the furthest-out and nothing short of that.\(^{317}\)

Among the first examples of “far-out” art that he ever saw, Greenberg counts the
puzzling experience he remembers having had in front of Rauschenberg’s blank
canvases, and of Yves Klein’s all-blue ones.

Greenberg then neatly summarizes how this contradiction takes shape within Johns’s
eyear paintings of targets, and figures:

Everything that usually serves representation and illusion is left to serve
nothing but itself, that is, abstraction; while everything else that usually serves
the abstract or decorative—flatness, bare outlines, all-over or symmetrical
design—is put to the service of representation. And the more explicit this

\(^{317}\) Ibid.
A pivotal question that modernism raised, under its many different colors, under the guise of its throngs of champions and critics, was, therefore, given its end, where did it all begin? What is most interesting as one casts a glance at the fabric of modernism is that the question of the origins of modernism seems precisely to inform the question of its own ending. In a seminal text revealingly titled “After Abstract Expressionism” (or, as one could also read the meaning of this title: after the ultimate phase of modernism), Greenberg begins recounting the beginning of the end of modernism with these words:

Twenty-odd years ago all the ambitious young painters I knew in New York saw abstract art as the only way out. Rightly or wrongly, they could see no other way in which to go in order to say something personal, therefore new, therefore worth saying.  

This brief description, I think, repays a minute or two of attention, especially since this is one of the first texts in which Greenberg attempts to come to terms with the Johns/Rauschenberg phenomenon, even though they are no more discussed in terms

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319 Greenberg, ibid., 121.
of what their art had to do with each other, than Cézanne’s and Pissarro’s were. Put simply, what Greenberg seems to be missing about the ways things went “twenty-odd years ago” i.e., in the ‘40s, is the basic fact that history seemed to know where it was going—or more accurately, history knew where it would not go. Representation was out: “Representational art confronted their ambition with too many occupied positions.” The sense of a forthright evolution (‘orientation’ is another word Greenberg seems fond of) is always underpinning Greenberg’s accounts of how the history of modern painting progresses. Aware though he is of the oppositions of its critics, Greenberg neatly encapsulates the somewhat ambivalent forces at work within the progress of modernism. Accused by George L. K. Morris of defending “behind the frame” paintings—i.e. the idea that no element in any composition must appear to come out, or to produce an illusionary volume that would seem to swell beyond the frame—Greenberg conceded to the “acuteness of [Morris’s] characterization” and almost claimed for himself this “characterization” by recognizing that Pollock and Gorky’s pictures remained further behind the frames than Picasso’s or Mondrian’s pictures post-1913. In other words, the pictures by the American artists of the ‘40s lied even more quietly on the surface of the canvas (behind the frame) and, by the same token, gave less the impression of jumping out of the pictorial space than Picasso’s and Mondrian’s cubist works did: they were, therefore, more in keeping with the general ‘orientation’ that the history of Western art was decidedly taking.

320 Ibid.
321 Ibid., 124.
Then Greenberg puts together a few sentences that might summarize what one could call the antinomy of modernism. Taking issue against Morris’s value system, Greenberg writes:

This in itself said nothing about their relative esthetic value, and Mr. Morris was altogether wrong in inferring that painterly abstraction was headed backwards in terms of the evolution of style (even if going backwards in these terms was, at that time, almost the only way to go forward in terms of major quality.) 322

This is perhaps one of the clearest cases of how Greenberg conceived of the progression of the history of painting with a goal at its end, and a vectorial force that orientates it forward (or backward, if, as the case may be, history comes to its own end…)

The problem came, of course, when individual artists did not fall in alliance with the general stream of things—when such awkward notions as “homeless representation” or “furtive bas-relief” (i.e., the exact opposite of what G. L. K. Morris had called “painting behind the frame”) began to take place. Jasper Johns, following and accentuating the track already traced by de Kooning in this, was, to Greenberg, a prime example of how things in history had begun to take a wrong track. In nuce,

322 Ibid.
furtive bas-relief is the minor (and therefore mannerist) version of what painting behind the frame is: one is good, the other is bad. Johns was seen by Greenberg as one of several artists\textsuperscript{323} who did flirt with de Kooning’s blurred invention, but Greenberg, right from the beginning (of the end) put Johns in a class of its own: “His case is another exemplary one, for he brings de Kooning’s influence to a head by suspending it clearly, as it were, between abstraction and representation.”\textsuperscript{324} To give him credit, Greenberg clearly seemed to engage in Johns’s works (despite its exemplary status as suspending de Kooning between abstraction and representation.) Greenberg articulates very convincingly the two poles of Johns’s early pictorial production and the ironic tension that results from these. As the critic argues, Johns represents with paint signs that, by their very ‘semiotic’ nature, exist as reproduced icons.

[N]onetheless, says Greenberg, the abiding interest of his art, as distinguished from its journalistic one, lies largely in the area of the formal or plastic. Just as the vivid possibility of deep space in photographs of signs or house-fronts, or in Harnett’s and Peto’s paintings of pin-up boards, sets off the inherent flatness of the objects shown, so the painterly paintedness of Johns pictures

\textsuperscript{323} These included Rauschenberg, of course, although they were not always mentioned together, but also an odd mix of artists who were held by Greenberg for having flirted with ‘homeless representation’ with various results: Diebenkorn on the West Coast was one of them, Tapies and Sugai in Europe were others. (IV, 124-127). \textsuperscript{324} \textit{Collected Essays}, IV, 126.
sets off, and is set off by, the flatness of his number, letter, target, flag, and map images.\textsuperscript{325}

Greenberg detects a “dialectic” force at work in Johns’s work that spells out clearly and honestly the trajectory from Abstract Expressionism to homeless representation. It is, perhaps above all, this clarity of focus and intention (that he certainly never saw in Rauschenberg) that Greenberg seems so interested in when he looked at Johns’s works. It has to be said here that Greenberg shares some of his intuitions that still appear very convincing when applied to Johns’s work, half a century or so later. Here are the terms in which he couches the “dialectic” at work in Johns’s work:

The original flatness of the canvas, with a few outlines stenciled on it, is shown as sufficing to represent adequately all that a picture by Johns really does represent. The paint surface itself, with its de Kooning-esque play of lights and darks, is shown, on the other hand, as being completely superfluous to this end.\textsuperscript{326}

Clearly Greenberg is enjoying looking at Johns’s art, and he lets his readers know about it: “I don’t mean to imply that the effectiveness of Johns’ painting depends on a

\textsuperscript{325} Ibid., 126-7.  
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid., 127.
device. There is far more to it than that; otherwise I would not get the kind of pleasure from it that I do.”

Irrespective of the praises lavished on Johns, Greenberg has but little respect for the novel currents (or counter-currents) that he diagnoses on the scene of American art of the early ’60s. Even Johns, who stands in a category of its own, is being heard singing “the swan song of “homeless representation,”” and, as such, like all swan songs, “it carries only a limited distance.” In fact, Greenberg digs his heels deep and refuses to confer any legitimacy on these he calls—and he is not alone—“Neo-Dada.”

Even though he “excepts” Johns from his comments, he has no kind words to say about the new artists who produce “ironic comments on the banalities of the industrial environment.” Whatever novelty they have decided to introduce, or insert within their works, Greenberg gives these artists—whether they display stuffed whales or fill a bowl of toilet with diamonds—no chance to break with what he calls “safe taste.” In other words, Rauschenberg stands no chance vs. Olitski’s “pure painting.” Ultimately, Greenberg cannot resist giving us his divinatory prediction: it will all pass away, and pure painting, carrying on the mark of high modernism, will dominate. Olitski, holding Cézanne’s torch, will beat these youngsters (Rauschenberg, and even Johns

327 Ibid.
328 Ibid.
330 Collected Essays, IV, 133.
among them) for their effect can only be “momentary, since novelty, as distinct from originality, has no staying power.”

Naturally, it would have been hard, even for Greenberg, to find some large consensus about this—no more than there ever was any agreement as to what precisely defined modernism. In a fascinating text on Cézanne, Greenberg attempting to make some sense out of the, already then, apparent proliferation of what he called “gratuitous mutations,” conceded that “[t]he number and discord of the tendencies that constitute modern art are taken for a symptom of decadence.” Greenberg as a true modernist prefers to see in these discords a sign of promise: “The reason for their discord, far from having to do with decadence, lies …in the very vitality of modern art.”

Greenberg enjoys the clarity of binary oppositions, but seldom gives way to simplistic explanations: Modern art, he tells us, can bear elements of discord—“homeless representation” at the hand of de Kooning is the proof of this; but such elements become bad when they fall into some form of mannerism.

Whatever points of origin and ending were ascribed to modernism, thinking about modernism was co-extensive with a particular vision of history. In it, events and

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331 Ibid., 134.
332 Greenberg, “Cézanne and the Unity of Modern Art,” in Collected Essays, III, 82. This seminal text, with its revealing title, was published several times; it attempts to harmonize the development of modern art. It is there that one meets the idea that Manet is one of the first apostles of modern art—an idea borrowed from Fry, and resumed and developed abundantly by Greenberg as will be seen at the end of the present chapter.
333 Collected Essays, IV, 124-125. Greenberg also refers to de Kooning’s Women as the results of a “dissolved Fragonard manner.” (IV, 287).
period cycles succeed one another through an independent rhythm or cycle, or some almost unstoppable motoring force. In a word: modernism is inherently bound to an historicist conception of history. Ironically, even though the principal players on the stage of what became modernism happened to be French (at least at the beginning), modernism and its history were largely conceived and discussed in Anglo-Saxon countries, as Barnett Newman would put it, i.e., in England, first, and in the United States eventually. At the root of modernism, a pivotal question had to be addressed: where, when, and with whom did it all begin? Did modernism begin with Cézanne? With Manet? Or with “impressionism”? In fact, each option found different advocates. Who was right in the end is a question that cannot be answered (and that only matters to those who still conceive of art history as a Derby race). What repays closer examination is the criteria of definition, and of evaluation of what was modern that each advocate retained in order to raise the question of the origins of modernism. Through these four cases: Cézanne/Pissarro, and Rauschenberg/Johns, the doings and counter-doings of modernism will be seen as making or imposing a certain sense on history. The concepts and values implicitly taken for granted will be as important as certain omissions that are part and parcel of the fabrication of the modernist enterprise. Among the major voices that will be listened to here, Clement Greenberg’s, as can already be seen, is essential—not only because he is the only author, paradoxically, who has ever devoted sustained attention to all four of the artists studied in this essay, but also, of course, because his name, at least in art history, has become tantamount to modernist criticism. The major irony as we review
the definition of modernism, its beginning and its end, as they were embodied through our four case figures, is that inter-subjectivity is almost never an issue. Another interesting omission is the origin of the notion of ‘post-impressionism’—yet another cornerstone in the modernist edifice. Among the impressionists (who somehow must have preceded the post-impressionists, although Cézanne was exactly the same age as the core group of the impressionists), Greenberg gave the ascendant to Manet—resuming Fry’s somewhat arbitrary, and odd classification, in which Manet had first led the ground for the invention of what Cézanne, over the heads of all the impressionists, developed and brought to full maturity in his late style. While resuming this rather strange, and historically unverifiable, idea, Greenberg did not mention his debt to the English critic. In this, he was not alone, however: John Rewald at approximately the same time managed the extraordinary feat to write a 619-page compendium on post-impressionism without once even referring to Roger Fry, the English inventor of this term. Greenberg began his account of the beginnings of impressionism with these words:

The Impressionists—Claude Monet (1840-1926), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), Edgar Degas (1834-1917)—began as disciples of Manet.  

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As we know today, this is a gross misrepresentation. There is no doubt that Manet held a considerable presence and his art had a major impact on all of the so-called group of the Batignolles, but this is a far cry from saying that all of the above artists were his disciples. This sort of statement will lead us, however, further to look into the reasons why the impressionists, on the one hand, Cézanne, on the other, have been traditionally held to be “disciples” of Manet—from Fry to Fried. Out of the five artists enumerated by Greenberg, none would have considered himself as a “disciple” of Manet. Renoir, Pissarro and Sisley had, no doubt, great consideration for his work, but produced works themselves that were very distant from Manet’s both through their subject matters and their facture. Renoir’s early still-life paintings, maybe, might demonstrate a certain degree of influence from Manet to Renoir. Degas held Manet and his art in great esteem but would certainly never have considered himself a “disciple” of Manet. One could detect possibly a certain rivalry, or emulation, between Monet and Manet, especially over the execution of their groups of seascapes during the late 1860s; but this is a far cry from describing Monet as a disciple of Manet. Clearly, therefore, these simplifications may explain a lot; by the same token, they may also distort what we know of the historical reality they are supposed to explain.
However, what is interesting in Greenberg’s description is that he gives credit to Manet for having “let light control and determine shadow rather than the other way around.”

This is definitely the way that Rauschenberg decided to construct certain of his compositions in the late 1950s. One could say of Rauschenberg that he took ‘light’ into his own hands.

More important and telling, therefore, than the question of the beginning of modernism, is the question of what kind of preconceptions, and expectations, underpinned the discourses of those who raised the question of the origins of modernism. Soon, however, that question also led to another question: where did it end? There, of course, Rauschenberg and Johns were to play a critical role. One can broadly advance for now the following proposition: in the same way as thinking about modernism = thinking about history, the end of modernism was at sight when thinking about history became all the more problematic—whether the end of history was announced, or the categories offered by history were suddenly inadequate to deal with “the number and discord of the tendencies” (Greenberg’s expression) that suddenly flourished, (or exploded, if one prefers a more apocalyptic sounding metaphor.) Or whether—as I will suggest was the case with Johns and Rauschenberg—it was suddenly possible to go back and forth through history, and take and leave ad libitum from the ‘tradition’ as much as one wanted, using history.
rather than serving history: “using” it, that is, like a consumer would, and finding
there what one needs in order to furnish one’s own creation. This, of course, was an
attitude that can well be described as being post-historical. *Levee* by Rauschenberg
certainly did offer a great example of this kind of “usage” value that history, in this
sense, the history of art, can deliver. *Flag* by Johns gulped down history in one set of
brush marks over cut out stars glued on canvas and coated with wax paint.\(^{337}\) [Ill.
Dossier F]

This question coextensive to the creation of the institution that was established as a
repository of modern art, the Museum of Modern Art, and it concerned every
category of agents within the art world: artists, museum curators and directors, art
critics, dealers, collectors. A perfect example of the kind of debates, at times
vehement, even raging, that were going on is offered by a text written by Barnett
Newman, entitled “The Problem of Subject Matter.” Setting himself in the seat of the
art historian without false modesty, nor any apologetic regret, he wrote:

> If we could describe the art of this, the first half of the twentieth century, in a
sentence, it would read as the search for something to paint; just as, were we
to do the same for modern art as a whole, it must read as the critical

preoccupation of artists with solving the technical problems of the painting medium.

Here is the dividing line in the history of art! Whereas every serious artist throughout history has had to solve the problems of his medium, it has always been personal, a problem of talent. It was not until the Impressionists that a group of artist set themselves a communal task—the exploration of a technical problem together. With them, talent became axiomatic. What to do with it? That has become the earmark of modern art movements. This critical re-evaluation of the artist’s role, this refusal to continue blindly the ritual of what art professors like to call tradition, has become a dividing line in art that is sharp indeed. For, were all knowledge, written and oral, of the dates of production of those great works that make up the art treasury of Western Europe to be lost (let us hope the work is not) all of them, from Veronese to Delacroix would become a dateless jumble. No man could trace its chronological progress with accuracy, so unified is its general appearance. Were this jumble, however, to include the work of anybody after Courbet, beginning with the Impressionists, it would segregate itself at once. For good or bad, Impressionism has given art an unmistakably different look.338

Even though this text carries certain caricatural effects, it is nevertheless remarkable in several aspects. It certainly has the merit of enunciating clearly the aesthetic program of modernism: one draws the line before or after Courbet. Even if these over-simplifications (having the history of western art begin with Veronese, for instance) may make us smile, it unquestionably clarifies for good the question of what aesthetic allegiances the abstract expressionists held. What is noteworthy in this text is that Newman takes action against Fry, and Cézanne’s “English and American defenders,”339 in order to repudiate the idea that he was “the father of modern art on the grounds that he was the great proponent of the art of Poussin.”340 We cannot examine here the numerous ramifications, and sources of such a statement. Let’s note, for now, that Newman erects here a model of “modernism” that does not recognize itself in the writings of the English proponents of modern art—Fry, principally. Newman goes so far as to say that the School of Paris is fortunate not to have found “the protection of such friends.” What Newman did not see, however, is that the sources of many of Fry’s interpretive positions found their inspiration in the writings of friends of the late Cézanne, especially Emile Bernard, Joachim Gasquet, and Maurice Denis. Newman’s argument is clear and cogent: what defines modernism in its radical nature is its strong stance against the past, not its ‘affinities’ with

339 For a brief survey of Newman’s rather fierce attack against Roger Fry, and his American followers, see Newman’s article “The Anglo-Saxon Tradition in Art Criticism,” op. cit., 83-86.
‘tradition.’ In Newman’s mind, there is no possible doubt as to when and how the beginnings of modern art took place:

Modern painting begins with the impressionists precisely because for the first time in history, a group of artists repudiated the role of the great personal message with its attendant doctrine of the immaculate conception and decided to devote themselves exclusively to solving a technical problem in painting—color.

More specifically, the American abstract expressionist credits the impressionists for having shredded apart the “velvet standards of the School of Venice:”

…only when Pissarro, Monet, Seurat, et al. created a new color aesthetic was this Venetian velvet finally repudiated to open up a richer world of possibilities. No matter what we may think today of the impressionists as artists, they solved the problem of color for all those painting since. They set the artist’s palette free of its prison.

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341 Ibid.: “… in Paris the man of talent was able to approach the revolution in art uncorrupted. For it was in its revolutionary differences, in its radicalism, in its “modernism,” that this art was able to lay down the basis for a continued creativeness—not in the elaborate and erudite “affinities” with “tradition” that have been read into modern art by its apologists.”

342 Ibid., 81-2.

343 Ibid., 82.
Newman certainly may receive credit for looking further to establish the sources of modernism than most. He certainly felt that it was a great mistake for the administration of the Museum of Modern Art not to include the impressionists in the canon of modernism, for instance. With his unmistakable self-assurance, he had it known that he felt that his main concern was not “to supplant Cézanne with Monet or with anyone else in the promulgation of any theory of art or in a struggle over art influences.” His concern, rather, was “only that a healthier, fuller picture should emerge concerning French nineteenth-century painting.” 344 Today, of course, it seems difficult not to agree with Newman; likewise, one would be hard put not to hail Newman’s striking premonition. A few years earlier, taking far fewer diplomatic precautions, he vented his frustration over the fact that MoMA had just acquired a painting by Monet—one of the *Poplars* series—without further ado. Newman wrote to the President of the museum this extraordinary letter:

> This cannot be considered as just another addition to the museum’s collection. The acquisition of this picture involves a basic issue of museum policy of far-reaching importance to the American public, which the museum, it seems, would like not to be noticed. No one—nowhere in the exhibition or in the public announcement—has indicated that this picture is not only the first Monet acquired by the Museum of Modern Art but also the first important

picture by an impressionist painter ever acquired by the museum in its almost twenty-five years of existence. Until now the museum has owned neither a Monet, nor an important Pissarro, nor a Sisley.

Why the silence? Is the institution that has dedicated itself for a quarter of a century to the false art history that modern art began with Cézanne afraid now to admit that it is changing its position?

Is the museum that has, by dedicating itself to the myth of post-impressionism invented by the English critic Roger Fry, promulgated the theory that the impressionists were failures—mere experimenters—now renouncing this policy? I cannot believe that the museum intends, nor do I consider it desirable, that it should offer to make Monet and the impressionists the new fathers of modern art; but is the museum, for the sake of truth, going to become a general art museum and give up the partisan role of misleading art scholarship created by this false art theory it has so long and so consistently illustrated?345

This extract of Newman’s fascinating letter deserves attention, not least of all because it has the very far-sighted merit of questioning (in my opinion, very fruitfully) some

of the unquestioned premises of selection criteria that were operating in the formation of the collection of the first and great repository of modern art in North America: such as, Modernism began with Cézanne. One will note here that MoMA, by focusing on Cézanne alone, qualified Fry’s principles according to which it was Manet and Cézanne who began modern art per se. This text, however, refuses to replace one doctrinaire system by another: the myth of Cézanne the father of modernism may be flawed; but to supersede it by another would be equally flawed. It is in this especially that this letter remains especially noteworthy today. Newman appears to wish for a more open, less pre-established (one might even say prejudicial) view of this extremely complex, and truly fascinating period that was also Newman’s period and, to a degree, continues to be our period. To approach this moment of the history of art with preconceived notions of where who belongs does not help in creating a deep understanding of what went on. The problem, which Newman is quite right in raising, is that the categories established by Roger Fry, were not there when the ‘subjects’ of his investigation were alive. Cézanne died in 1906; Manet in 1883; Seurat in 1890; Gauguin in 1903, van Gogh in 1890. Fry launched the concept of “post-impressionism” in 1910. This was the first modern ‘ism’ invented by an art historian and not by a journalist, or an artist. It did not purport to define a living movement. By then, all the leading ‘post-impressionists’ were dead.\textsuperscript{346} A great irony, therefore, lies in the fact that Cézanne never knew that he would be one day hailed as a founding

“Post-Impressionist.” Cézanne was critical of impressionism, but no more so than Pissarro was—who vituperated, alongside Seurat, Signac, his own eldest son Lucien and others, against those whom he suddenly discarded as the “romantic impressionists.” What the Fry account does not tell—Newman is right to emphasize its shortcomings—is that all of the impressionists became very critical of impressionism by the 1880. Even before, Pissarro, and Cézanne in their work together, were certainly very self-critical of their own works. Finally, the reason why the movement broke up in 1886 is largely because no one then believed in the aesthetic cause that had brought these young recruits together twenty years earlier; at that time, Pissarro and Cézanne had just stopped seeing and working with each other, after more than twenty years of an intense and uneven friendship and collaboration.

The cement that had held modernism together from impressionism through to the New York School, was essentially twofold: individualism, and historicism were the two driving forces behind modernism. Individualism was a very strong factor in the formation of modernism. Harold Rosenberg, in a telling interjection, called the group of budding Abstract Expressionists a “herd of independent minds.”

This was even true of the way Pissarro was interpreted. In a review article on the first publication of Pissarro’s correspondence edited by John Rewald, Greenberg, tellingly,

opens his article with the following quote from a letter written by Camille Pissarro to his son Lucien:

We are on the right track, be faithful to your sensations.\(^{348}\)

It is interesting that Greenberg should have chosen, completely out of context, a sentence—certainly characteristic of Pissarro’s militant fervor against religion and, as ever, enthusiastically advocating a “return to nature”—that combines two of the main forces within modernism: a claim of validation of one’s own position confirmed by the sanctioning authority of History, and an appeal to one’s own innermost individual mark. Out of these, two paradoxical facets—historicism, and individualism—one affirms the autonomous dynamic force of history, the other claims the right of the individual to be one’s own and to expose one’s difference. However, neither in

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\(^{348}\) The sentence quoted without any reference comes from a letter written by Pissarro to his son on September 30, 1896 from Rouen. The French source reads: “Nous sommes dans le vrai, suivons notre sensation.” (CP/ JBH, IV, 262.) A more accurate translation should have been: “We are in the truth, let us follow our sensations.” Let us leave the problem of the inaccuracy of the translation of these letters aside. The general context for this letter is that the Pissarros, father and son, are at that point somewhat concerned by what they identify as “le mouvement néo-catholique” that seems to be developing both in England and in France. The ‘truth’ in Pissarro’s vocabulary is one that steers away from any form of religious ideology. With a slightly scientist, or positivist tone, Pissarro endorses the views of an atheist critic, Jules Baissac who opts for neither a Semitic, nor an Aryan god. At the same time as Nietzsche pronounced the death sentence of God, Pissarro follows suit with Baissac’s article and declares to Lucien: “Je t’enverrai un numéro de la Société nouvelle, lis-moi l’article : « le Dieu sémit et le Dieu aryen », c’est la fin d’une série. Tu y verras que les savants prévoient bien la marche vers une voie nouvelle mais qui ne sera pas néo-chrétienne ni Juive non plus.” (Ibid., 264). So, truth (le vrai) lies away from God, and may only be reached in cultivating “our sensations” in front of nature. The apparent antinomy between the positivist tone of this truth-finding program and the relativist limitations necessarily imposed by “one’s own sensations” did not seem to disturb Pissarro, nor his son. On the close positions of Greenberg and Rewald regarding modernism/historicism, see Section III.
Pissarro’s mind, nor in Greenberg’s does there seem to be the shadow of a doubt about the fact that it might be difficult logically to reconcile individual demands with historic necessity.

The article by Greenberg on Pissarro, even if it does not pose the questions that we have introduced in the First section of this essay, is nevertheless noteworthy in that it does justice to Pissarro in other ways by emphasizing certain characteristics of the artist. He notes, for instance, the fact (pinned up by Gauguin, and many others) that Pissarro seemed to “change his mind more than once.” The New York critic, however, offsets this attitude (which today would be praised rather than criticized) with the fact that Pissarro remained steadfastly faithful to nature and his. Incidentally, this is a concept that he is supposed to have shared with Cézanne—although Greenberg falls short of mentioning this point.

Whereas Pissarro stood at the beginning of modernism, Rauschenberg and Johns, among others, stood at the end of modernism, or at the very least introduced signals in their art that indicated the end of a period, whereby the mark of the individual was offering some yardstick by which it was possible to judge the merit of a particular work of art. Johns and Rauschenberg, especially in their works of the 1950s, each through different strategies, introduced a good dose of skepticism as to the validity, or even the mere possibility, of any individual statement being embedded in a work of
art. In between these two points, bridging the two banks was Cézanne who very much embodied what modernism was after. Pissarro has been perceived as an introducer of the modernist enterprise, Johns and Rauschenberg, at the other end, have been often seen as bringing it to its conclusion point.

Reflecting on what had happened in his gallery through the late ‘50s and the ‘60s, Leo Castelli who had given Jasper Johns his first one-man show in 1958, and who, the same year, also gave Rauschenberg one of his important one-man shows, thus discussed how he perceived the change, and what came after:

I had been sort of spoiled by the fact that so many things occurred in my gallery, one after the other, that were considered of the first importance, and I would have liked to go on that way, but I felt a little bit powerless in front of new developments…

Cézanne, on the other hand, has been unanimously acclaimed as a full participant and a major actor in launching the modernist enterprise that rebounded and gained momentum throughout the successive movements that claimed an allegiance to

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349 Leo Castelli, “A Farewell to Modernism,” in Suzi Gablik, Conversations Before the End of Time, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), 461. Describing this last moment in the history of modernism, Castelli also wrote (with some nostalgia): “there was no doubt that the artists I had chosen were the best. There was just no question about it. But I was naïve because I didn’t see that there were fantastic undercurrents threatening this sort of earthly paradise in which I was living. It was quite fantastic how confident I was about myself, about people who were my friends in museums, and so on—it seemed to be a perfect world.” (Ibid. 469).
Cézanne—from Gauguin and Picasso, to Pollock and Newman. Greenberg was wont to oppose the Old Masters and their reticence to let the viewers’ eyes “rest to long on the surface,” to Cézanne, (and before him, Manet) who had begun, “unconsciously for the most part, to shift the emphasis precisely there [on the surface] (where abstract painting has put it almost entirely).”\(^{350}\) The vast celebration that his late work received during and after his life, the critical fortune his art enjoyed among almost every single artistic group from impressionism onwards, in every country of Europe and in America, are some of the principal causes for the central role held by Cézanne’s art throughout the 20th century. Here again, Greenberg was reciting, and developing an historical narrative that found its sources in such authors as Emile Bernard, or Roger Fry. What Greenberg found remarkable in Cézanne’s late paintings was the fact that, whether through heavy emphasis on the contours, or a distortion of the general proportions, Cézanne was already capable of “sacrific[ing] the realism of the illusion” to “the unity and decorative force of the surface design.” With possibly Ingres, and Manet as predecessors, Cézanne appears as a major force that propelled the history of Western painting to its ultimate development in New York in the 1950s:

This concern with surface pattern was, of course, part of a tendency to flatness in painting (the unconscious motives of which have yet to be explored) that goes back to Manet, and, perhaps, Ingres. Matisse and the Fauves, the

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Expressionists and the Cubists, all took up where Cézanne—and Gauguin and Van Gogh—had left off, and the final result has been abstract painting, which is the flattest pictorial art we have ever seen in the West.351

Pissarro has no room in this Pantheon largely because the Cézanne that is historically important—the most extreme Cézanne—is the one of the end who appears almost to rival with the works of the New York School:

Some of the late landscapes—which I feel to be the culmination of Cézanne’s art—are certainly striking and as “extreme” as a good deal of our best contemporary work. For this and other reasons there is no better way for anyone who wants to learn to enjoy—not “understand”—modern art than to apply himself to the pictures of the master of Aix.352

The joy provided by the Master of Aix’s works can therefore offer a useful pedagogical tool of a peculiar kind since it can help to “learn to enjoy” the merits of the Abstract Expressionists: the expression is rather amusing, and could be reminiscent of the programs dressed for some 18th century libertines. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that, according to Greenberg, history made no progress since Cézanne, and that the Abstract Expressionists simply re-did what Cézanne had

351 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
done first in France half a century earlier. The links can thus be reconstructed:

Cézanne was, at first, critical of the impressionists—Greenberg ever forgetting to mention that Cézanne was a full-fledged member of the impressionists and participated to the first and the third impressionist exhibitions. What Cézanne found reprehensible in impressionism (according to Greenberg’s reconstruction) was a lack of form and structure. The formal answer provided by Cézanne against this flaw was to supply ample contrasts of warm and cool colors, or dark and light.353 The American abstract expressionists have to be credited too for a development of which they are wholly responsible. Greenberg feels a need to emphasize this point with a touch of patriotism:

It is, I think, the most radical of all developments in the painting of the last two decades, and has no counterpart in Paris (…), as so many other things in American abstract expressionism have had since 1944.354

This most radical development consists in giving up value contrasts that had been absolutely central to the make up of Cézanne’s late works, and, by the same token, had formed the core of Cézanne’s heritage as it was passed on to the Cubists. In opposition, Greenberg identified a tradition that cultivated a break away from contrast painting—by developing what Greenberg called “close-value painting.” This point

353 See Greenberg, ““American-Type” Painting,” Collected Essays, III, 227.
354 Ibid., 228.
becomes all the more interesting, and relevant to our discussion as when it comes to finding examples of the Europeans, who—against the mainstream tradition of dark v. light contrast-painting uncritically resumed by Cézanne and the cubists—Greenberg pointed to Turner, of course, the late Monet, and Pissarro. With Greenberg, therefore, Cézanne and Pissarro find themselves at the other end of the spectrum of forces that, conflated with one another, led to the formation of abstract expressionism. “As the Cubists resumed Cézanne, Greenberg wrote, Still has resumed Monet—and Pissarro. His paintings were the first abstract pictures I ever saw that contained almost no allusion to Cubism.” In other words, what the dismantling of forms, the break up of contours, and the distortions of proportions achieved for Cézanne—and after him, for the Cubists—the toning down of the color scale, and the “bunching” of close value intervals together achieved analogous results for Turner, Monet and Pissarro.

As far as the other three artists in this essay are concerned, let us immediately register a peculiar paradox. All three artists, Pissarro, on the one hand, Rauschenberg and Johns at the other, stand at the opposite margins of modernism: the beginning and the end. Yet, all three of them share a deep, abiding admiration for Cézanne with generations of modernist artists in between them. An interesting paradox results

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355 Ibid.
356 Ibid., 229.
357 For a useful sample of the vast array of statements of admiration made by modern artists, from Camille Pissarro to Barnett Newman, and including even post-modern artists such as Jannis Kounellis, see “A Painters’ Painter,” by Terence Maloon and Murray Bail, in Classic Cézanne, (Exh.), (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1998), 167-181; statements by Johns and Rauschenberg are missing, however.
from this situation: given that Pissarro and Cézanne were so close for nearly twenty
years, given that Rauschenberg and Johns have continuously held Cézanne in great
admiration, the dividing lines between modernism and what preceded it (Pissarro and
the impressionists) and what followed (post-modernism in its multiple facets) may
not offer the most fruitful way to grasp the meaning of the two relationships between
these two pairs of artists.

This perception of Cézanne embodying modernism has largely resulted in carving out
the artist’s art and career into at least three moments: the Baroque (or the mad,
Romantic\textsuperscript{358}) young Cézanne who does almost anything to shock and displease
everyone; the more mature and quieter Cézanne who, under the benign influence of
Pissarro, comes to the point of “realizing his sensation” as a painter; and, finally, the
real Cézanne of the last twenty years, who, on his own merit, and in isolation, in
Provence, reaches his own artistic truth by himself. This traditional way of presenting
Cézanne goes back almost to the earliest days of the critique on Cézanne. These are,
summarily put, the accounts given first by Emile Bernard, then, by Roger Fry. Both
authors, in turn, influenced a great deal the analysis later developed by Clement
Greenberg. As often in these summaries, there is a part of truth, even if that truth is
over-simplified for the sake of explicating a complex, if not daunting, artistic reality:

\textsuperscript{358} Fry, 1926, seems to be using both terms “baroque” or “romantic” as synonyms. What these terms
actually mean in an art historical context is not as important here as the fact that they both are opposed
to the term “classic,” “Baroque,” “mad,” or “romantic” are therefore to be understood as mere
equivalents to describe Cézanne’s less than orthodox beginnings.
that of the art of Cézanne. The main flaw, as I see it, of the traditional modernist presentation of the Cézanne complex is that, while its explicatory force is undeniable, one is left with three, not easily reconcilable Cézannes.\footnote{This carving phenomenon receives its most vivid translation in the ways Cézanne is portrayed through museum retrospective exhibitions. All encompassing (or synoptic) exhibitions are rare: the 1995 London/Paris/Philadelphia show: \textit{Cézanne} (Exh.) (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, and Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995) was the most recent and notable exception, and even then, the catalogue authors divided up between themselves the early, the mature, and the late Cézanne. Before then, one had to go back to the great 1936 retrospective to find an exhibition that addressed “Cézanne” as a whole. Otherwise, the rule in conceiving Cézanne exhibitions has been to place an emphasis on one, or the other, of the principal moments of his career: \textit{Cézanne: The Late Work}, (Exh.) (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), and \textit{Cézanne: The Early Years 1859-1872}, (Exh.) (London: the Royal Academy of Arts, 1988) are the best illustrations of this dissecting phenomenon. I should add that two virtual exhibitions that have been much spoken about partly reiterates this division: one, \textit{Cézanne and Pissarro: an Impressionist Collaboration}, conceived by Richard Brettell, Richard Shiff, and myself would obviously stress the intermediary moment (Cézanne II); and another, more recently being discussed by Philip Conisbee to celebrate the centenary of the artist’s death, would focus on the artist in Provence. The latter project, if it does give a fair representation to the early production of the artist in Provence, might offer one of the first opportunities to compare and discuss Cézanne I and Cézanne III—the pre-modernist and the modernist artist, although it is likely that Cézanne III will dominate.\footnote{Maurice Denis, “Cézanne,” in \textit{Théories}. Extracts reprinted in \textit{Conversations}, 170.} For the sake of brevity, I will refer to these three Cézannes as Cézanne I (from the beginnings of the artist’s career to the early 1870s), Cézanne II (= the impressionist Cézanne), and Cézanne III (the Cézanne of the last twenty years). Cézanne II, in the modernist accounts, is the one portrayed as having engaged in the interaction that tied him to Pissarro during the impressionist years. One of the sources for this division of Cézanne into three parts goes back to Fry’s predecessor, Maurice Denis, who, even more systematically than Bernard, associated Cézanne II with his relationship with impressionism. It is, Denis explains, “in the second period of Cézanne” that Monet’s and Pissarro’s impressionism supplies fuel for Cézanne’s style and his sensibility.\footnote{Maurice Denis, “Cézanne,” in \textit{Théories}. Extracts reprinted in \textit{Conversations}, 170.} However, it is important to note that this modernist account that proceeds essentially by
simplifications, necessarily skips the more subtle, complex, less malleable accounts one gets when looking at a detailed chronology of both artists. The interchange between these two artists, for instance, lasted, in fact much longer—from the early 1860s to the mid-1880s with intermittent periods during which the two artists did not see each other—Cézanne returning to Aix, or Pissarro undertaking prolonged stays near Brittany, in a small village called Montfoucault. All in all, therefore, the modernist accounts—when they paid attention to this interchange—left Cézanne I and Cézanne III out of the picture, even though it was Cézanne I (before Cézanne II) who met Pissarro and befriended the older artists. Contrary to this account, I will, in the final chapter of this essay, attempt to prove that, in fact, the first part of Cézanne’s life and career was equally seminal to the relationship between the two artists, and the beginnings of both artists’ careers had a lot to do with each other. Indeed, the same can and will be said about Johns and Rauschenberg, although the modernist accounts did not carve out their careers in the same way at all.

Out of this carving exercise, Cézanne I appears to have very little to do with Cézanne III. As a result, the function of Cézanne II, as facilitating a passage between I and III, is just as problematic. There we have two models: either I and III are very different, and therefore the role of II has to be very clearly exposed (Fry). Pissarro, here, plays a vital role of catalyst that reunites I and III. Or, I and III are not that different—in which case, II appears as a dispensable aberration (Bernard) or as a relatively
insignificant continuation of Cézanne I though in a different vocabulary: Pissarro’s role, on the whole, can almost be taken out. This latter position is exemplified by Denis who describes Cézanne I as embodying the conflict between Greco and Titian. This is how he then describes Cézanne II:

Ce même conflit émouvant, cette combinaison du style et de la sensibilité se retrouve dans la seconde période de Cézanne, mais c’est alors l’impressionnisme de Monet et de Pissarro qui en fournit les éléments, qui en provoque les réactions et la transformation classique. Les contrastes de teintes amenés par l’étude de la pleine lumière, les irisations d’arc-en-ciel de la nouvelle palette, il les discipline, il les organise avec la même rigueur que les oppositions de noir et blanc de la période précédente. En même temps, au modelé sommaire de ses premières figures il substitue le chromatisme raisonné des figures et des natures mortes de cette seconde manière qu’on pourrait appeler sa manière fleurie.\(^{361}\)

In other words, Cézanne II (in what Denis lyrically calls his flowery manner) did not proceed differently from Cézanne I: he continued to inscribe his sensibility within what Denis characterized as the artist’s “rough and rational syntheses,” except that, under Pissarro’s and Monet’s contact, he suddenly applied this synthetic power to the

prism of light, and the divisions of color introduced by the impressionists. Thus the arch-famous Cézannian shibboleth appears to gain a renewed sense and logic: indeed, Cézanne would have succeeded in turning impressionism into an art as solid and permanent as the art one finds in museums. Again, in this reconstruction, Denis assigns an inherent logic to the Cézannian evolution that makes the impacts of people like Monet or Pissarro very marginal, or tangential, since Cézanne already had it in him to develop his own logic. Denis brings this development to a close by stressing that a) Cézanne only had much respect for the early Pissarros and the first Monets, and that b) among all the living artists he befriended, anyway, Monet was the only one for who he had a real esteem… It must be said here that this downgrading of Pissarro’s place alongside Cézanne is all the more weird at the hand of Maurice Denis, as elsewhere, in a conversation with Gasquet, Cézanne supposedly referred to a conversation with Denis in which he emphatically insisted on Pissarro’s role:

Moi aussi, je ne le cache pas, j’ai été impressionniste. Pissarro a eu une énorme influence sur moi. Mais j’ai voulu faire de l’impressionnisme quelque chose de solide et durable comme l’art des musées. Je le disais à Maurice Denis.  

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362 Ibid., 170-171.  
363 Cézanne to Gasquet, Conversations, 121.
The typical trade-off inherent in most modernist reconstructions (logical gains, factual losses) are obvious here. The portrait of Cézanne that results from this construction is indeed a (theoretical) image that imposes “simplicity, austerity, grandeur.” One is entitled to ask how much of this image is a projection of Denis’s own expectations, or wishes. The point is, however, that this image of Cézanne as a maker of the modern monument, may be reassuring to hagiographers, but it says very little about the complex daily process of search, the painful, even sometimes agonizing, the ongoing quest for answers that are not already given before one begins searching. It is this sort of complex reflections that formed the nexus of the ongoing dialogues between Pissarro and Cézanne. There is no wonder that there was no room for the system of explication drawn by Denis for this kind of dialogues: for it would have presented the image of a Cézanne full of hesitation, of weaknesses—not an erector of monuments, but a simple man, who woke up every day with new problems, and whose answers he sought entering into a dialogue with some one else. The modernist conception of the genius is founded on an image of the author/subject as equal to itself, in complete harmony, and in full possession of its own means. The facts of daily creation are, however, very different from this noble conception. Cézanne couched this paradox beautifully in his conversations recorded by Joachim:

“Chaque fois que je me mets devant mon chevalet, je suis un autre homme, moi, et toujours Cézanne…”

364 Conversations, 153.
Briefly put, there is another mild variation to this form of interpretation that draws links that are more specifically geographical than historical within Cézanne’s art. The merit of this interpretation is that it draws an even clearer conclusion: Pissarro’s role was irrelevant to one’s understanding of Cézanne. Kurt Badt—who owes a great debt to Denis—offers a prime example of this. Badt saw Cézanne not so much as articulating a bridge between two phases of the nineteenth century, but as a bridge between the Roman civilization and the Dutch tendencies in painting. He thus explained:

That is why it is radically wrong to regard Cézanne as directly related to the French impressionists; for this kind of painting came straight from the atmospheric studies of the Netherlanders. Even though Cézanne did receive a great deal of practical instruction from Pissarro, yet the fact that he worked alongside him was historically irrelevant, as was also his choice of the same motifs and the same palette. These facts lost their significance because Cézanne gave a metaphysical interpretation to natural harmony when he used it as the subject of his art and he was thereby put under the necessity of attaching himself once more to the ‘Roman’ tradition.\footnote{Kurt Badt, \textit{The Art of Cézanne}, trans. Sheila Ann Ogilvie, (New York : Hacker Art Books, 1985), 321.}
This text is interesting only insofar as it offers one more of the reasons why the Cézanne/Pissarro relationship seemed worthy of being ignored. One owes to the author of this text an acknowledgement for a candid admission.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that all the modernist tradition systematically omitted to think of Cézanne in terms of someone who could, and indeed, did engage in a serious artistic interchange with Pissarro. As opposed to Denis who sees the same seamless logic at work between Cézanne I, II, and III—i.e., the pursuit of a synthesis between two qualities that Cézanne reunited: sensibility and reflection, or “émotion du moment” and composition—other authors refused to see that Cézanne I and Cézanne III had much in common. The question then arose: how could Cézanne II offer a transitional link between I and III, and how did this link work if I and III had indeed almost nothing in common? There the traditional modernist interpretation (Fry especially) accords Pissarro a preponderant role as a catalyst that helped Cézanne II to come to his artistic sense. Fry, as he was summing up his important study on Cézanne, attempted to see a unifying thread in all these Cézánnes, and he found it the “persistence” of “the expression of … erotico-lyrical moods” but he soon dismissed this persistent factor that could be retained as a unifying theme throughout Cézanne’s work, because “other and minor masters have been more felicitous” in this. Ultimately, what matters to Fry—and here, he is in full

agreement with all modernists—is that “Cézanne counts pre-eminently as a great classic master”\textsuperscript{367} and basically, the “classic Cézanne” is Cézanne III. The art that counts the most is that of the last twenty years of his career (from the mid-1880s to 1906). The problems that Fry faces, however, are twofold: 1) the classic Cézanne, before he could be born, had to come to his senses, given that Cézanne I doesn’t have all his senses, and is artistically alienated. He therefore needed a mentor, or a catalyst (Pissarro) who would liberate him from himself. 2) In order for the classic Cézanne to fully “realize” himself, he then also needed to gain finally his autonomy from his mentor Pissarro. Fry’s analysis thus ends on a confirmation of the last period of the artist’s work as his “pre-eminently great” moment, to the detriment of what came beforehand which needed to be repressed: it is almost as if Pissarro in this scenario acted as a shrink, coming to the rescue of Cézanne who badly “needs help.” Once the cure is over, however, Pissarro is no longer necessary. Curiously, and rather shrewdly, here again following the analogous model of the unfolding of a psychoanalytical cure, Fry assigns the task of “repressing” what had come before to the artist himself: he only can liberate himself, even though he can receive help, light and guidelines from his shrink. One may then talk of an act of self-repression, or self-discipline, and, in that, Cézanne followed the rule of all great masters. “[P]erhaps all great Classics are made by the repression of a Romantic.”\textsuperscript{368}

\textsuperscript{367} Ibid., 82-83.

\textsuperscript{368} Ibid. This very comment is described by Shiff as “one of the critic’s most influential (and misconstruable) pronouncements.” See Richard Shiff, “\textit{Painting, Writing, Handwriting, Roger Fry and Paul Cézanne},” in Roger Fry, \textit{op. cit.}, xix-xx. It seems to me that Fry, here, is in fact generalizing his
while, and some efforts, to clear his “vision and understanding” from “his romantic exaltations.” In the same diagnosis given by Fry, one is told that the sight of Baroque art had intoxicated Cézanne: this took hold of the young Provençal artist like some food poisoning. The remedy came from the hands of the older and wiser artist, Camille Pissarro who protected the younger artist against the “danger” of his “bewildering dreams.” The discipline of impressionism provided Cézanne with a fence against the excess that resulted from the “fermentation” of his mind. The terms in which Fry couches the Cézanne-Pissarro relationship are unambiguous: “At Auvers Cézanne became in effect apprentice to Pissarro, who was already master of his method and in full possession of his personal style. It was, one may say, his first and his only apprenticeship.” The irony—that takes a vaguely Hegelian twist—in Fry’s account is that, ultimately, Cézanne was credited by the same author for having reenacted his individuality more fully, and having liberated himself again, but this time from the naturalistic shackles inherent in impressionism. Characterizing the accomplishment of the post-impressionists—Cézanne, chief among them—Fry explained:

own model of interpretation of Cézanne’s work, and applying it to “all great masters.” In the case of Cézanne I, the craziness of his own fantasy must be curtailed in order to leave room for the dormant, solid structure of his spirit, already present in Cézanne I, but covered up by the excess of his exuberant imagination.

369 Ibid., 32.
370 It is rather amusing to observe here that Fry assigns to impressionism the exact counter-value of what Denis's interpretation of impressionism proposed. To Denis, impressionism was all about sensibility, improvisation, and he even invokes Geffroy to conjure up the “vertige spirituel provenant de l’exaltation des sens.” Cézanne remedied this danger inherent in impressionism by resorting to the “support logique d’une composition.” (Conversations, 171). Fry, who yet had read Denis, says rigorously the opposite: impressionism offered the “exalted” young Cézanne the support of its logic to help him out of his wild dreams.

371 Fry, op. cit., 33.
In no school does individual temperament count for more. In fact, it is the boast of those who believe in this school, that its methods enable the individuality of the artists to find completer self-expression in his work than is possible to those who have committed themselves to representing objects more literally. This, indeed, is the first source of their quarrel with the Impressionists: the Post-Impressionists consider the Impressionists too naturalistic.\textsuperscript{372}

Despite their differences from the impressionists, the post-impressionists—Cézanne chief among them—had been closely involved with the impressionists:

Yet their own connection with Impressionism is extremely close; Cézanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh all learnt in the Impressionist school. There are pictures on the walls by these three artists, painted in their earlier years, which at first strike the eye as being more impressionist than anything else; but, nevertheless, the connection of these artists with the Impressionists is accidental rather than intrinsic.\textsuperscript{373}


\textsuperscript{373} Ibid.
Close as they may have been to their seniors, the resemblance of the post-impressionists’ works with those by the impressionists was contingent, or accidental. Fry was certainly not above a contradiction or two. One sometimes senses that he wants to have the cake and eat it: he attempts to substantiate the existence of a strong link with impressionism while, at the same time, and contradictorily, attempts to minimize the importance of that link—by referring to it as “accidental”—or by accentuating the difference between the impressionists and the post-impressionists.

What the impressionists and the post-impressionists shared in common were two characteristics: 1. they all very much intended to express their own “temperaments” (the impressionists would have said: “sensation”); 2. they would never let themselves be influenced by the ideology or the taste of the moment as to what is “beautiful, significant and worthy to be painted.” In other words, the impressionists and the post-impressionists were trendsetters, rather than trend-followers. It is not uninteresting to note that Greenberg, so indebted to Fry in many ways, was to resume the distinction put in place by Fry in the 1910s and develop it further. In one of his articles in The Nation, Greenberg wrote a double review of an exhibition of works by Paul Gauguin and Arshile Gorky. This is incidentally one of the most exhilarating aspects of reading Greenberg: that is his capacity to articulate artists of different backgrounds, cultures, languages, and histories, and see what links they share, be it through Greenberg’s historicist conception. In his review, Greenberg begins by saying that “Gauguin ranks with Cézanne and Van Gogh as a founding father of

374 Ibid., 81-82.
modern art.” In itself, by 1946, this sort of statement cannot claim a great deal of originality; however, countering Fry’s views, Greenberg adds: “But the sharpness of his break with impressionism…can be exaggerated. In his epoch-making *Déjeuner sur l’herbe* Manet anticipates what Gauguin only isolates and emphasizes.” In this parallel between Manet and Gauguin, Greenberg is partly faithful to Fry’s spirit but quits Fry when he inflects this parallel towards different conclusions: these parallels “do not suffice to make Gauguin a great artist.” Furthermore, Greenberg is even more critical of Fry when he states that Gauguin left the cradle of impressionism prematurely: “he would, perhaps, have realized himself more fully had he stayed closer to the spirit of impressionism.” The New York critic further clarifies his point by referring to three examples in the impressionist cannon: “Renoir, Pissarro, and Monet may have become flaccid at times, but they never suffered from the divided aims that hurt so much of Gauguin’s painting.”

Doubtlessly, however, Fry must be credited for one thing here—unlike Bernard, his predecessor, whose example will be studied in a moment, or Greenberg, his successor—Fry did pay serious attention to the relationship between Pissarro and

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376 Ibid.
377 Ibid., 77.
378 Greenberg resorts to an extraordinary comparison; he compares Gauguin’s premature development to a rather unexpected political situation. Alluding to Marx’s analysis of Russia (Marx having announced that Russia was not yet ready for socialism), Greenberg wrote: “Like ‘socialism’ in Russia, Gauguin is a case of premature and uneven development.” Ibid., 77.
379 Ibid. One wonders here whether Greenberg knows about Gauguin’s apprenticeship with Pissarro, given that he mentions Pissarro in the same breath as Monet and Renoir who had relatively little impact on Gauguin.
Cézanne. Fry is certainly one of the earliest critics and historians who came as close as possible to the point of describing the inter-subjective link that kept Pissarro and Cézanne in contact with each other intermittently for approximately twenty years. In a sense, the present essay takes one of its cues from Fry when he wrote:

…By far the most important of the group [of devotees to the impressionist doctrine] was Pissarro, with whom he at once felt himself in sympathy.\textsuperscript{380}

There are several problems, however, with Fry’s interpretation of this relationship. First, historically, Fry is slightly misled about dates. He uses the key period of the early impressionist years (1870-1874) as the launching moment of the relationship between the two artists\textsuperscript{381} whereas the two artists, as will be seen later, began to engage in a close artistic interaction by the mid-1860s. Strangely enough, Fry knew and mentioned the fact that by the early 1860s Pissarro and Cézanne already knew each other well:

\textsuperscript{380} Fry, Cézanne: A Study of His Development, 32. Again, this statement is directly opposed to Denis’s statement according to which the only living artist for whom Cézanne ever had much esteem was Monet. The fact is that Cézanne’s serious tendency to contradict himself through the years might offer substance to support either statement. The tone of his letters and conversations could change abruptly through the years, and the mood Cézanne was in.

\textsuperscript{381} Ibid., 30-31: “At all events by the year 1873, when circumstances brought Cézanne into closer contact with certain impressionist painters, it was no longer a question of the comparatively assimilable Impressionism of the early Manet and of Bazille, but of the fully developed \textit{plein air} doctrine, with its divisionism or method of breaking up the colour of a mass by means of small touches of comparatively pure colour.” Fry then concludes: “The years 1873 and 1874 were of crucial importance then for the development of Cézanne’s artistic personality. He spent the summers of those years at Auvers-sur-Oise, where he found himself in a colony of devotees of the new doctrine.
From the very outset of his career in Paris Cézanne had been more or less in touch with the group of artists who were afterwards to be labeled as Impressionists. Already in 1863, M. Vollard tells us—and he probably had the information from Cézanne himself—Bazille came to Renoir’s studio bringing, he declared, two ‘famous recruits.’ These were Cézanne and Pissarro.\textsuperscript{382}

Fry is here referring (without giving a specific source) to the interesting account published by Vollard of the first meeting between Renoir, and Cézanne and Pissarro, introduced to each other by Bazille. Vollard (quoting Renoir) wrote these lines that deserve mention:

\begin{quote}
Ce fut aussi cette année-là (1863) que je connus Cézanne. J’avais alors, aux Batignolles, rue de La Condamine, un petit atelier que je partageais avec Bazille. Celui-ci arriva, un jour, accompagné de deux jeunes gens : « Je t’amène deux fameuses recrues ! » C’étaient Cézanne et Pissarro.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Je devais les connaître, dans la suite, intimement tous les deux ; mais c’est de Cézanne que j’ai gardé le souvenir le plus vif. Je ne crois pas que, dans toute l’histoire des peintres, on trouve un cas semblable à celui de Cézanne. Avoir vécu jusqu’à l’âge de soixante-dix ans, et, depuis le premier jour où l’on a tenu un pinceau, demeurer aussi isolé que si l’on était dans une île déserte ! Et
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{382} Fry, \textit{op. cit.}, 30.
aussi, à côté de cet amour passionné de son art, une telle indifférence pour son œuvre une fois faite…” 383

Renoir does exactly the same odd thing as Fry does: he mentions the fact that Pissarro and Cézanne were closely involved with each other and were introduced to him as two “great recruits”384, but soon discards this fact in order just to underline the fact that Cézanne remained “isolé” from the first time he touched a brush until he reached the age of seventy… And so, one cannot but wonder: Was Cézanne also ‘isolé’ while he was closely acquainted with Pissarro? Similarly, Fry—although (unlike Renoir) he did pay attention to the relationship of Cézanne and Pissarro after 1870—mentions the meeting between Cézanne and Pissarro, and Renoir, but then ignores its consequences or meaning. That meeting seems inconsequential—despite Bazille’s hyperbolic expression; the relationship between Pissarro and Cézanne remained incidental. The only artist with whom Cézanne might have felt some sympathy at the time, according to Fry, was Bazille. Otherwise, Cézanne was simply not ready to absorb the lesson of the impressionists and of Pissarro’s:

383 Ambroise Vollard, Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), (Paris : éditions G. Crès, 1920), 32-33. See also Vollard, En écoutant…, op. cit., 20, for a slightly different version of the same event.
384 Fry misunderstood the meaning of the word “fameuses” used by Bazille in the expression “Je t’amène deux fameuses recrues” to introduce Pissarro and Cézanne to Renoir: the adjective ‘fameux’ in its more familiar or colloquial usage means ‘first rank’ or ‘first choice;’ one can thus speak of a ‘fameuse’ piece of meat, for instance. Given its colloquial and slightly slang connotation, I suggest the slightly familiar English translation: “great” or “superb.” This is obviously what the word meant in Bazille’s mouth in this context. Besides, at the time, Pissarro and Cézanne were anything but famous—the word ‘fameux’ cannot here, therefore, be mistaken for a synonym of the word ‘célèbre.’
Though alert enough to recognize from the first that these were the only vital painters of his day, [Cézanne] was not yet ready to learn much from them. His vision and understanding were still obscured by his romantic exaltations.\textsuperscript{385}

Impressionism appears as a kind of \textit{alma mater} to most of the so-called post-impressionists as the first historians were chartering the development of modernism. If Gauguin (according to Greenberg) was premature in leaving the benign influence of impressionism, Cézanne was slow in absorbing the good lesson that he would get from the impressionists.

Things began to change for Cézanne, according to Fry, after 1870, when he became ready to digest Pissarro’s lesson, and, therefore, willing to undergo detoxification\textsuperscript{386} from his romantic exaltations.\textsuperscript{387} Fry then focused on a very important painting by Cézanne, (\textit{Vue de Louveciennes}, c. 1871, by Paul Cézanne (Venturi #153, and Rewald #184) that occupies a central position within the dialogue between Pissarro and Cézanne. However, Fry a) gave the painting an inaccurate title: \textit{Auvers} and b) did not seem to know that this was a painting executed by Cézanne after another painting by Pissarro (P&V 123). \textit{Vue de Louveciennes}, c. 1871, was executed by Cézanne

\begin{footnotes}
\item[385] Fry, \textit{op.cit.}, 30.
\item[386] Fry uses such odd metaphors throughout his text on Cézanne: “he had not digested the intoxication which the sight of the great Baroque designers produced in him. He was not ready yet to content himself with so sober, so deliberate, so comparatively unambitious a manner…” (\textit{op. cit.}, 30.)
\item[387] It must be noted that Cézanne himself in a conversation with Bernard did not feel at all ashamed of his (or his impressionist colleagues’) attachment to romanticism: [Monet and Pissarro] “had just as I did, much enthusiasm for the great Romantic period.” Bernard, \textit{Propos sur l’art}, \textit{op.cit.}, 226.
\end{footnotes}
after Louveciennes, 1871, by Camille Pissarro (P&V 123). It is important to point to an interesting problem regarding these two paintings to which I shall return in the final section of this essay. Fry clearly knew this painting since it was reproduced, and discussed it in detail. This text is extraordinary in that Fry comes very close to suggesting that the painting had as a model a painting by Pissarro, yet this fact is not spelt out:

The picture of Auvers painted in these years [the 1870s], is of capital importance in this context. It shows a turn of a road bordered on the left by a clump of trees, behind which a brighter light falls on the road. In the middle the view embraces the houses of the village, with their gardens sloping towards the stream, and a few interspersed conifers. It is as literal and prosaic an ensemble as one could find, and it is stated with scrupulous exactitude. But what is so remarkable—and what, alas, can hardly be guessed at from the reproduction—is that it is executed so entirely in Pissarro’s Impressionist manner as to be almost mistakable for a picture by him.388

Even though this text by Fry, among all early modernist texts, comes closest to producing an analysis of the Cézanne/Pissarro interchange, I felt that it was worthwhile to expose in some detail the terms of Fry’s description because on a number of counts, I will rectify some of the assumptions, or statements that he made.

that are now invalidated by our present knowledge of both artists. 1. I will attempt to show that Pissarro and Cézanne, as attested by Bazille and Renoir, via Vollard, knew each other very well during the 1860s and that their artistic interchange began in earnest at that time, i.e., shortly after the Salon des Refusés. 2. I will argue, therefore, that Cézanne did not work as an ‘isolé’ as Renoir, or Vollard seemed fond of saying, but that he was from the earliest days, at the heart of a very dynamic artistic exchange. 3. The main problem I have with the way this early modernist account of the Pissarro/Cézanne exchange is that, in fact, it is not described as an exchange. Cézanne is seen not as a subject, but as a patient being almost ‘cured’ from exuberant exaltations, from his early “romantic,” or “baroque” madness. I will argue against this model that neither artist was the shrink (or the patient) of the other, but that both gained (and sometimes lost) from this contact with each other. To put it bluntly, it seems certain to me, as we look at works by both artists of the 1860s, that Pissarro learnt as much from Cézanne, as Cézanne did, right from the start—this reciprocity characterized their relationship almost to the very end, in the mid-1880s. 4. The type of analysis given by Fry of Cézanne’s painting Vue de Louveciennes (entitled by Fry, Auvers) fails, as a result, to address an essential point. Here I would literally invert the proposition drawn by Fry: the critic did not seem to know that there was a model by Pissarro; yet, ironically, he found the painting by Cézanne was so close to Pissarro “as to be almost mistakable for a picture by him.” I would say the exact opposite:

389 Ibid. The idea that the painting by Cézanne is a mere copy or a “faithful reproduction” of the Pissarro has enjoyed great longevity: Rewald himself in the catalogue raisonné of the artist describes
today, we do know the model by Pissarro, which I will be discussing in relation to the painting by Cézanne in the last section; and, I would say that the comparison of these two paintings also makes the painting by Cézanne—close as it is in numerous ways to the painting by Pissarro—unmistakably his own. What I personally find so fascinating about this artistic exchange between these artists is that they did get so close while at the same time always retaining their differences. This is what made this exchange rich, and intriguing—not the fact that Cézanne was a copycat of Pissarro for about ten years.

Fry, I have insisted on this point, appears to be one of the only modernists who has actually made an attempt to grapple with this inter-subjective short-lived phase in Cézanne’s life: others (e.g., Bernard, or Greenberg) hardly paid even lip service to the question of inter-subjectivity in Cézanne’s career, or, if they did (Denis, Badt), openly claimed the irrelevance of such a link. It seems as though Cézanne was all the more venerated throughout modernism, as he would be seen as having barred the vitiating influences of the world, and withdrew as a result. The modernist model of perception in these terms: see JR #184, (vol. I, 144). “Evidently it was by faithfully reproducing this work that Cézanne was best able to initiate himself into his friend’s technique of accumulated small touches and broken colors, so different from the large brushstrokes and the contrasts that distinguish Cézanne’s work executed before his arrival in Pontoise.” This text carries on two misperceptions: 1. it is impossible if one has seen both paintings by Pissarro and by Cézanne, to arrive at the conclusion that one is the “faithful reproduction” of the other—the Cézanne cannot be described in terms of “accumulated small touches and broken colors;” 2. Cézanne did not need to “initiate” himself into his friend’s technique because for the last seven years at least, they had both “initiated” each other into their own techniques. More fruitful in order to understand this painting would be to attempt to recreate the “conversation” (rather than the initiation) that led both artists to the point where one would lend the other one of his works—and see what surprising result would come from the other’s hands. See comparison of details in Ills. Nos. 9 to 15.
of Cézanne (I, II, and III) certainly does provide an explicatory answer as to the wildly different styles with which Cézanne experimented over the first three decades of his career—even though it completely fails to address the question of why Cézanne I continued to linger behind the curtain even as Cézanne II was already up and running. The question of why Cézanne continued to produce some of his “exalted” genre scenes even as he was undergoing his cure through impressionism, remains a vexing problem for any modernist account that claims coherence. The interpretive price to pay for this simplifying model is that it opens up to even more, and greater, problems. If we follow Fry, how did Pissarro see something in Cézanne I that led him to believe (in 1863) that the mere virtual Cézanne II (still far away), and eventually Cézanne III (even further away) could come out of Cézanne I? Or, to put it differently, if Cézanne wasn’t ready by 1863 to absorb Pissarro’s lesson, why would they both continue to see and write to each other as they did for another ten years—until Cézanne was finally ready to absorb Pissarro’s benign “influence?” Was Pissarro a seer, or did he benefit from some psychic powers that allowed him to predict the course of modern art history? One must assume that some other glue held their relationship alive and well for so many years. A common choice of human and artistic values was at the foundation of their ongoing friendship.

It is true, of course, that Pissarro himself eventually was not afraid to boast that he had virtually predicted Cézanne’s success decades before it finally occurred. This
atypical demonstration of lack of humility stemmed from the fact that Pissarro had felt deeply frustrated because he had been left out. The voice of History, namely as it was written at the helm of Emile Bernard, had completely ignored Pissarro’s role as a discoverer of Cézanne’s unacknowledged genius. Pissarro rightly felt unjustly ignored. Back in 1889, only a few years after their last serious collaborative contact together, Pissarro had been wounded by the fact that a small brochure written by Emile Bernard on Cézanne neglected to mention his role, or even at the very least, his own longstanding appreciation of Cézanne’s art. Worse even, this text was deeply offensive to Pissarro as it suggested that the older artist had come to enjoy the fruit of glory by putting his special friendships to good use, while Cézanne refused to use “friendships” in order to reach such ends. For Pissarro who held very strong values of uprightness and staunchly refused all his life any form of compromise with dignitaries, and official representatives, nothing could be more hurtful. This is how

390 See CP/JBH, III, 76, where Pissarro expresses his anger at Bernard’s text of 1891: “Paul Cézanne” in Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui for not having credited him for the influence he exerted on Cézanne: “Ce pauvre ignorant [Bernard] prétend que Cézanne a été un moment sous l’influence de Monet, un comble, qu’en dis-tu?..” See also Emile Bernard’s « Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites », in Mercure de France, octobre 1907, v. 69-70, 385-404 and 606-627. The first paragraph of this other major analysis of Cézanne’s role in the development of modern art begins with a reflection on the brochure Bernard had written almost twenty years before on Cézanne, and on the turn history had taken with regard to Cézanne’s position. Referring to himself with the 3rd person, Bernard tells us that “the author” of the brochure was then “loin de s’attendre au succès retentissant qui, depuis, a fait des moindres tentatives de Paul Cézanne des ouvrages d’un intérêt spécial.” In contrast, at the time, Bernard tells us that he was indignant with “[le] mutisme de la critique, du mépris des amis et de l’ignorance des peintres, ses contemporains, simplement.” (Op. Cit., 386) Notwithstanding the fact that this statement was factually erroneous since at least three of Cézanne’s contemporaries were closely following, as much as possible, his development (Pissarro, Degas, and Gauguin—not to mention Renoir), Bernard goes on describing his essay on the artist in Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui as “un des premiers hommages à son maître d’alors.” The only exception, according to Bernard, of some one who had seen in Cézanne’s work “la peinture de l’avenir” was not an artist, but an art dealer, the much celebrated Père Tanguy: “Tout ce que l’on en savait [de Cézanne] était raconté par le père Tanguy, le bon et généreux Breton dont la boutique était l’unique repaire, en ces temps si vite devenus passés, de la peinture de l’avenir.” (Ibid., 385-86 ; Bernard’s emphasis.)
Bernard couched his allusive insult, directed at Pissarro and all of Cézanne’s earlier friends:

Les amis: Pissarro, Guillaumin, Monet, Zola, Bail, ont fait leur route, ont eu leur part de gloire, ont su la joie d’une justice. Inconnu ou plutôt méconnu il a, lui, aimé l’art jusqu’à renoncer à se faire une notoriété par les amitiés et les cénacles. Non méprisant, mais entier, il a renoncé à faire part de ses efforts…

Bernard’s text on Cézanne may not have been credited enough for all its intuitive far-sighted punch. Elliptic, sharp, and brisk in style, this text was often right on target as far as what Cézanne was about to become a few years later. This text was written in 1891 and, at the time, it is true, very few authors had paid any attention to Cézanne. A couple of sentences such as these, for instance, tend to force one’s admiration:

Style. Ton. — Peintre avant tout quoique penseur, grave aussi, il ouvre à l’art cette surprenante porte : la peinture pour elle-même.

391 Emile Bernard, “Paul Cézanne,” Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui, vol. VIII, no. 387, (1891) ; reprinted in Emile Bernard, Propos sur l’art, ed., Anne Rivièrè, (Paris: Séguièr, 1994), 20. The exact date of this publication is not known with assurance, although the editor of the anthology of texts by Bernard ascribed it to 1889-90. However, the letters in which Pissarro commented and reviewed (with bitter disappointment) this brochure when it came out. Pissarro’s letters to his son were dated May 1891: see CP/IBH, III, 70-71 and 76-77. A more plausible publication date for this important text on Cézanne must be 1891. A correct date was given to this text in Cézanne, (Paris and Philadelphia, 1995), Op. Cit., 30.

Or,

Essentiellement hiératique et d’une pureté de lignes connue seule des purs maîtres primitifs, cette toile m’apparaît comme une des plus grandes tentatives de l’art moderne vers le beau classique.\(^{393}\)

This text powerfully evokes Cézanne’s artistic practice, and sums up in a few words the modernist program that Cézanne came to embody for generations of artists after him. Incidentally, it is not without interest that, in its cryptic formulaic style, this sentence, translated into English, could describe to the point another artist and great admirer of Cézanne, i.e., Jasper Johns himself. Johns fits Bernard’s description, just as well as Cézanne does: “A painter before anything, although a thinker too, he opens a surprising door in art: painting for itself.” As a good early modernist, Bernard too, even as early as 1891, saw three Cézannes—although, inevitably, “Cézanne III” had then barely begun:

Trois manières sont distinctes:

L’arrivée à Paris ;

L’époque claire ;

L’époque grave.\(^{394}\)

Bernard must be given credit—even though, of course, in 1891, he did not know how nor where the “époque grave” would lead—for being one of the first and very rare authors to attempt to reconcile the beginning and the end of Cézanne’s work: “La dernière manière n’est guère qu’un retour à la première, mais à travers les théories naissantes de la couleur et des apercus très personnels et inattendus sur le style.”

Furthermore—this was most unusual—Bernard did not denigrate the “first manner.” Quite the contrary:

En rien, pourtant, les premières œuvres ne sont inférieures aux dernières comme intérêt. Elles empoignent par leur précoce puissance ; elles empoignent, malgré de fréquents rappels de Delacroix, Manet, Courbet, Corot, Daumier.

There, however, came the second blow against Pissarro. Not only was he not given any credit (unlike dealer Père Tanguy) for having acknowledged early on Cézanne’s original talent as an artist, and he was—alongside Cézanne’s other friends, Guillaumin, Monet, Zola, and Bail—implicitly accused of having put to profit the connections that “friendships and cenacles” could yield in order to reach glory. The moral premise of this first accusation was that, a rightful merit as it may have seemed,

394 Ibid.
395 Ibid.
396 Ibid.
success should only be reached by one’s own individual efforts, rather than by reaching out to circles of influential friends. Benefiting from support and help was not as noble as doing it all by oneself, according to Bernard. Let aside the rather crude suggestion that Pissarro, or Zola, had been intriguing to reach some degree of success, another question remains: who has ever ‘made it’ by oneself? Could Cézanne, without Vollard—or indeed Bernard, or Pissarro—, have made it? And reciprocally, of course, could Pissarro have made it without Cézanne, Corot, Melbye? Everybody needs someone else’s help, or at the very least attention, in order to go from A to B, in order to confer some sense on one’s actions movements, and decisions. For anyone who is somewhat familiar with Pissarro’s ways of thinking, Bernard’s nasty insinuations were intolerable: manipulating one’s way to success was as far from Pissarro’s mind as the idea of painting a historical battle scene. Attempting to please the public, or one’s friends, by compromising his own standards would have been complete anathema to Pissarro. Friends could confirm one’s tough choices, or to dispel or critique one’s artistic or political convictions. They could in no way provide quick access to success. Cézanne’s conception of friendship was exactly identical to this: contrary to what Bernard suggests, this shared conception of friendship cemented the relationship between the two men. In fact, it is easy to argue that Cézanne’s staunch attacks against schools and systems of honors, awards, and official prizes first found a sympathetic ear in Pissarro’s: the two artists, among all the impressionists, were perhaps the most obstinately opposed to compromise with the system under any circumstances. It can easily be documented today that integrity and
upright values, in their own arch-radical systems, were what brought Cézanne and Pissarro close together—not what separated them.

As he was going through Bernard’s pamphlet, however, Pissarro was about to come across another unfair treatment: Cézanne’s “second manner” (what I have called “Cézanne II”, and Bernard referred to as “l’époque claire”) i.e., the manner directly “influenced” by the omitted Pissarro, was deemed by Bernard Cézanne’s worst manner:

L’époque claire fut sa plus malheureuse; elle fut de contrainte d’ailleurs. Il avait rencontré Monet qui ne rêvait que soleil et lumière et il succomba à son tour aux charmes des grandes clartés ; mais il reprit peu à peu son calme et sa pondération, et il revint plus complet et plus savant à son point de départ.397

The only consolation Pissarro could have had reading this text was that the person who was held guilty for this miserable epoch in Cézanne’s work was not him (since he was not mentioned), but Monet. This consolation, however, could only be short lived and the whole text, and the affair surrounding it, left a bitter taste in Pissarro’s mouth: he was outraged. Even though, with supreme irony, Pissarro had been asked to send a drawing portrait of Cézanne, Pissarro complained that he had not even been

397 Ibid.
sent a copy of the pamphlet after it came out. This postal omission covered other omissions to which the older artist very much took offense. In the last paragraph of a letter he sent his son Lucien two days later, Pissarro exploded, in his characteristically restrained prose, with somewhat awkward syntactical constructions—the tone of his frustration and anger was, however, unmistakable:

Je t’ai envoyé avec les eaux-fortes un numéro de l’Homme du jour, avec le portrait de Cézanne par moi et notice de Bernard. Ce pauvre ignorant prétend que Cézanne a été un moment sous l’influence de Monet, un comble, qu’en dis-tu ?… Cependant Gauguin connaît bien les études de l’époque d’Auvers et de Pontoise et autre part ! Zola lui-même l’a assez dit qui l’avait influencé, et selon moi heureusement ; je me trompe, ce n’est pas de l’ignorance, c’est de la roulardise à la Gauguin. Mais bah ! qu’est-ce que cela fait, ne sommes-nous pas tous sous l’influence du milieu? Le grand Gauguin lui-même ne l’a-t-il pas subie ? Allons donc !

It remains trivial to know who came first—Père Tanguy or Pissarro—in the discovery of Cézanne’s genius—although factual history tells us that Pissarro and Cézanne met

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398 CP/JBH, IV, 70; (letter to Lucien, 2 May 1891.) Pissarro is announcing to his son that he will be sending him a copy of Bernard’s brochure as he has just bought it himself—a clear sign that it mattered to him a lot, and that he wanted to read what his eldest son, and closest confident, would have to say about it.

399 This is a typo: Pissarro confused the series Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui, a series published by Léon Vanier in which the article on Cézanne by Emile Bernard was published, with the title of a column called L’Homme du jour published in the newspaper L’éclair.

400 CP/JBH, III, 76-77; (Letter to Lucien, 7 May 1891.)
as students, and therefore, way before they met Père Tanguy. Cézanne’s position in
the Pantheon of modernism has long been established; more even, Cézanne’s
enterprise (especially Cézanne III) has almost become synonymous with the rise of
modernism. The intention of the present essay is by no means to question this
position nor to attempt to reconfirm it a posteriori. Nor is it to claim some part of the
glory of modernism in the name of Pissarro who would have been unjustly ignored
out of this enterprise. More to the point, I am interested in figuring out the roles that
relationships—especially the relationship that Cézanne II held with Pissarro—played
in the entire career of Cézanne. Vice versa, of course: I am also interested in
examining how the relationship Pissarro cultivated with Cézanne played a role
throughout his life. My claim is simple: it is difficult, if not impossible, to have much
to do with Pissarro without coming across Cézanne, and vice versa. I hold the same
claim about Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. Yet, in the histories of
modernism, these two claims have not received much attention, or success. This leads
us back to the question of why modernism could simply avoid these questions, or, as
we shall see later in the cases of Johns and Rauschenberg, to deal only partially with
the more complex reality of their relationships. As we are examining the status of this
“omission” we should look back toward Bernard’s text. Pissarro was almost
completely left out—despite the cover. Pissarro received this omission as an affront:
he began his paragraph by suggesting that Bernard was an ignoramus. He soon
realized, however, that he should think again: Bernard’s omission was no ignorance;
it was more likely deliberate. Bernard in those days was still close to Gauguin, and
Gauguin knew full well that Pissarro and Cézanne had worked closely together for several years because he had been there, as a student of Pissarro, while Pissarro and Cézanne were closely working together. Pissarro, therefore, felt somewhat betrayed: this is not “ignorance;” this is “roublardise” <craftiness>. These crafty tricks are in Pissarro’s mind attributed to Gauguin. It is not possible here to develop fully the terms of the tortuous, complicated, and at times, contradictory exchange between Pissarro and Gauguin. Let us say that Gauguin was the subject of one of Pissarro’s biggest disappointments in his life as an artist. Gauguin had been a zealous, and loyal student of Pissarro’s— unlike Cézanne who, nine years older than Gauguin, and nine years younger than Pissarro, never studied under Pissarro. Gauguin did study under Pissarro and learnt very fast: it soon became apparent that he was not going to repeat Pissarro’s lesson ad infinitum. In fact, the short episode of their painting together in Rouen in 1883 was the last instance of the two artists being able to share much of their artistic experience together. Pissarro was not going to forgive Gauguin for taking on a ‘symbolist’ track in his career: instead of depicting what there is, Gauguin, in Pissarro’s eyes, made the stupendous mistake of attaching himself to the task of evoking ‘ideas,’ myths, ideals—all entities that Pissarro linked, rightly or wrongly, with religious art—which was anathema for the older artist. The irony, of course, is that Gauguin was perhaps Pissarro’s best pupil: he really experimented with “la liberté absolue” more than any other young artist Pissarro had come across.

Gauguin had certainly learnt Pissarro’s lesson very well indeed, and he surely had made all the right efforts in order to “become himself.” Precisely the year of his last
prolonged working sojourn with Gauguin, Pissarro, in his quasi-natural pedagogical tone, would tell his son Lucien (who was also intending to begin a career as an artist): “Mais ne pas oublier que l’on doit être que soi-même ! Mais on ne l’est pas sans effort.”\footnote{CP/JBH, I, 264; (Letter to Lucien, 25 December 1883.)} This is the ultimate paradox: one must only be oneself—but one isn’t oneself without efforts. Gauguin certainly devoted much time and energy to cultivate his self, and to try to find it (his self) at the contact of unspoiled worlds.

It was therefore Gauguin—a source of disappointment to Pissarro—who was held accountable for having misinformed Bernard. As an amend to Bernard’s omission, it will be suggested that it is not so much what Pissarro saw in Cézanne, as what they saw in each other that was of importance in their relationship. Pissarro knew Cézanne I well. The history of impressionism does not pay much attention to the relationship between Pissarro and Cézanne in the 1860s: the dramatic episode of Cézanne ‘copying’ a landscape by Pissarro in 1872 is usually taken as the incipient moment of their relationship. By that time, however, Cézanne has already known Pissarro for six or seven years, and Cézanne’s sudden decision to move to Pontoise in 1872 with his unwedded companion and their new-born child, was the result of several years of intense mutual contact. In fact, the ‘copying’ exercise of 1872 comes about half way through the principal part of the relationship between the two artists. Clearly, the facts do not fit ‘happily’ within either part of the carefully dissected modernist Cézanne.

Likewise, when one jumps to the other end of modernism, and reads again what Johns
and Rauschenberg said or wrote about Cézanne, one readily assumes that they were referring to Cézanne III rather than to Cézanne I or II: the rotating point of view mentioned by Johns, or the surrounding experience described by Rauschenberg when discussing Cézanne’s work are automatically taken to refer to the classical Cézanne, the progenitor of cubism and all ensuing modernist movements. Yet, it could easily be argued that the phenomenal distortions experienced in some of Cézanne’s earliest works [III. 3] of Cézanne’s academic life drawing of a nude model), or works of the 1860s such as The Rape, or The Murder, already testify amply to what Johns and Rauschenberg discovered in Cézanne’s later work. In fact, one could say that the experience that Johns and Rauschenberg made of modernism, by critiquing it and going beyond its boundaries while yet continuing to look at Cézanne will lead us to address another paradox: modernism can continue to be of interest, and of great interest, to its critics. Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning would offer but two more examples—both artists’ works being collected with intense interest by Jasper Johns, for instance, among several works by Cézanne. The partitions produced by the historians of modernism in order to make sense out of the modernist enterprise do carry their limits. The rigor of the divisions or classifications usually taken for granted by the modernists is too strict to accommodate the complexity of the art, and of the artists who function within the boundaries of modernism, or at its margins. While Cézanne III epitomizes the core of modernism, Cézanne I doesn’t. Cézanne II and Pissarro appear to prepare the ground for the launching of modernism that takes
place under the aegis of the later Cézanne, alone. A century later, Johns and Rauschenberg launch an attack against the premises of modernism, while both still claim a genuine interest and admiration for some key modernists. In other words, this essay will explore some aspects of the margins of modernism: what happened before, and what happened afterwards? Before exploring these margins by themselves, through the dynamics of inter-subjectivity, (Part III of this essay), let us know examine how modernism perceived its own limits (or didn’t as the case may be) by looking at the roles given to all four artists in the construct of modernism proposed by Clement Greenberg.

This presentation will have two aims: 1. It is impossible to understand much about any couple, or associations, if one doesn’t know each participant to some extent. Again, here, the same paradox is always at work: an association, or a couple are not made of abstractions, but of individuals, who are alive and who, by entering into these partnerships, show to be capable of transcending their individualities, while necessarily retaining the features that define them as individuals in the first place. 2. It will thus also permit us, not only to understand each of these four characters better but also to understand what there was, in their personal, or private existences, that led them (and almost predisposed them) to meeting and collaborating with each other.
There is another reason. This brief expose on these four individual artists as sitting on the brink of modernism (just before, or just after) will also lead us back to re-examine the marks they left within the modernist pantheon. A brief review of the roles traditionally ascribed to these four figures in the development of modern art, will thus lead us to revisit the importance of each artist within the Greenbergian enterprise of edifying the history of modernism. Having said this, I also want to qualify in advance the potential conclusions of too harsh a critique of the Greenbergian enterprise. While many modern artists who happened to live in the intellectual aura of ‘Clem’ undoubtedly felt the grip of the “modernist” canon with much rigor and sometimes resentment, it should also be said that Greenberg’s mind was also more complex than he has sometimes been credited for. Within Greenberg’s system (subsequently understood as a synonymous with the modernist system), Cézanne held a key vault position. Yet, the seamless rigor of Greenberg’s system doesn’t necessarily stop him from being some times critical of his own system, and even at times, to wish to look beyond the self-imposed boundaries of the system of values he helped establish, and largely espoused for himself. Early in his career as an art critic for The Nation in the 1940s, Greenberg had wholly accepted the canonic presence of Cézanne within modernism, yet this acceptance was not uncritical. For instance, when reviewing the 1942 Cézanne exhibition at Paul Rosenberg’s gallery, Greenberg acknowledges, almost as a premise of his own views, that
Cézanne’s insights have become so much a dimension of all painting now and provided food for so many epigones that it is difficult as yet to appreciate him properly. It is also the misfortune of a great artist to set standards in his very best work from which one cannot escape in judging the rest.\footnote{\autocite{Clement Greenberg, “Review of Exhibitions of Corot, Cézanne, Eilshemius, and Wilfredo Lam,” The Nation, 12 December 1942. Collected Essays, I, 129.}}

The argument against the very limits of modernism could not have been phrased better than it was here under the nib of the patron of modernism himself: Cézanne suffers from the “standards” set—by the critics of the modernist tradition, might one add—to evaluate his own “best” works. Consequentially, (if one pushes these lines by Greenberg to the limits of what they have to say) the less than “best” of Cézanne (or Cézanne I vs. Cézanne III) is poorly evaluated, at best, or misunderstood, or simply not seen at all, at worst.

Greenberg is right: it is this very process of epigonization that has stood in the way of properly appreciating Cézanne’s work as a whole. The paradox observed by Greenberg is that Cézanne’s greatness has in fact detracted us from being able to appreciate in detail the greatness of his work. One could generalize this remark to the various periods of the artist’s work: the period that has been considered (rightly or wrongly) as the defining moment in Cézanne’s career (essentially the 1890s and 1900s) have stood as an obstacle against our possibility of appreciating in their own
rights the earlier moments of the artist’s period. The purpose of the present essay is not so much to claim to rectify an historical injustice than to open afresh opportunities to look back at some of Cézanne’s works that have not necessarily reached the status of epigones, and that can yield surprisingly rich results, and more importantly, to suggest that Cézanne’s art is made (like all arts) of relationships: relationships with others, but also relationships with himself, with his own past as an artist. An artist always has the possibility to destroy what he/she cannot live with, or cannot bear seeing. By accepting the presence of his own past works of art, an artist implicitly accepts to recognize that he is, at the very least, willing to look back at these works of art; therefore, they are not pointless. They necessarily carry some relevance to what comes after them. In brief, what I suggest here is that Cézanne I is no further from Cézanne III than Pissarro is. By suggesting that there is a relationship between Cézanne and Pissarro, I am, in part, proposing to reconcile the earlier Cézanne with the later Cézanne. I propose to appropriate a sentence written by Greenberg himself about Van Gogh and apply it to Cézanne: “there is too much good painting in his bad pictures.” This is exactly the point that will be made here, and, in fact, one could say that this is precisely because Pissarro and Rauschenberg both saw a century apart how much good painting there was in those bad pictures by Cézanne and Johns, respectively, that two of the most amazing artistic friendships began. In fact, in the same article, Greenberg does, at some point, draw a comparison between Van Gogh’s

so-called distorted vision and Cézanne’s “inability to draw with academic correctness” and seems to allude there to Cézanne I’s production. Furthermore, Greenberg does seem to draw a link between Cézanne I and Cézanne III around the notion of distorting practice through a very powerful intuition. Presumably referring to the late Cézanne (III), Greenberg wrote:

Cézanne’s preoccupation with the justness of color values to the last millimeter in the delineation of space and volume made him lose sight at times of the whole in view. In his case, though, segments at least of otherwise unsuccessful pictures survive as superb texts in the painter’s art.\(^{404}\)

This text is admirable for several reasons, one—not the least—is that it accounts for Cézanne’s ‘unfinished’ practice without trivializing it, or attributing those ‘faults’ to some handicap, laziness, or lack of interest.

In the same article, Greenberg reconsiders the merits of an artist whom he describes as “the last great academic painter:” Camille Corot. Again, here, one may be somewhat surprised to see Greenberg not only paying attention to an artist whose impact on high modernism is not considered as fundamental. Yet, Greenberg goes so far as to declare that “[e]ven his poorest work is solidly accomplished” and the art

\(^{404}\) Ibid., 161-62. (My emphasis)
critic blames “the acceptance of modernism” for the fact that Corot’s latest period
“has been unjustly depreciated.”405

With these examples in mind, it will surprise no one that Greenberg would spend time
analyzing the works of artists that, at first, may appear as different as Pissarro and
Cézanne, or Johns and Rauschenberg. Even though the Greenbergian system (or the
modernist system at large) was poorly equipped to be able to think hard about issues
of inter-subjectivity (as we have already established), it is worth noting again that, for
Greenberg, the success of modernism could in no way equate itself with a repeat of
Cézanne’s lesson. Critiquing the Whitney Annual exhibition, and the exhibition titled
Artists for Victory at the Metropolitan Museum406—both exhibitions of contemporary
art at the time—Greenberg warns the viewers against the results of “[t]hese second-
hand Renoirs, Cézannes, Vlamincks, Eakinses, Winslow Homers, Maillols, Rodins,
these archaizers, these academicists and eclectics.” All these nameless imitators all
display a lot of talent, and Greenberg concedes that they rehearse the previous success

405 Collected Essays, I, 129.
406 In the November 1942 issue of The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, this is how Hobart
Nichols (president of Artists for Victory, Inc.) described this cultural and political event: “The events
of December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor shocked and infuriated the whole country. The great body of
American artists, like all patriotic citizens, wanted to be of service in this crisis and hoped to use their
special ability both to further the prosecution of the war and to maintain the cultural standards that
would surely be lost if we were defeated. The pressing question was how to be of service.” The author
calls for concerted action while immediately conceding that in New York City, this was not easy to
achieve given “the immense number of artists centered [in New York]” and “their divergent opinions
of history even “with greater dexterity than [their] initiators.”

The trouble is that all these artists may well be “accepted” they lack “an invigorating common impulse.”

With this concept of “common impulse” Greenberg comes in fact very close to analyzing the phenomenon of inter-subjectivity, but this concept remains undeveloped. However, in a tone rather dissentient with orthodox modernist views, Greenberg gives us a glimpse of what this common impulse would consist of:

“Moving art in any age is that which wins new experience for human beings.” This is the common link, which opens an area of inter-subjectivity (even though the term never occurs in Greenberg’s vocabulary) between artists who, through the ages, have produced “moving art:” Cézanne, in Greenberg’s estimate, occupies a crucial position as he is the only modernist who is mentioned, alongside the production of Third Dynasty Egyptian art, archaic Greek sculptures, Giotto and Veronese! Again, however, this definition (“winning new experience for human beings”) would have been met with unswerving enthusiasm by all four artists in this essay—not just Cézanne.

* Cézanne as a Linchpin

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408 Ibid.
409 Ibid.
The linchpin between these two pairs of artists is Cézanne. He, on the one hand, fully engaged in his pivotal working relationship with Pissarro during the impressionist period, and, on the other hand, was hailed by both Rauschenberg and Johns as an artist of principal importance. Cézanne, keen admirer of Pissarro’s works, was himself admired by the two young American artists.\footnote{Robert Rauschenberg has long held a deep-rooted admiration for Cézanne: “It is my own personal psychosis that it is only by the background that you can see what is in front of you. Only by accepting all that surrounds you be totally self-visualized. And at the same time, your self-visualization is a reflection of your surroundings. Albers was right about that. That’s why I like Cézanne so much. Matisse said you have to read between the lines. When he would stop a line, say, at the ear, and begin it again perhaps at the neck, he was really exercising the viewer’s mind to fill the blank.” Barbara Rose, \textit{Rauschenberg}, (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 72-73. Jasper Johns, certainly no less than Rauschenberg, has also frequently referred to Cézanne—and has, even, traced some of Cézannes’ works into his own. In fact, in the oft-quoted statement in which Johns defines the three paragon sources of influence on his work, he named Leonardo, Cézanne, and Duchamp. The lesson he kept from Cézanne was, namely, that of “the rotating point of view.” See Jasper Johns, \textit{Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews}, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996, p. 20. It is fascinating that what both Johns and Rauschenberg emphasize in their preference for Cézanne, has nothing to do with the modernist concept of the special significance of the “touch” but has to do with the phenomenological notion of being “surrounded” by a visual field, or, symmetrically, the notion of a rotating point of view.} Insofar as the latter two artists can be seen as practically the last artists of a long tradition who claimed a debt towards Cézanne, one can say that a sort of chain of allegiances came to an end with Rauschenberg and Johns. It is difficult to imagine that the artists who came “after Rauschenberg and Johns had much to do with Cézanne at all—people like Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Joseph Kosuth, or indeed, Andy Warhol, or Roy Lichtenstein—paid much attention to Cézanne, and if they did, it tended to be on an ironic mode.\footnote{Lichtenstein’s works after Erle Loran’s pedagogical diagrams of Cézanne compositions can be read as ironical comments on the complexity of modernism. As Lichtenstein declared: [the portrait of his wife by] “Cézanne is such a complex painting. Taking an outline and calling it Madame Cézanne is in itself humorous, particularly the idea of diagramming a Cézanne when Cézanne said, “…the outline escaped me.”” See John Coplans, “Talking with Roy Lichtenstein,” in \textit{Pop Art, A Critical History}, Steven Henry Madoff, ed., (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1997), 200.}

So, in a sense, one could say here (with a touch of historicism) that the period opened...
by Cézanne—and consecrated by art historians as the dawn of modernism—came to a closure with Johns and Rauschenberg, the last two late modernist artists (or early post-modernists) to pay an unmitigated homage to Cézanne.

It is fair to assume, however, that neither Rauschenberg nor Johns spent much time at all thinking about the collaborative artistic relationship between the two impressionists. This interaction, in fact, has seldom been a subject of investigation at all. The point that will be developed here will be to show that, throughout the modern era, individualistic pursuits and collaborative interactions, or originality and communication, solitude and solidarity—individualism and inter-subjectivity—or even, solipsism—a stance by which nothing exists but the self—and osmosis—a completely porous permeation to otherness form an inherent paradox within the vast realm of modernist practices. Conversations with oneself lead to conversations with others, and vice versa: this is precisely what Jasper Johns described in an interview with Ann Hindry:

Painting can be a conversation with oneself, and, at the same time, it can be a conversation with other paintings. What one does triggers thoughts of what others have done or might do—affects one’s idea of what is possible. This introduces a degree of play between the possible and the necessary, which can
allow to learn from other artists’ work that might seem otherwise unrelated or irrelevant.\textsuperscript{412}

The point made by Johns could not be stated more clearly: a conversation with oneself is not exclusive of a conversation with others. A conversation with others can also be with others who are dead, but whose works triggers new thoughts. Roberta Bernstein, who has probably spent more time than anyone looking at Johns’s paintings emphasized this point with very telling visual examples in the essay she wrote for the 1996 MoMA retrospective of the artist’s work:

Among the most fascinating and consistent features of Jasper Johns’s art is his use of imagery “triggered” by his response to other artworks. He refers to these sources in a variety of ways—through names, initials, titles, imprints, copies, and tracings; whether the references are obvious or cryptic, they are integral to the visual, conceptual, and expressive dimensions of his work… Johns’s dialogue with art history is part of his ongoing inquiry into how images carry meaning, and how meanings shift in changing contexts.\textsuperscript{413}

\textsuperscript{412} Ann Hindry, “Conversation with Jasper Johns/Conversation avec Jasper Johns,” \textit{Artstudio} no. 12 (Spring 1989): 6-25. This transcript of an interview with Jasper Johns conducted in his house in Saint Martin enunciates ideas that have very much shaped the argumentation of this essay. Republished in \textit{Writings}, 233. See also the third epigraph in next section.

Among the artists with whom Johns most frequently enters into a conversation are Leonardo, Matthias Grünewald, Hans Holbein, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Cézanne, Munch, Picasso, Duchamp, Magritte, and Newman. Bernstein does not mention Rauschenberg, and I believe that she is right: first of all, Rauschenberg is alive, all the artists just mentioned above are dead. Dialogues with the dead cannot take the same form as dialogues with the living. Secondly, the type of dialogues Bernstein is focusing on share one technical characteristic: they all proceed from an particular quote. Johns appropriates a fragment, a detail, a title, or a whole work of art from one of these artists, and, if necessary, twists, cuts, folds, inverts, turns and returns that detail that, re-presented by Johns within one of his work, becomes part of a Johns picture, and triggers other thoughts. The situation with Rauschenberg has largely been different in that the two artists have often stressed that their works have often been compared, retain, each, a strong degree of autonomy. They tend to go at the same themes, through different means, different positions, different intentions and expectations. Their meeting tends to focus around an object, or an idea, that they share and that becomes the center of their communicative practice.

The process described by Johns in the interview quoted above corresponds very much to what goes on in an ordinary conversation whereby inner reflection not only facilitates, but also nurtures and makes possible the continuation of a dialogue. If one

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414 Ibid.
simply doesn’t think about what one is saying to someone, the conversation soon dissolves into nonsensical verbiage. As Johns says, therefore, conversations with oneself and with others can happen simultaneously, and, in fact, make each other possible: they trigger one another.

Of course, one should not conclude from this that every single individual that was active throughout the history of modernism, necessarily entered into such a collaborative unit, or at least, into a collaborative unit that took on the intensity and the complexity that characterized the two collaborations under scrutiny. Indeed, these two collaborations also lasted longer than most collaborations did. More to the point is the fact that there is a kind of swinging dynamic at work throughout modernism between individualism and inter-subjectivity. What is precisely interesting about the two cases of collaborations under study, here, is that they both came close to extremes: both pairs of artists (Pissarro/Cézanne and Rauschenberg/Johns) reached moments when their works appear difficult to distinguish from one another, while at other times, they retained the unmistakable imprint of each artist’s mark.

415 Indeed, it seems easy to argue that among the number of famous collaborative alliances we can think of, none lasted as long as the alliances between Pissarro and Cézanne, and Rauschenberg and Johns: From the examples of Matisse and Derain, to Warhol and Basquiat, including Braque and Picasso, these intense interactions seldom ever lasted more than a couple of years. The only possible exception is the example of the Matisse and Picasso. On this point, see Yve-Alain Bois, Matisse and Picasso, (Exh. Cat.), (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 10-23.
We continue in the history of modern painting, especially in the English speaking world, to see modernism largely through the lens carved by Clement Greenberg half a century or so ago—even if that lens has since then been cut again, readjusted, revised, and critiqued many times, the primacy of his position and his pivotal role in laying the ground for “modernism” in the visual arts are never questioned. In fact, I am often struck by the way students in the history of art today have come to draw a mental automatic ‘=’ sign between “modernism” and “Clement Greenberg:” say: “modernism.” His “theoretical” presence remains colossal, daunting, even, and, I think, merits and can well afford a certain measure of critical stir. It is incidentally ironic that the enormous prestige that Greenberg continues to enjoy in the English-speaking world’s practice of art history is offset by the very small, or negligible role occupied by Greenberg in the study of modernism elsewhere: in other countries and cultures. Moreover, Greenberg’s name is far from prevalent in other fields of cultural history in the period he investigated, even in the US; in the field of literary

416 I am thinking, for instance, about the erudite and impressive study led by Philippe Junod, Transparence et opacité, Essai sur les fondements théoriques de l’art moderne, (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1975), in which the author proposes a reflexion on “la préhistoire de la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes et la genèse de la notion de «moderne.»” (Page 20.) Junod’s point is that the passage from « modernité » to « modernisme » took place when two claims were conflated: the first (inherent in modernité) was the claim to invent new subject matters (which Junod traces back to Benjamin West—although one could certainly go further and mention, namely, artists of the Seicento in Rome, or, in the north, artists such as Georges de La Tour ;) the second laid an emphasis on the novelty of treatment of the form, and Junod sees the source of this kind of exploration in the Romantic period, and even, to some extent, in Mannerism.
criticism, for instance, his name is very little known, despite his abundant output in that discipline. The dire contrast between his fame in art history and his obscurity in literary criticism would repay, one day, a serious investigation.

*Modernism vs. Inter-Subjectivity*

Despite Greenberg’s claim to the Kantian legacy of self-criticism, his name is not often mentioned in the field of modern aesthetics or in the history of modern philosophy. Greenberg’s name is certainly not distinguished among Kantian philosophers. Whether celebrated in its own discipline, or quasi-obscure in others, Greenberg’s definition of modernism continues largely to set the boundaries for what this concept encompasses when applied to painting. Given that Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one hand, Rauschenberg and Johns, on the other, have tended largely,

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respectively, to lay the ground for modernism in painting, on the one hand, and, to critique its ultimate consequences, on the other, it simply seems impossible not to look first at what these four artists have meant within a classical (Greenbergian) modernist perspective. The role that each one of these four figures has had individually in contributing to modernism has been amply studied through monographs that provided useful knowledge on each one of these figures. Nevertheless, the contribution of these four artists, studied two by two, has consisted in a way of producing art, where an individual artist becomes who he is, only through “being with” another artist. The question no longer is one of knowing who was better—as in the traditional “Braque/Picasso” debate—but, much more of establishing how these interactions actually formed each one of these four artists. In other words, how did Cézanne become Cézanne through Pissarro, and Pissarro become Pissarro through Cézanne; analogously, it will be argued that Johns became Johns through Rauschenberg, and Rauschenberg himself through Johns. This process is not the same for each individual: the way Cézanne “colored” the process of formation of Pissarro’s individuality, cannot be confused with the way Cézanne’s individuality was formed through Pissarro’s eyes. The other important feature to underscore is that inter-subjectivity is not exclusive to one person. Pissarro, with his extraverted personality, was prone to enter into very intense, collaborative inter-relationships more readily than most—from Fritz Melbye to Francis Picabia, it seems that the dean of the impressionists was ready to engage in collaborative relationships
from beginning to end. Cézanne, too, despite his sharp and boorish personality, and his social reluctance, far from immune to equally intense inter-subjective exchanges: very early on, his relationship with Zola testifies to the formative role it had on his work; and even many years after he and Pissarro had stopped seeing each other and working together, his limited, though clearly welcoming, openness to a generation of young adulating artists—Maurice Denis, Emile Bernard, among the better known—offers proof that inter-subjectivity continued to have a strong impact on his work. The cases of Rauschenberg and Johns offer the same complexity: Rauschenberg, older than Johns, had entered into an equally intense working relationship with his wife Susan Weil, and, then, with Cy Twombly, before he met Johns, and the two artists initiated a collaboration that was to reshape the contemporary art scene in New York. Likewise, both Rauschenberg and Johns, both individually and as a pair, entered into collaboration with another pair of “co-artists,” Merce Cunningham and John Cage.

*Greenberg as a Kantian*

With this in mind, it will then be interesting to attempt to understand why there was but little room within the conception of modernism to engage in such studies of inter-subjectivity, or to examine the critical impact of the products of these artists’ creativity, seen as two distinct pairs of “co-artists,” who, during several years, worked
in close tandem: one could barely put a mark on his canvas without informing the other about what could be done, or should be tried, and vice versa.

Given that Kant’s greatest discovery, according to his famous follower Fichte, was “subjectivity” and that subjectivity, for Kant, cannot be articulated without positing inter-subjectivity, —i.e. another subject with or against whom the first subjectivity may affirm itself—the question that will have to be asked is: how come Greenberg, as a self-proclaimed Kantian, virtually never found much to say about questions of inter-subjectivity? What texts by Kant had he read, or, more importantly, what texts by Kant had he not read? The question is seldom asked. I am struck, for instance, by the fact that in an article pointedly discussing “Greenberg’s Kant and the Problem of Modernist Painting,” only two references to Kant were given, vs. about twenty references to Greenberg’s texts. The fact that Greenberg only read certain texts by Kant, and did not read those very consistently, is compounded with the fact that Greenberg mixed his interest in Kant with interspersed readings of Hegel’s and

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418 The concept of communication is truly central to Kantian studies and cannot be ignored. Kant in his reflections on Education (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971 [1960]: 1-6) has amply emphasized that: “Man is the only creature who needs education.” (1) or, as he put it differently again, “Man can only become man by education.” (6). On this, also see Renaut, (Kant aujourd’hui, op. cit. 118-122) who points out that Kant and Fichte—the latter goes even further than Kant by saying that man only becomes man among men (always in the sense of ‘Mensch’)—already had launched a severe critique against the solipsism of all classical metaphysics. Renaut points out that one did not have to wait for Karl-Otto Apel to establish the higher importance of interacting with others over being-all-to-one’self (solipsism). My point is that modernism was, in fact, partly founded on a solipsist conception of the artist, and, as a result, could, of course, not come to terms with such notions as ‘thinking-for-the-other’ or any form of inter-subjectivity. Interactions with others were simply out of reach of a traditional modernist discourse.

Croce’s texts. According to some, Greenberg also blended references to Kant with early flirtations with Trotskyism.\footnote{I am not going to concern myself here with the question of whether the early Greenberg was more or less Kantian than the late Greenberg. Various reflections have led to reconstruct Greenberg’s evolution from a materialist to an idealist stances—from his emphasis on the “positive facts” of a pictorial surface to the “opticality” of a color field—and thus, it was tempting to draw an ideological parallel with his “gradual” “ideological conversion” from early Trotskyite sympathies to some later “Kantian” allegiance. See for instance Yve-Alain Bois, “Greenberg Amendments,” Kunst & Museumjournaal 5, no. 1 (1993): 1-9. Yet, Greenberg started referring to Kant (only seldom giving a reference to the precise texts he was alluding to, in the vast corpus of Kant’s writings) as early as in 1941—a time when his sympathies for Trotskyism were still real. His first allusion to Kant—as this cannot qualify as anything more than an allusion—arose in the context of Greenberg’s activities as a literary critic. In 1941, he wrote an article in Partisan Review, (Collected Essays, I, 46) in which he expressed his delight over the renaissance of “little mags,” i.e., poetry and literary reviews. In a brief text, Greenberg defines the ideal program for what a literary magazine should do: “The function of a little magazine is to be an agent. In order to act as an agent and stir up good writing there must be some kind of positive notion, some working hypothesis, a bias in a particular direction, even a prejudice, as to what this good writing of the future will be like. As Kant says, you only find what you look for.” (My emphasis) (Collected Essays, ibid.) The question of what texts by Kant Greenberg actually had read is of great interest and yet seems on the whole to have eluded most art historians’ attention. The likelihood is that Greenberg (in this pithy first reference to Kant) is alluding to Preface to the second edition of The Critique of Pure Reason in which Kant uses a few examples of scientists (Galileo, Torricelli, Stahl) who all had a pretty good idea of what they were looking for before launching into their experiments: “They comprehended that reason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design: that it must take the lead with principles for its judgments according to constant laws and compel nature to answer its questions, rather than letting nature guide its movements by keeping reason, as it were, in leading-strings.” (Critique of Pure Reason, op. cit., B xiii, 108-09). I am here grateful to Professor Makkreel for patiently answering questions regarding Greenberg’s possible reading sources for Kant. In his article, Greenberg then develops his reference to Kant, in a semi-apologetic tone that clearly reveals that he hasn’t read other essential texts even in the first Critique. When one knows that Kant set his critical enterprise under the sign of an attempt to avoid the two main ideological threats to all rational enterprises, i.e., dogmatism on one side, and skepticism on the other, it is surprising to read Greenberg, anticipating to have his reference to Kant read as dogmatic. He wrote: “I don’t mean by this that it is necessary to be dogmatic and to have fixed ideas against which everything is to be measured. I mean simply that more thinking and inquiring should be done about the problem.” Whatever Greenberg meant by this reference to dogmatism, it is clear that he already was reading (albeit partially) Kant by then. Therefore, the evolution between the early Greenberg and the late Greenberg seems to me to be one of degrees: in 1941, Greenberg vacillates between the easy temptation of dogmatism and the praiseworthy attempt to lead a proper critical inquiry. Twenty or thirty years later, he estimated that he had done enough ‘thinking and inquiring’ and was thus entitled to set a position, that, unfortunately, returned him to a kind of dogmatism. He then came to regret in Kant a lack of determination in clearly drawing the line between good taste and bad taste. By that time, Greenberg had abandoned one of the most central features of kantian aesthetics, which is that a judgment of taste is primarily about the spectator’s feelings, and cannot be proven or demonstrated conceptually—or with a rule. Insofar as Greenberg’s modernist enterprise has largely consisted in introducing rules of practice (for the artist) and of taste (for the spectators) applicable to a proper appreciation of modern art, it is safe to say that he was, at that point, as far from...}
upon the fact that Greenberg’s references never claimed—nor should they be held—to amount to anything systematic. Rather, they resulted from an ideological cocktail whose secret he may well have taken with him. Greenberg’s praise for Kant as “the first real modernist” is further echoed by other statements; for instance, Greenberg once declared that the Kantian aesthetic theory was “the most satisfactory basis for aesthetics we yet have.” Incidentally, Greenberg was certainly not the first, nor the most unequivocal, in making this sort of declarative statements about Kant’s modernity: Charles Peirce, almost a century before him, had referred to Kant as “the King of modern thought” insofar as “it was he who first remarked the frequency in logical analytics of trichotomies or threefold distinctions.” Threefold distinctions in Kant’s work do not seem to have held a special appeal for Greenberg, as he was more prone to establish twofold cut and dry distinctions. A major problem when facing Greenberg’s laudatory comments on Kant, and his prose in general, is that he tends to Kant as one can be. (I will leave aside here the question of Greenberg’s formalism which he drew also from a particular misunderstanding of what Kant meant by form—the term ‘formalism’ incidentally never appearing in print in Kant’s corpus. Let me briefly restate that to Kant the form is essential in a judgment of taste; but, by ‘form’ Kant meant something quite different to what Greenberg understood by the same term. As far as the judgment of taste is concerned, form, for Kant, means “design” (Zeichnung) or contours, and “composition” in music—see Critique of Judgement, §14. He opposes it to colors in painting or to the various tones of instruments in music. In other words, in the battle between Ingres and Delacroix, Kant would have definitely opted for Ingres. By “form” however, Greenberg means “medium” or the constitutive materials for the practice of painting. The two concepts have very little to do with each other.

421 Collected Essays, IV, 85.
be held as a philosopher—or, at the very least, as a theoretical author who was well immersed in the philosophical sources he quotes. The fact is that Greenberg, who never made any such claims, was an art and literature critic: he never wrote any programmatic statement that purported to deliver to his readers the key to his interpretive system. Indeed, Greenberg did not find the Kantian lack of resolve as far as establishing rules that would permit to decide what taste was about, to his satisfaction. Besides, Greenberg was wont to contradict himself—not just as has often been pointed out from the beginning of his career as a critic—but, more fundamentally sometimes within the same text. Greenberg could oscillate from a strong dogmatic stance to a strangely humble self-critical position. Hence the difficulty of pin-pointing Greenberg’s position anywhere; hence also the wide gamut of responses experienced among his readers: from admiring sympathy to mild annoyance, and even aggravation. The famous Bennington seminars offer a clear case in point. The first seminar opens with a series of very Kantian-sounding warnings as to the possible excesses of the claims to make sense out of all art objects: Greenberg sets out the task of “making clear the limits of what you can say about art.” He rightly sees in this quasi-transcendental exercise (establishing the limits of a given activity by addressing its conditions of possibility) a valuable potential use. This will help, as Greenberg announces, “the clearing away of irrelevancies—fetishes, dogmas, highfalutinness, irresponsible rhetoric, inflated language, melodrama—all the verbal excrescences that come to accompany modernist art in particular, though not just
modernist art.” Even though Kant is not once mentioned there, this call to humility—and apparent declaration of faith that calls for the limits of its own activity sounds more Kantian than Greenberg often does.

Another problem stems from the fact that the discussions of Greenberg’s ‘Kantianism’ take for granted that what Greenberg chiefly borrowed from Kant was ‘formalism.’ The fact that the concept of “formalism” does not exist in Kant’s works does not seem to have troubled almost every single commentator of Greenberg. The point is that Kant and Greenberg understood very different things by “form.” Kant in his analysis of the judgment of taste states that he favors forms over contents, whether it be in the visual arts or in music. This could, in no way, turn into anything more than a mere profession of taste as far as Kant was concerned—otherwise, if it were more than this, it would turn into a rule, a principle, a concept and, by the same

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425 Paul Crowther, for instance, refers to Greenberg having found shelter “beneath the umbrella of Kantian-style formalism.” (Op. cit., 324). Whatever is meant by this phrase is never addressed. As I have briefly mentioned above, the concept of ‘formalism’ did not exist for Kant; Kant merely stated the superiority of ‘forms’ (understood as the drawing or the contours of an object) over color. Crowther is not alone in this slight confusion. He holds this in common with authors against whom he vituperates: Paul Richter, “Modernism and After,” Art Monthly, (March 1982): 3-7; Deane W. Curtin, “Varieties of Aesthetic Formalism,” Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism, Vol. XL, No. 3, (Spring 1982): 315-326: the latter article is defamed by Crowther to have led to “a disastrous misinterpretation of both Kant’s and Greenberg’s attitude.” There is a strong and ironic chance that this somewhat arrogant phrase might apply to Crowther’s own interpretation just as well. See also David Carrier, “Greenberg, Fried, and Philosophy: American-Type Formalism,” in Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology, ed. George Dickie and Richard Scalfani (New York: St Martins Press, 1978): 461-469. Adrienne Golub even goes slightly further than the above authors by suggesting a direct link between Greenberg’s attraction to T. S. Eliot’s “ultra-conservative criticism” and the “Kantian rationale and terminology.” See Golub, “Towards a Newer Critique: The Missing Link: The Influence of T. S. Eliot’s Ultra-Conservative Criticism on Clement Greenberg’s Early Rhetoric and Themes,” Art Criticism, 1997, vol. 12, no. 1, 5-37.
token, it would annihilate the possibility of making an aesthetic judgment, since aesthetic judgments (unlike theoretical or geometrical judgments) can only take place without rules or concepts. Greenberg did not follow this Kantian reserve and erected his emphasis on “form” into a whole system: “formalism.” There he completely left the Kantian criticist system and fell back into a form of dogmatism. The other important point to stress is that to Kant “form” (as far as aesthetic judgments are concerned) means “drawing” (Zeichnung), or the contour or the delineation of objects in other words. Greenberg has in mind something completely different when he talks about forms. He, in fact, is referring to the medium more than the form in the Kantian sense. The contours of what is painted, or the drawing of things are utterly irrelevant to Greenberg, in the same way as the imperatives of the medium were for Kant. In effect, Kant and Greenberg spoke different languages—in more ways than one. Even though the same word “form” was used by both of them, it carried very different significations in each case.

* From Manet to New York

The span of time covered by Greenberg’s modernism covers the span of time from the impressionists and Manet to the New York School. Again, here, in chronological terms, our four co-artists fit precisely within the boundaries of modernism. In fact, even the critiques of the modernist canon all seem to agree with their target on this
point: modernism took shape, as it began approximately with the French impressionists and Manet, and ended with the New York School, a century later and a continent further. Pissarro and Cézanne, on one hand, Rauschenberg and Johns, on the other, appear, therefore, to fall precisely within the span of time that has defined modernism, according to Greenberg, and successive generations of critics and art historians. Greenberg’s vision of history largely affirmed a continuum linking together Manet at one end, together with people like Pissarro and Cézanne, and the New York School at the other end. In his own admission, Greenberg said that he “fail[s] to discern anything in the new abstract painting that is that new. I can see nothing essential in it that cannot be shown to have evolved out of either Cubism or Impressionism, just as I cannot see anything essential in Cubism or Impressionism whose development cannot be traced back to the Renaissance.” In the same article tellingly entitled “How Art Writing Earns Its Bad Name,” Greenberg went back to Manet, his favorite bookend, who seemed to announce new times, or a new era in the history of art. Yet, even though the author of Olympia played a crucial role in Greenberg’s account of the history of modernism, Greenberg was quick to deflate the dramatic “break” that might be accounted to Manet and his peers: “Since Manet every step in the evolution of modernist art has been hailed, or condemned, as a revolutionary break with the past, and in each instance the passing of only a little time has refuted this claim.”

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uninterrupted continuum. In a review of a retrospective of Manet’s works in Philadelphia in 1967, however, Greenberg seemed to contradict himself by praising Manet for the fact that, unlike the impressionists (and he included among the impressionists namely Cézanne, and van Gogh), Manet was more capable of affirming his individuality: “It was as though he could accumulate nothing from experience.” In other words, Manet was described as operating against the historic continuum that led towards high modernism: this historical process consisted in a long accumulation of experience, from the Renaissance onwards, whereas Manet, oddly enough, now appeared to Greenberg to stand aside, and to retain nothing from experience. Manet was suddenly described in this article as having started work afresh almost everyday: “Each painting was a one-time thing, a new start, and by the same token completely individual.” In contradistinction, everything the impressionists did “tended to take [its place] in a sequence.” Greenberg seemed untroubled by the contradiction introduced by the notion of a “complete individual” who should start anew every day, versus the long historic process leading towards modernism—which “finally takes its place in the intelligible continuity of taste and tradition.”

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428 Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” Op. Cit., vol. 4, p. 93. We will see later on that Greenberg eventually does attempt to resolve this contradiction by resorting to a conceptual model known as “the ruse of reason,” borrowed, consciously or not, from Hegel, and Leibniz. This model consists in a nutshell in affirming that individuals can do whatever they want, history, in its unstoppable mechanism, unfolds itself through these individuals’ whims and caprices, and, unbeknownst to these “historic” individuals, history accomplishes its own ends by appropriating these individuals’ private actions. Individuals, therefore, become unconscious instruments of history: they appear to themselves as free-willing entities, although they are in fact determined through and through by invisible historical forces. See Greenberg, Op. Cit., p. 91: “…it has taken the accumulation, over
individual, implies a creative rhythm made of ruptures, stops and starts; the other, the historical continuum, implies the very opposite: a long uninterrupted, smooth continuum.

* Manet’s “Frankness” and Greenberg’s Silence

Be it as it may, Manet—more so than any of the impressionists—appeared to Greenberg’s eye as one of the proto-modernists, and the impressionists gained credit in Greenberg’s scale of values by following suit and acknowledging Manet’s *frankness*:

Manet’s became the first Modernist pictures by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the flat surfaces on which they were painted. The Impressionists, in Manet’s wake, abjured underpainting and glazes, to leave the eye under no doubt as to the fact that the colors they used were made of paint that came from tubes and pots.

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429 This phrase “the first Modernist” was also applied to Kant, as we saw before. It is striking therefore, to realize that in the Greenbergian system, Kant is to critical theory what Manet is to painting. One can also deduce that this notion of frankness ranked very high in Greenberg’s estimate and that this is probably also an intellectual quality that he detected in Kant’s usage of theory in order to criticize theory—frankly and openly.

In this text that is probably one of the most frequently referred texts in modernist art history, Greenberg was adopting, knowingly or not, one term after another from Mallarmé’s vocabulary—or a judiciously close equivalent thereof—as found in the poet’s critical texts on Manet.\textsuperscript{431} Mallarmé used the term “sincérité:”\textsuperscript{432} Greenberg used that of “frankness.” Manet’s pictorial vocation was described by the French poet as “a pursuit of truth,” (poursuite du vrai), or again, his work appeared shocking because “he paints truth.”\textsuperscript{433} (il peint la vérité.) Finally, Mallarmé saw Manet’s art as revealing “a frankly modern cachet.”\textsuperscript{434} (un cachet franchement moderne); to which Greenberg seemed directly to respond in referring to the “virtue of … frankness” of Manet’s paintings. “Those who will have interesting things to say about Manet, Mallarmé warned us, are only those who cultivate a concern for the “métier pur”\textsuperscript{435} of the artists—to which Greenberg responded almost like an echo chamber by placing the same emphasis on purity, over and over, ninety years later: “Thus would each art be rendered ‘pure,’ and in its ‘purity’ find the guarantee of its standards of quality as


\textsuperscript{432} Stéphane Mallarmé, \textit{Ecrits sur l’art}, 322. “… si l’art de nos derniers temps est moins glorieux, moins intense et moins riche, ce n’est pas sans la compensation de la sincérité, de la simplicité et d’un charme comme d’une enfance.”

\textsuperscript{433} Ibid., 310-11.

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., 203.

\textsuperscript{435} Ibid., 299.
well as of its independence. Interestingly, Greenberg used quotation marks, but did not designate his source. Following this thread, Greenberg defined the art that stood against this direction of “purity” as an art (whether realist, or romantic) that “conceals” itself: the enemies of modernism have “dissembled the[ir] medium, using art to conceal art.” (My emphasis). Surely again, the New York critic must have been borrowing these words from the Parisian poet who, a century earlier, had described Manet as a “danger” to those artists “whose principal mischief is to conceal the origin of this art.” (dort le tort principal est de voiler l’origine de cet art.) Mallarmé then went on defining this art as “made with mediums and colors.” (cet art fait d’onguents et de couleurs.) No, it is not Greenberg who wrote all this, but Mallarmé. Greenberg must have been rather astonished to come across his own theory in someone else’s mind, and with virtually his own words, a century before he thought about it. In fact, he may well have seen in Mallarmé a “fearsome intruder,” to borrow the expression from Mallarmé himself to describe Manet’s position amongst the Jurys of the Salons. This is one possible explanation for Greenberg’s total silence on Mallarmé’s pieces of art criticism. Finally, one cannot close the catalogue of the

438 Ibid.
440 Another oddity that would confirm this hypothesis is that Mallarmé is mentioned by Greenberg as a poet, but never as an art critic throughout the corpus of critical essays of the New York critic. The closest Greenberg ever came to acknowledging Mallarmé’s career as an art critic, was in a text where Mallarmé and Valéry are mentioned in concert as two examples of poets who pushed for a “more radical” conception of poetry, i.e., one emphasizing the medium of poetry (=words) in “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” Op. Cit., vol. 1, 9. Greenberg also referred to Mallarmé as a consistent practitioner of “pure poetry,” in the critical text “Towards a New Laocoon,” Op. Cit., vol. 1, 33. The French poet was mentioned again about half a dozen times by Greenberg from 1945 until 1950, always in the context of
evident analogies between Mallarmé’s art critical apparatus and that of Greenberg without referring to their shared distrust against the insidious impact of “sculpture” on painting. Having defined impressionism as “the delight of having recreated nature touch by touch,” Mallarmé thus cleared the French artistic movement, and Manet chiefly, of the burden of having to mimic, or represent nature—given that nature itself is “superior to any mere representation of it.” Once this mimetic burden was out of the way, Mallarmé explained that the next task was for the impressionists was to sever their links with sculpture—indeed a proto-Greenbergian shibboleth. Mallarmé, lending his voice to Manet, thus wrote:

I leave the massive and tangible solidity to its fitter exponent, sculpture. I content myself with reflecting on the clear and durable mirror of painting, that which perpetually lives yet dies every moment, which only exists by the will

a comparative analysis of a poet who did in the field of poetry what painters should strive to do in painting. He was last mentioned in 1950 in a text on T.S. Eliot: “T.S. Eliot: The Criticism, The Poetry,” Op. Cit., vol. 3, 66. Again, and ultimately here, Mallarmé’s “‘abstract’ or ‘pure’ poetry” was described as “antedat[ing] abstract art.” Talking about the question of one author “antedating” another, one could have expected that at least some parallel be drawn between Greenberg himself and the French critic/poet. In fact, a different version of the same review of T.S. Eliot’s Selected Essays, Greenberg mentioned the problem of who antedated whom with even more insistence—with an apparent sense of competition or ‘vengeance.’ According to Greenberg, “‘pure’ poetry antedates “pure” painting (significantly, Fry translated and annotated Mallarmé) but “pure” art criticism antedates “pure” literary criticism; the serious art critic is under greater pressure to be pertinent simply because his digressions tend to stick out more.; he deals with a more opaque medium, and he cannot linger as plausibly on Mona Lisa’s smirk as the literary critic can on Hamlet’s neurosis.” Greenberg, “T.S. Eliot: A Book Review,” in Art and Culture: Critical Essays, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 240. Clearly, the mention of Mallarmé seemed linked in Greenberg’s mind with the question of antedating. It is quite probable that finding out that Mallarmé had used an almost identical vocabulary as his to describe, not Pollock or Newman, but Manet, and that all this took place in the previous century, can only have left Greenberg with a distinct feeling of discomfort. Silence was the simplest expression of this discomfort.
of Idea, yet constitutes in my domain the only authentic and certain merit of nature—the Aspect.441

With which, Greenberg indeed seemed, indeed, in perfect agreement when he wrote the celebrated lines:

The flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be an absolute flatness. The heightened sensitivity of the picture plane may no longer permit sculptural illusion, or trompe-l’oeil, but it does and must permit optical illusion.442

Both Mallarmé’s and Greenberg’s warnings against the pernicious effect of sculpture on painting found another partial validation—before finding a complete invalidation—in Cézanne’s own technical principles after 1880. According to Vollard’s own testimony, Cézanne would have realized after 1880 that painting was not to be confused with sculpture, and had thus abandoned his early predilection for thick impastos. Vollard, however, rightly points out that this sudden shift in Cézanne’s technique did not last, and by the end of his life, he began to “paint thick”

again.\(^{443}\) Thus, here again, the modernist dream of a continuous, and seamless evolution away from the pernicious influence of sculpture—or volume-oriented practice of painting—found another limitation in Cézanne’s own practice at the end of his life. Indeed, any one who has spent some time in front of the extraordinary portrait of a seated man, known as *Le Marin* (or *Le jardinier Vallier vu de face*)\(^{444}\) cannot but wonder at the way such a thickly encrusted surface of paint has been made, or how a surface of linen can hold and retain such a dense and deep accumulation of pigments as to create a kind of coarse, leathery skin that almost conjures up the skin of a hippopotamus, or a crocodile. So much, then, for the warnings against the prevalence of volumes in the practice of painting at the end of Cézanne’s career: the presence of this painted figure is formidable; his two dark eyes appear of immense intensity, and are almost like two gaping holes transfixing us. There is nothing flat about this painting: neither the surface, nor the depiction of the subject matter, nor any of its details.

\* **Opticality and ‘l’Aspect’: the Immediacy of a Mirage**

Not only, Greenberg appeared in perfect agreement with Mallarmé in attempting to retrieve painting out of the illusory hold of sculpture—painting must stop play the

\(^{443}\) Ambroise Vollard, *En écoutant Cézanne, Degas, Renoir*, (Paris: Grasset, 1938), 33. Vollard thus quotes Cézanne who gave up painting thick when he realized that “la peinture, ce n’était pas la même chose que la sculpture.” Yet, as observes Vollard, this “ne devait d’ailleurs pas l’empêcher, vers la fin de sa vie, de se remettre à peindre ‘épais’.”

\(^{444}\) Rewald no. 951.
game of sculpture and start being honest, and act out of its own means, not those borrowed from another art and give a tactile appearance to its representations; but furthermore, what Greenberg called “opticality” corresponded in Mallarmé’s system of values to what the poet called “l’Aspect,” with a capital ‘A.’ The “Aspect” understood was understood as what is there for one’s eyes (optical) in nature, or, as the Littré dictionary put it, as “l’état de ce qui est sous l’œil, devant les yeux.”

What the artist gained by confronting “the Aspect” of nature is that he conquered “that which properly belongs to [his] art.” This text by Mallarmé conjures up Greenberg’s “opticality” (understood as the domain of pure painting). Opticality is opposed to tactility (the domain of painting’s rival, sculpture): “The more closely color could be identified with its ground, the freer it would be from the interference of tactile associations,” Greenberg wrote about the watercolor-like pigment-soaked canvases of Morris Louis, and he further explained: “the effect conveys a sense not only of color as somehow disembodied, and therefore purely optical.”

Again, one is tempted to ask: Who is quoting whom here? Did Mallarmé portentously announce Greenberg’s theoretical system, or did Greenberg paraphrase Mallarmé’s critical texts? Is this mere serendipity, or a deliberate act of plagiarizing on Greenberg’s part? Who knows? One will probably never be able to find a proper answer to this question,

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447 Clement Greenberg, “Louis and Noland,” Op. Cit., vol. 4, 97. The discussion of pure opticality then shifts into the issue of “openness,” and “expansion—”a consequence of the fact that color and thread, in Louis’s paintings, are one and the same thing, which probably could be described as the ultimate “aspect” (in Mallarmé’s terms) of modernist painting.
unless one finds one day abundant notes in Greenberg’s papers, or an annotated
version of Mallarmé’s texts in his hand.

Far more important than the question of whether Greenberg actually had consciously
recited Mallarmé’s critical texts, is the observation that Mallarmé and Greenberg
wholly share, beyond a common vocabulary, a common Weltanschauung, a common
vision. Ultimately, the same aims and values appear in both critical systems and form
an axiological axis that guides each critic’s investigations: a renewed, and intimately
close attention to “that which properly belongs to [each] art” (Mallarmé) offers the
same premise for both critics—and Greenberg reinforces the point: “visual art should
confine itself exclusively to what is given in visual experience, and make no reference
to anything given in any other order of experience.”\footnote{Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” \textit{Op. Cit.}, vol. 4, 91.} Understand: sculpture, for
instance; or literature. Painting was not supposed to evoke qualities such as tactility,
because layers of paint applied on a flat linen surface do not result (or scarcely) in
creating a three-dimensional volume; and it should not evoke a narrative structure
because colors by themselves do not tell any story. This shibboleth of modernism (a
search for autonomy of each medium) is by no means Greenberg’s or Mallarmé’s
own preserve: it extends to almost all disciplines, and authors. Alfred Barnes, for
instance, before Greenberg, saw that much of the “power” that Cézanne’s art
contained derived from the fact that the constructions of planes and color did not
depend on literary, nor sculptural devices to project their impacts.\textsuperscript{449} This doesn’t mean, of course, that different forms of art may not communicate with each other—but they should only communicate insofar as they respect each other’s specific media and idioms. In a very peculiar text, Greenberg as he reviewed an exhibition of American sculpture in the ‘40s credited Cézanne, among others, for having enabled modernist sculptors to liberate themselves from the weight of the Renaissance tradition. Even though he had nothing to do with sculpture, Cézanne by conferring upon his own art, a certain degree of autonomy was able to propagate a new lesson that sculptors could take up and use to their own benefit.\textsuperscript{450} Greenberg asserted this point over and again with force and clarity:

> Let painting confine itself to the disposition pure and simple of color and line, and not intrigue us by associations with things we can experience more authentically elsewhere.\textsuperscript{451}

Greenberg was here knowingly or not echoing a statement by Bernard derived from Cézanne’s own teachings: The paragraph that leads him to the latter statement opens with an injunction that could announce Greenberg: “Soyez peintre et non pas écrivain

\textsuperscript{449} Alfred Barnes and Violette de Mazia, \textit{The Art of Cézanne}, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), 3: “Perhaps no other painter has so successfully made power the keynote of his design; not even Michelangelo, whose means were partly sculptural, partly literary, and whose effects are in consequence largely \textit{vitiated by a confusion of values}.” (My emphasis.)


ou philosophe!” Bernard himself was merely repeating in the form of an admonition what Cézanne had written to him:

[The artist] should be wary of the literary mind which so often causes the painter to depart from his true path—the concrete study of nature—to become lost for too long a time in intangible speculations.453

In other words, let the painter beware if he wants to play the game of a sculptor, a novelist or a philosopher. Greenberg sounds this warning most specifically to any painter who would be unhappy with the confines inherent in the practice of painting:

The painter may go on playing with illusions, but only for the sake of satire. If he finds the limited depth of the plane surface too confining, let him become a sculptor—as Arp, originally a painter, had done.454

As ever, Greenberg’s messages and injunctions possess the merit of being cogently clear. The lesson of modernism is definitely confining, Greenberg concedes that much. The rules are the rules: if one doesn’t like them, let one try a different profession.

453 Paul Cézanne, correspondance, 261. Quoted by Shiff, op. cit., 186.
The conclusive aim that confers its own success on the whole system in either case is the conquest of the “autonomy” of the optical gaze that is no longer “spoilt” by a form of art foreign to painting: “the steadfast gaze of a vision restored to its simplest perfection” is what is gained from the Manetian effort to “purify” the métier of painting. This drive towards purity, this needs to be emphasized, reaches a point of “disembodiment:” whether referring to “Aspect” (Mallarmé), or to “pure opticality” (Greenberg), the fact is that color ends up being visible as a “mirage:” “matter is incorporeal, weightless, and exists only optically like a mirage.” There is some logic behind this rather strange idea: again it is the very direction of “modernism” as a gradual “pictorial tendency to reduce all matter to two dimensions” that drives art towards an “economy of physical substance—indeed, there is no “substance” to pure two-dimensionality. It is this idea, pushed to its extreme limit, that painting, just like sculpture, should strive towards “physical independence,” or “self-sufficiency” that has created this rather strange state of affairs within the study of modernism.

Greenberg’s heirs, and their critics, have all centered their interests on modernism in painting around this notion of “physical independence” or “optical illusion.” Michael Fried conceded so much as well:

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456 Greenberg, “Sculpture in Our Time,” Op. Cit., vol. 4. 60. (This article is known under the title “The New Sculpture,” in Art and Culture, 1961.)
457 Ibid.
Nothing in Greenberg’s art criticism or for that matter in mine has come in for more sustained assault in recent years than the claim that modernist painting posits or privileges or establishes the illusion of a purely visual or “optical” space, one addressed to eyesight alone.\footnote{Michael Fried, \textit{Art and Objecthood, Essays and Reviews}, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 18.}

Another distinguishing feature of this “Aspect”/“pure opticality” conundrum is that it ideally depends on neither substance, nor time: just like a “mirage,” it comes up as a flash:

When a picture presents us with an illusion of real space, there is all the more inducement for the eye to do [much] wandering. But ideally the whole of a picture should be taken in at a glance; its unity should be \textit{immediately evident}, and the supreme quality of a picture, the highest measure of its power to move and control the visual imagination, should \textit{reside in its unity}. \textit{And this is something to be grasped only in an indivisible instant of time.}\footnote{Greenberg, “The Case for Abstract Art,” \textit{Op. Cit.}, vol. 4, 80. (My emphasis).}

Again, to those who might find surprising such a description of the experience of viewing an abstract painting, Greenberg reinforced his point for the occasional skeptics: an abstract picture “comes out,” not like a poem, or a story (both of which
require time) but all “at once, like a sudden revelation.” Here, then comes this extraordinary text that underscores the immediacy of the experience of viewing an abstract picture:

The “at-once ness” which a picture or a piece of sculpture enforces on you is not, however, single or isolated. It can be repeated in a succession of instants, in each one remaining an “at-once ness,” an instant all by itself. For the cultivated eye, the picture repeats its instantaneous unity like a mouth repeating a single word.

The concept of art’s superiority due to its immediacy was not new. The German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling certainly had come to similar conclusions a century and a half beforehand:

Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source.

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460 Ibid.
461 Ibid.
Interestingly, however, what Greenberg sought out in painting (immediacy of impact of a picture), the German Romantic philosopher found in drama, which does not just signify its objects but places them right in front of our eyes. Here again, it will be easy to see what a long legacy this very notion has had on the works of Johns and Rauschenberg especially. This also helps understanding better both of their huge continuous involvement in performance art. Again, “the idea of opticality (and related notions),” as Fried would put it, or “l’Aspect,” to use Mallarmé’s term, seem to be conjured up through the Romantic theoreticians’ ideology—even though Schelling lived a century before the latter, and two centuries before the former. This essential apprehension of painting through its pure opticality obviously encouraged an individual approach to painting and certainly did not facilitate communication. The phenomenon of “opticality” is after all for my eyes only.

*Why did Greenberg Miss Kant’s “Grundidee:” Communication?*

In an extraordinary text on Jewish American artist Arnold Friedman who was given a retrospective at the Jewish Museum in 1950, Greenberg expanded with praise on Friedman’s choice for an isolated mode of life:

> He had little time or inclination for mere socializing. He could not cultivate and get up entertainments for ‘friends’ on whom to force an informal

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exhibition, swing a sale. And he had no stomach at all for the coquetries of the cocktail party: to Friedman, who had told a patron, “You’re not giving me charity!” the artists hovering around, toady ing to, all but soliciting possible patrons, seemed despicable… Nor did he find companionship in the artist groups he joined, for they did not band together out of mutual respect and good will but from necessity.464

This text recalls the romantic tone of Bernard’s text that lavishes praise on Cézanne for having succeeded while having renounced what socializing, interest-driven friendships, and belonging to certain cliques could have done for him:

Inconnu ou plutôt méconnu il a, lui, aimé l’art jusqu’à renoncer à se faire une notoriété par les amitiés et les cénacles. Non méprisant, mais entier, il a renoncé à faire part de ses efforts…465

The myth of the lonesome modern artist who refused to give in to the temptation of friendships that could propel him socially and economically obviously held a great appeal in the construction of the story of modernism: this is the story of the self-made artist, who absolutely refused to compromise himself in anyway. Inter-subjectivity, of

any sort, is, therefore, depicted there as a gate open to facile alliances, compromise, and intrigues.

This, in turn, may explain partly why Greenberg never gave room within his expansive system of explanation of modern art to artistic interrelationships—whether between Pissarro and Cézanne, Rauschenberg and Johns, or others. Nevertheless, the fact that Greenberg never raised the issue of the artistic interchange between Pissarro and Cézanne is all the more strange as the intense collaboration between the two impressionists was amply developed by one of Greenberg’s mentors, Roger Fry.466 This point will lead us to examine the self-proclaimed ideology behind Greenberg’s system of interpretation. His partial usage of some of Kant’s concepts (the idea of “self-criticism,” for instance) was, in fact, grafted on other concepts that had nothing to do with Kant (a historicist interpretation of the unstoppable unfolding of the road towards abstraction, and an obsessive focus on the imperative obligation for all the arts to affirm their distinctive identity, each through its own unique and specific medium).467 This hybrid conceptual mixture made it impossible (or at the very least, completely superfluous) for the art critic to look at the notion of inter-subjectivity in his conception of modernism, and thus to miss out on a critical aspect of Kant’s own

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466 Roger Fry, Cézanne A Study of His Development, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), [1927], chapters IX and X.
467 This historicist vision of history (i.e., the notion that history evolves out of its own forces with an unstoppable necessity) is found throughout the corpus of Greenberg’s criticism. It is already present in his earliest critical texts, e.g., in his “Obituary of Mondrian,” where one finds the extraordinary sentence: “Mondrian was the only artist to carry to their ultimate and inevitable conclusions those basic tendencies of recent Western painting which cubism defined and isolated.”
conception of “modernism”—as interpreted by Greenberg.\textsuperscript{468} Calling himself a Kantian throughout his mature work, Greenberg seems to have missed out what Kant himself called “die Grund-Idee der Vernunft.”\textsuperscript{469} This “ground idea” or this fundamental notion (‘Grund’ meaning foundation) consists in the human possibility of putting oneself in the place of some one else. This (which Kant literally calls ‘Sympathie’) enables a process of communication to take place. The notion of communication is not a mere cosmetic that could be added to the essence or prime definition of man: communication defines man. As Kant put it, “How much and how correctly would we think if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we communicate our thoughts, and who communicate theirs to us!”\textsuperscript{470} From this notion of co-thinking, (or “thinking in common”) follows the idea of a human world that draws its force and its clarity from communication—a communication that must remain uncoerced, and free from transcendent ideals, and free from the domination of a universal “logos.”\textsuperscript{471} This emphasis on the pivotal importance of communication in the Kantian system did not go unnoticed by Kant’s celebrated

\textsuperscript{469} Immanuel Kant, Kant’s gesammelte Schriften, herausgegeben von der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reiner, 1913), Band XV, Erste Hälfte, no. 782: “Das Ideale Ganze ist die Grundidee der Vernunft… Die Eigenschaft des Menschen, das particulare nur im allgemeinen beurtheilen zu können, ist das sentiment. Sympathie ist davon ganz unterschieden und geht bloß auf das particulare, obgleich an anderen; man setzt sich nicht in die Idee des Ganzen, sondern an die Stelle eines anderen.”
\textsuperscript{470} Immanuel Kant, “What is Orienting Oneself in Thought?” op. cit. See first epigraph of Section I.
\textsuperscript{471} I am grateful here for the most clear explication of the concept of communication in Kant’s and Fichte’s systems drawn by Alexis Philonenko, La liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte, (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1966), 36-40, and in the same author’s L’Œuvre de Kant, (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1972), vol. 2, 190-195. See also Alain Renaut, Kant aujourd’hui, (Paris: Aubier), 118-122 and 385 sqq.
follower and admirer, Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Who could ever dispute it—Fichte certainly spent more time and attention reading Kant’s texts than Greenberg did. Fichte himself ended up facing the same “Grund-Idee der Vernunft” and produced sets of definitions of mankind, or humanity that, in many ways, seem to echo the voice of the Koenigsberg philosopher. Fichte wrote:

Reciprocal action carried out with signs (Zeichen) is the condition of humanity: on his own, man is nothing. Man constitutes a community. If he is assured that men exist, then signs must exist; indeed, wherever a man can be found, others also exist, and, thanks to signs, they are all in mutual contact through concepts with each other. In its largest sense, this active mutual contact is language: without it man could not exist. Of course, the ultimate development of this communication through signs is something contingent. Yet, one can say that language is inherent in man; I mean: language absolutely belongs to the essence of man.472

Notwithstanding the fact that “reciprocal action carried out with signs” i.e., brush marks, artistic gestures, forms, objects and performances offers here an excellent brief definition of what this work will try to analyze, this text places all the greater an emphasis on the notion of language, and communication in Kant’s heritage.

472 J.G. Fichte, Nachgelassene Schriften, herausgegeben von H. Jacob, Berlin, 1937, Bd. II, 151
What about Greenberg’s version of art history at the light of this concept of “reciprocal action”? Let us observe that Greenberg did not lock himself in the study of Abstract expressionism to the exclusion of anything else. Even if individuals do not seem to communicate very much in Greenberg’s system, art movements at least seem to be inter-connected to one another. Greenberg, for instance, can certainly not be accused of having lacked interest in impressionism itself. The substantial role that he occupies in art history as the champion of Abstract Expressionism has tended to overshadow the fact that Greenberg was very versatile in many fields, cultivating great interest in literature, as well as in many periods of the visual arts. He seemed blithely capable of juggling between centuries and media in his prolific reviews, equally at ease discussing Mondrian’s theories, American literary criticism, a biography of Napoléon III, writing a very humane, and rather moving, description of life in a camp of German POWs in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, then going on reviewing books or exhibitions on, say, 15th century Flemish illuminations, or retrospectives of works by Georgia O’Keeffe, Marc Chagall, Jacques Lipchitz and Jackson Pollock, among plenty other examples.473 Besides this vast and heteroclite critical production,

Greenberg seems to have manifested a serious critical predilection for the impressionists. His interest in impressionism is somewhat self-serving, in that impressionism fits neatly within Greenberg’s system and announces what he will be doing several years later. For instance, reviewing a large retrospective of Claude Monet’s works in 1945, Greenberg thus described the French impressionist: “Monet was a flat painter, and the first concern of his métier [Greenberg’s emphasis]—a concern that leads from him straight to Mondrian—was to maintain plastically the equilibrium that the surface of the canvas already possesses physically. Impressionism meant naturalism as understood in the terms proper to painting rather than to literature.”

There was nothing wrong, to Greenberg’s eye, in literature per se—Greenberg himself started his career as a literary critic, and continued to write literary criticism as he went on to become an art critic. There was something wrong, however, for Greenberg, in borrowing artistic criteria from literature—or from any other forms of non-pictorial art, sculpture for instance—and applying those to pictorial creation. Painting was to be pursued as an activity whose praxis was obeyed to rules of its own—not to borrowed rules. Consequentially, the practitioners themselves needed not to consult one another in search for rules. The great artists were those who figured before any one else what the next phase of art would hold.

Not only was there no need for communication in this theory of painting, but, furthermore, communication implies openness, and readiness to change ideas, or

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revise one’s course of action. Communication would have blurred the monolithic and clear trail of modern history—opening it up to what modernism barred: hesitations, uncertainties, surprises.

* Karl-Philip Moritz and Clement Greenberg: In Search for Autonomy in Art Two Centuries Apart

There is certainly no surprise in the fact that Greenberg’s analysis of impressionism foretells his forthcoming interpretation of Abstract Expressionism—hailed by the critic as having expunged all remnants of extraneous rules, conventions or criteria borrowed from a heterogeneous art (literature). This gradual process of “autonomization” of painting through modernism, i.e. the gradual conquest by painting of its own means, and its own goals was not altogether original. In fact, it owed a great deal to some of the German Romanticists who also defined a work of art as “an arbitrary whole existing in itself,”475 as Karl Philip Moritz could write a hundred and sixty years before Greenberg. This was the first time that the criteria of “resemblance” or “imitation” were no longer able to legitimize fully the success of a work of art. The creation of a work of art, rather than be subservient to criteria of imitation of the outside world, had to establish and follow the laws of its own internal structure. We find here an argument that is portentous of the Greenbergian emphasis

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on “autonomy.” Paintings must not be dependent on heterogeneous criteria of creation, such as those that were traditionally borrowed from non-pictorial arts like sculpture or literature. With Moritz, in anticipation of the Greenbergian ideology, we see the concept—that will become and remain truly central to modernism—of self-sufficiency in a work of art take a definite form:

the beautiful object *does not require an end outside itself* (my emphasis), for it is so perfect in itself that the entire purpose of its existence is found in itself.

Or again: “The essence of the beautiful object consists in its accomplishment in itself.”476 Almost sounding as if he needed to develop the same idea in a modern context, Greenberg wrote:

…Our taste for the factual, immediate, first-hand, which desires that painting, sculpture, poetry become more concrete by confining themselves strictly to that which is most palpable in them, namely their mediums, and by refraining from treating or imitating what lies outside the province of their exclusive effects.477

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One—Moritz—is articulating together the notion of putting an end to the rule of imitation of nature in art, and instead, emphasizes that a work of art has no need to go and look “outside itself;” the other—Greenberg—puts the stress on the empirical, fact-oriented values of the modern era, and thus comes to the same conclusion although through different premises: all of the arts must attempt to be in touch with “the literal essence of their medium.” In other words, they must attempt to exclude what is not directly given through the raw material of their medium—words for poetry, sounds for music, or paints and canvases for painting: the arts in our modern age must “refrain from treating or imitating what lies outside the province of their exclusive effects.” As will be seen in the next section, the exact opposite of this statement (the arts must not refrain from treating anything that lies outside the province of their effects) served as the very premises for the art practices of Johns and Rauschenberg: in this sense alone, they certainly deserve to be called ‘post-modernist’ or even ‘anti-modernist.’ Whether it be “outside the province of [its] exclusive effects,” or more simply put, “outside itself,” as Moritz wrote, Greenberg essentially agrees with Moritz: painting should concentrate on its own medium in order to attain its own truth, goal and essence. It is noteworthy that, at that point of his development in his critical text “The New Sculpture,” Greenberg decides to refer to another German Romantic theoretician, not Moritz, but Lessing, who was about a generation older than Moritz. Greenberg is, therefore, clearly aware of his conceptual

\[478 \text{ Ibid.} \]
\[479 \text{ Ibid.} \]
debt to German Romanticism, and it is most likely in the context of his readings of
the texts of that generation that Greenberg came across Kant. I will argue, however,
that Greenberg felt a much stronger empathy for the German Romantics than for the
author of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and that, for this reason, it became difficult—if
not impossible—for Greenberg to give subjectivity, or indeed inter-subjectivity, any
room in his system. In this reference to Lessing Greenberg takes for granted that his
readers are all aware of the fact that Lessing had argued, like himself, for a clear
distinction between the arts.480 This is how Greenberg’s allusion reads:

This does not mean what Lessing meant when he protested against the
confusion of the arts; Lessing still thought of the arts as imitative of an
external reality which was to be incorporated by means of illusion; but
modern sensibility asks for the exclusion of all reality external to the medium
of the respective art—for the exclusion that is of subject matter.481

Greenberg was here plotting the modernist argument within the boundaries of what
Lessing, and following him, most of the German romantic theoreticians, had
established: that each art should follow be regulated by the rules of its own in order to
avoid confusion.

480 On Greenberg’s relationship to Lessing, read *Thierry de Duve’s witty article: “Clement Lessing,”
Confusion was considerably avoided too by the paradigm of the so-called “road to flatness.” This has had the powerful effect of explaining how things unfolded for over a century, from Manet to Newman: modernism, Greenberg told us, “used art to call attention to art.” With this autotelic conception of art in mind—in which the development of modern art brings in an increased awareness of its own ingredients, limitations and norms (its own essence, in a word)—Greenberg was capable of producing a remarkably potent tool of explanation: the history of modern art, at the critic’s hands, made total sense. Modern art had one goal: affirming its own “purity.” That goal could be reached through an intense “enterprise of self-criticism,” and this “self-criticism” indeed led to self-definition, or even “self-definition with a vengeance,” which was synonymous with “purity” in Greenberg’s system: the logic of this autotelic circle thus closed neatly upon itself. Having a goal, the modernist enterprise also had a “direction:” “an anti-sculptural direction” which conferred upon history its own unity, logic, and coherence. What is put in negative terms by the periphrasis: “an anti-sculptural direction” turned into a positive injunction when

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483 I emphasize this idea of totality or of total sense for now, simply because this was to become one of the targets of the attacks from the post-modernists who eventually saw in this totalizing project one of the alarming aspects of Greenberg’s enterprise. Ihab Hassan, an early spokesman of American postmodernism, for instance, wrote: “totalization in any human endeavor is potentially totalitarian.” (“The Critic as Innovator: The Tutzing Statement in X Frames,” Amerikastudien 22 (1977), Heft 1, 55. Hassan plays here on a pun (totalization/totalitarian) that says more about his wit than about his capacity for logical argumentation. If indeed, Greenberg’s project merits to be criticized, it is not because totalizing projects inherently lead towards totalitarianism.
Greenberg referred to an orientation towards flatness: “Because flatness was the only condition painting shared with no other art, Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else.”\textsuperscript{485} Whatever it was, fighting against the sculptural effect, or for flatness, meant the same thing. The general idea (or the main narrative) that presided over the unfolding of each phase of this historic enterprise was simple: painting must shed any remnant of illusions attached to its own past practice by having attempted to achieve the task of sculpture, that is to create volumes. “To achieve autonomy, Greenberg wrote, painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture.”\textsuperscript{486} This narrative appears as the engine that drives the historicist conception of how art evolved almost since the beginning of mankind, according to Greenberg. Yet, when the art critic attempts to apply his model to the understanding of the history of Western painting since the Renaissance, a contradiction started to creep in. A search for purity, or autonomy is what guides the evolution of modernist painting since Manet and the impressionists. A “purely optical experience” as opposed to optical experience tainted by a “sculptural” experience and distorted by ensuing “tactile associations”\textsuperscript{487} is what characterizes modern painting.

Yet, only a paragraph earlier, Greenberg, without seeming to blink at this contradiction, explained that in resisting against the sculptural appeal—or in resisting the temptation of mimicking sculpture, or solid volumes through painting—painting reveals “how firmly attached it remains to tradition beneath and beyond all

\textsuperscript{485} Op. Cit., 87.
\textsuperscript{486} Op. Cit., 88.
\textsuperscript{487} Op. Cit., 89.
appearances to the contrary.” In case we had not taken him seriously enough on this point, the critic decided to repeat it several pages later, this time even more emphatically. The idea that each new phase of modern art should be a break with the past, and “should be hailed as the start of a whole new epoch in art” is a big mistake. Modernism’s home is, Greenberg insisted, “in the intelligible continuity of taste and tradition.” What then did Greenberg mean? The essence of modernism, as we have already seen, is “to use art to call attention to art;” in this very function, it is to be opposed to “realistic, naturalistic art” which used “art to conceal art.” What became a positive factor in modernism, used to be regarded as a negative factor among the art of the Old Masters. So, how can modernism be seen as the ultimate step of a long continuum?

* Greenberg’s Infidelity to Kant, and Discrete Loyalty to Hegel

It seems that, far from a Kantian model—whose inspiration he claimed at the beginning of his momentous article—, Greenberg was reviving a Hegelian mode of

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491 Op. Cit., 86: “The limitations that constitute the medium of painting… were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Under Modernism these same limitations came to be regarded as positive factors, and were acknowledged openly.”
492 When describing the “justification for the term ‘abstract expressionist’,” Greenberg there again suggested that [the Abstract Expressionists] “all started from French painting, got their fundamental sense of style from it, and still maintain some sort of continuity with it.” In the next sentence, Greenberg makes mention of “the general direction in which it had to go in their time.” “American-Type” Painting,” in The Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. 3, 219.
understanding history. Each phase, each individual is then conceived as partaking in a larger process (larger than life) that progressively reveals itself, almost despite the participants themselves. There is a kind of ineluctability about the way Greenberg describes the process of unfolding of modernism that is very reminiscent of the way the historical process in the Hegelian system. The “individual things become progressively more authentic the more completely the Idea enters into them,” wrote Hegel. If we translate the concept of the Idea into Greenberg’s realm, it becomes the continuum that unfolds itself finally to reveal the end truth of modernism, understood, in Hegelian terms, as the truthful moment that was to going to be announced right from the beginning, that was held in germ by the early figures of the Idea. Then, all becomes clear: “the phase of Modernist art… finally takes its place in the intelligible continuity of taste and tradition.” The proximity of Greenberg’s argumentation with a Hegelian model culminates in the art critic’s usage of a model of thinking that strongly resembles what is known as the “ruse of reason.” In brief, individual artists may be under the illusion that they are serving their own aims and programs, they are, in fact, working for history whose inexorable logic re-appropriates the results of their work and actions unbeknownst to them. Here is a perfect illustration of the kind of logic at work in the early Greenberg’s prose that provides a pristine example of the mechanics of the “ruse of reason.”


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A good many of the artists—if not the majority—who contributed importantly to the development of modern painting came to it with the desire to exploit the break with imitative realism for a more powerful expressiveness, but so inexorable was the logic of the development that in the end their work constituted but another step towards abstract art, and a further sterilization of the expressive factors. This has been true, whether the artist was Van Gogh, Picasso or Klee. All roads lead to the same place.\textsuperscript{495}

T. J. Clark, who once quoted this text\textsuperscript{496} is right when referring to the ineluctable logic that holds each individual artist to its claims: each artist is held as if in a vise (these are words used by Greenberg.) Needless to say, there is absolutely no room here for any artistic freedom: or rather, the artist may well believe that he is free; his freedom is ‘ineluctably’ recuperated by the logic of history that forces the development of art in one sole direction. It is not necessary, at this point, to emphasize again how distant this conception of history is from a Kantian model. In contrast, however, it is very closely allegiant to a Hegelian form of understanding of the dialectic between history and individual initiative.

Every phase of history succeeds one another towards the accomplishment of the goal of modernism, and Greenberg even discusses this process in terms very reminiscent

of Hegel’s dialectical historical process. In another essay a few years earlier, the critic wrote: “To produce important art it is necessary as a rule to digest the major art of the preceding period, or periods. This is as true today as ever.”

The idea that the historical process that leads to modernism digests the previous moments offers a good metaphor for the Hegelian chain of moments, or figures of the Reason accomplishing its own resolution, whereby each “figure” negates the previous one while all the same retaining something of what it destructed. Each individual artist—or each distinct phase—leading to the modernist accomplishment is subjected to a logic that it (the individual) does not control. It is, on the contrary, the logic of history itself that controls the individual, while, all the same, affirming the individuals: in other words, everything an individual does in a Hegelian/Greenbergian model, makes sense, as it is contributing to the advance of the presiding system. Here is the cunning side of the “ruse of reason:” an individual may have the impression of working according to his/her interests, or intentions; but in fact, unbeknownst to that individual, the logic of history imposes itself through this individual, with or without his/her knowledge. For instance, let’s look at the example of Cézanne. “Manet and the Impressionists” are credited for having paved the way towards a “purely optical experience.”

Cézanne, Greenberg tells us, reacted against impressionism—not mentioning that Cézanne had been a full-fledge impressionist at some point of his life. He reacted against impressionism in a way that seemed to rub the course of history the wrong way: he,

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and the Cubists after him, opposed impressionism “in the name of the sculptural.”

Never mind: the reason of history always prevails. Greenberg explained that just like David and Ingres had reacted against Fragonard, attempting to create a type of painting that would be more sculptural, but ended up producing “a kind of painting ever less sculptural than before, Cézanne and the Cubists, despite their “counter-revolution” against the impressionists, “eventuated in a kind of painting flatter than anything in Western art since before Giotto and Cimabue—so flat indeed that it could hardly contain recognizable images.” They thought they were creating volumes, and the malicious result was that this “turned into the flattest painting Western art had seen since the time of the Byzantines.”

Even though Greenberg often quotes Hegel, he doesn’t seem to have come across the very concept of the ruse of reason. Greenberg, however, coined his own expression by calling it “the malice of a certain logic…”

Continuum implies history, and the conception of history that reflects a Hegelian conception of history.

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499 Ibid.
500 Ibid.
502 Ibid., 190.
* From Cézanne and Pissarro to Rauschenberg and Johns: What do they hold in common according to modernism?

Cézanne’s lesson, for modernism, is in essence not that different from the lesson initiated by Manet. If anything, it might appear, especially with the artist’s late career (Cézanne III) more radical—or, more abrupt, as Greenberg put it:

To acknowledge the brute flatness of the surface on which he was trying to create a new and less deceptive illusion of the third dimension, Cézanne broke up the objects he depicted into multiplicities of planes that were as closely parallel as possible to the canvas’s surface; and to show recession, the planes were stepped back with comparative abruptness.

We have seen that, according to Greenberg, it is only to the very indirect extent that Pissarro, and Cézanne, owe a debt to Manet that they have come to occupy the role they took in the history of modern art. Even so, these two roles are very different. Pissarro was one of the “disciples” of Manet’s whereas Cézanne was rather an equal who furthered the great pictorial forays produced by Manet. In this scheme of understanding, Greenberg is therefore not that far from Fry—except that Fry, as we saw, lent a much more ‘constructive’ (almost therapeutic) role to ‘le père Pissarro’
insofar as he credits the older artist for having ‘tempered’ Cézanne’s earlier pictorial madness.

The irony with Rauschenberg and Johns is that they appeared to articulate the pictorial language of modernism to a point of excess—by doing so, they both revealed some of the aporias inherent in modernism. Throughout the 1950s Rauschenberg and Johns produced a number of monochromatic works—e. g. Rauschenberg with his White Paintings, or Johns with his White Flag or White Figures. These pure paintings seem, at first sight, to be an exact application of the Greenbergian principles: painting here is exclusively oriented towards flatness and nothing else. Rauschenberg with this emblematic empty seven-panel painting seems to say that painting completely surrendered to the specificity of its medium. Here was pure, total, absolute two-dimensionality—disturbed by nothing at all. Johns, too, with White Flag seemed to intensify the experience of two-dimensionality around a subject matter, it is true, but a subject matter that offered no trace of three dimensionality. The whole experience, therefore, seemed to comply with the directions suggested by Greenberg. Rather than just doing ‘flat on flat’ Johns was doing ‘flag on flat.’

We could read, therefore, the developments of modernism from its very beginnings to its culmination as the opening and the finale of a great story—the story of the evolution of modern art towards its goal, or the realization of its own essence. I will,
however, suggest that looking at the works produced by these four artists, two by two, provide substance for a critique of modernism—despite the appearance to the contrary. In fact, I will take my first cue from Greenberg’s own response to Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*. His first response is quite extraordinary—and almost in keeping with *White Paintings*; it was total silence. Greenberg saw these works in 1953 and yet found nothing to say about them for fourteen years. Then in 1967, he wrote an article on sculpture (for an exhibition catalogue titled *American Sculpture of the Sixties*). In this catalogue, almost as a digression, Greenberg tells us all of a sudden how he felt in front of the first monochrome paintings he ever saw. This experience is credited first to the “almost monochromatic pictures” by Rollin Crampton shown in 1951. He explains that his first response to monochromatic painting had been a mixture of derision and exasperation. Then Greenberg went on:

The next monochromatic paintings I saw were completely so—the all-white and all-black paintings in Rauschenberg’s 1953 show (at the Stable). I was surprised by how easy they were to “get,” how familiar-looking and even slick… What was so challenging in Crampton’s art had become almost overnight another taming convention.\(^{503}\)

Greenberg points out that Pollock to a degree contributed to this “taming” phenomenon: he contributed to making the all-over aspect of painting familiar, and

turned it into a convention. Whether it be the accidental look cultivated by the Abstract expressionists, or the sense of emptiness, or (what Greenberg calls) “the look of the void” that was generated by Pollock, all these aspects of art were—one after the other—gradually tamed or acclimatized by the following generation. The logic that ties all these moments together is what Greenberg calls the logic of the far out. But what Greenberg doesn’t tell us is why the logic of the far out (which is clearly what has paid off best in avant-garde practices) can work for Pollock, and not for Rauschenberg. Greenberg brings up a final point in conclusion—these new artists—chief among them Rauschenberg and Johns—“appear to have realized that the far-out in itself has to be the far-out as an end in itself and that this means the furthest-out and nothing short of that.”

Now again, these words were written sixteen years after the *White Paintings* were created, fourteen years after they were exhibited. The only way to understand this extraordinary silence from a critic who never missed a beat in what was going on in the New York scene of the art world is to take these words quite literally. If these works were the embodiment in 1951 of the “furthest-out,” this meant literally that there was (in the avant-garde logic that he is describing and advocating) nowhere else, no where further to go. This event had brought the logic of the avant-garde to an end—or at least, it had reduced it to silence. It is not just that the *White Paintings* carried the logic of modernism to its furthest point (this in itself could have been a

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504 Greenberg, IV, 252.
cause of celebration), but it is the fact that by pushing this logic (Greenberg’s logic) to its furthest point, it brought up its own contradictions. Rauschenberg followed the rule of practice of modernism to the letter, that is he painted flat on flat, ‘surrendered’ the practice of painting to its pure essence, i.e. its two-dimensional support: he actually did so better (the surface of White Paintings is immaculately flat) and further (not a single mark or form comes to disturb this pure white surface) than anybody had dared do before. Nevertheless, the very logic of this surrender brought its own death. As I see it, this is how one can interpret Greenberg’s own silence after seeing these works. More than just a feeling of frustration and irritation, he was awe struck: he saw through these very paintings the end of modernism—and had literally nothing to say.
THIRD SECTION

Inter-Subjectivity: Two by Two
Rien là que je ne me dise moi-même, moins bien, en l’éparse chuchoterie de ma solitude ; mais où vous êtes le divinateur, c’est, oui, relativement à ce mot même : C’est… qui règne au dernier lieu de mon esprit. Tout le mystère est là : établir les identités secrètes par un deux à deux qui ronge et use les objets, au nom d’une centrale pureté. Tout cela pour dire que vous me pénétrez, de loin ; et que nous devons vivre un peu du même regard.

Stéphane Mallarmé

...la peinture, l’art en général m’enchante, c’est ma vie, que me fait le reste, quand on fait une chose avec toute son âme et tout ce que l’on a de noble en soi, on trouve toujours un sosie qui vous comprend, pas n’est besoin d’être légion, n’est-ce pas là tout ce que doit désirer l’artiste !

Camille Pissarro

Entre toi … et moi, je veux dire entre ce qui fait ta personnalité et la mienne, il y a le monde, le soleil… ce qui passe… ce que nous voyons en commun… Nos habits, nos chairs, les reflets… C’est là-dedans qu’il faut que je pioche.

Paul Cézanne

Painting can be a conversation with oneself and, at the same time, it can be a conversation with other paintings. What one does triggers thoughts of what others have done or might do… This introduces a degree of play between the possible and the necessary, which can allow one to learn from other artists’ work that might seem otherwise unrelated or irrelevant.

Jasper Johns

…the very best way to know people is to work with them, and that’s a very sensitive form of intimacy.

Robert Rauschenberg

Ann Hindry: Clement Greenberg quoted to me the old saying that it should take two to paint a painting—the painter, and someone to shoot him when he is through…

Jasper Johns: I am sure that Clem was willing!

505 Mallarmé, Correspondance, eds. Henri Mondor and James Lloyd Austin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 292-3; letter to Francis Vielé-Griffin, 7 August 1891 ; There is nothing in this that I don’t tell myself, less well, in the uneven whisperings of my solitary conversations, but where you are the diviner, it is, yes, relative to these very words: it is… which reign in the ultimate location of my mind. There lies all the mystery: to establish the secret identities through a two-by-two which wears and erodes objects, in the name of central purity. All this to say that you go deep inside me from afar, and that we must be somewhat living off the same gaze.

506 CP/JBH, I, 253. Letter to Lucien, 20 November 1883: (Painting, art in general is an enchantment: it is my life. What do I care about the rest! When you do something with all your soul and all that is noble in you, you always end up finding a kindred spirit that understands you. You don’t need an army of them, but isn’t that just what an artist should seek for!)

507 Joachim Gasquet, “Ce qu’il m’a dit…” in Conversations, op. cit., 153 : (Between you and me, I mean between what makes your personality and mine, there lies the world, the sun… what moves… what we see in common… Our garments, our flesh, the reflections… There is the material in which I must dig in.)


Greenberg, the great champion of modernism, spent time thinking about the limits of modernism and its margins: beginnings and endings, especially as he had to witness the successive blows that gradually called the modernist edifice into question. The defining and critical roles of Pissarro, and especially Cézanne, at the onset of modernism, and the ‘de-defining’ roles of Rauschenberg and Johns played, as we have seen, quite a part in the general story of modernism and what came after. I would now like to point in two directions. 1. Cézanne’s and Pissarro’s art, as well as Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s art were not only misapprehended by modernism for the fact that the dimension of dialogue inherent in much of their works was omitted. 2. These four artists’ oeuvres resist in many ways a modernist approach—and, despite their undeniable contributions to the modern epoch, these works, and the ideological positions that underpin them, offer a direct critique of modernism. One might, therefore, deduct from this strange-sounding paradox that there is an anti-modern, or pre-modern dimension within modernism. There is a simple reason for this:

*Pluralism or Dialogues vs. Modernism*


\[511\] For a study specifically focused on Cézanne’s work in relation to different stripes of modernism, see Joyce Medina, *Cézanne and Modernism: The Poetics of Painting*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1995).
seduced by the promises of a glowing future held by a historicist version of history, could also be very critical of what he saw as certain excesses of early modernism at the hand of some one like Huysmans, for instance, who, well before Greenberg, also over-simplified the evolution of modern art.) In one of his latest works, Todorov concludes on a note that questions the process of simplification of “our habits of writing history.” These habits—from Huysmans, or Bernard, to Greenberg—often produce the impression of a linear evolution whereby the practice of painting eventually reaches out its essence, or its own truth—by being stripped of whatever is inessential to its true practice. But, objects Todorov,

En réalité, le recul que nous a donné la centaine d’années écoulée depuis le début de la transformation permet de voir que cette évolution-là est illusoire. L’art représentatif ne disparaît pas, loin de là, et les pratiques artistiques en question sont simultanées, non successives…. La caractéristique de la peinture du XXème siècle ne réside pas—quoi qu’en aient pensé les théoriciens de telle ou telle école d’avant-garde—en ce qu’une norme nouvelle remplace l’ancienne, mais en ce que plusieurs normes, radicalement différentes,

512 Thierry de Duve has this interesting expression to characterize Huysmans’s version of modernism: “a modernism clothed in nineteenth-century garb, a modernism made of a reflexiveness that rubs history against the grain (à rebours, the reference to Huysmans is deliberate) all the better to go forward.” In “Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism,” trans. Rosalind Krauss, The Duchamp Effect, eds. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996), 126
Indeed, there is a fundamental difference between what modernism does to painting, and what these four artists did (and what two of them continue to do) to modern painting—in this sense, looking at the works by these four artists offers fuel for a critique of modernism: modernism proceeds by exclusion—when it lays out a definition, or a label, it edits out what does not belong to that label. For a pithy critique of the notion of “labels” one can also turn to Johns who once said:

> Once a term is set, everybody tries to relate anybody they can to it because there are so few terms in the art world. Labeling is a popular way of dealing with things.\(^\text{514}\)

Johns had little more patience for “labels” than Pissarro and Cézanne did for “formulas.” It was a trait of brilliancy on Johns’s part to turn one of the principles of modernism on its head by demonstrating through his art that the experience of flatness could be reached in painting—not just through abstraction—but by painting representations of objects that were rigorously flat, and were all about surfaces: flags.

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\(^{513}\) Tzvetan Todorov, Éloge de l’Individu : Essai sur la peinture flamande de la Renaissance, (Paris : Adam Biro, 2000), 226. (My emphasis.)

figures, targets, letters. The flatness quality was thus transferred from the painting support (flatness of the canvas) to the object depicted and back: Johns could then play an anti-modernist tune (emulate an object through its representation to the near point of perfection, and—ghastly word to the ears of a modernist—to the point of creating an ‘illusion’) while remaining strictly (and slightly perversely) within the boundaries of a modernist practice—painting flat on flat. The artist, painting Flag, [Illustration Dossier G]—followed by quantities of flags—had produced a powerful illusionary effect while sticking to modernist rules. As Johns continued to work on his Flags, however, a most interesting process happened: it was as if these flags gradually metamorphosed into the artist’s own signature. This universally recognizable sign—the sign that stands for the nation of the United States of America—hadn’t just become Jasper Johns’s Flag (1954-5) [ill. 121]; in other words, it hadn’t just been appropriated by an artist as a “motif” (as Cézanne would say): it had become Jasper Johns’s own sign—or his signature. Flag embodied both the sign of a nation and the signature of one individual: literally, all in one. Covered with scribbling, the flags lose their ‘flag-ness’ as they carry layers of marks of the individual who signs, sometimes more than once, these flags. Thus, Johns showed how limited and narrow the modernist conception of “flatness” that oriented so much of the thinking around modern art had been: just like Duchamp’s famous Door, (or Rauschenberg’ Interview) Johns’s flat painting could be ‘opened’ and ‘closed’ to representation at the same time. They also functioned within the gap between universalism (a sign
everybody recognizes) and individualism. Here was an artist critiquing through his art the bedrock of a period of art criticism in which he happened to live, and showing, through his artistic work, how to overcome the pretense for flatness to “be an end product at all.” Artists occasionally offer through their art a critique of art history that is more powerful than any art historical argument could be. This was the case, not only with Flag, but with much of Rauschenberg’s work during the ‘50s and ‘60s. In turn, through these two artists, it will be possible to look back at the two French artists to test in comparison the critique they addressed—before the time—to the art historical construct that ‘made sense’ out of their contributions. We might attend then an interesting other dialogue here, between art and art history: what Cézanne, Pissarro, Johns and Rauschenberg had to say, respectively, and retro-actively, to Rewald and Greenberg.

* Stretching the Limits: Painting Does “More Than One Thing”

While modernism simplifies, excludes, trims, and edits, these four artists, inversely, have proceeded by inclusion and complication. They, each individually, and each pair distinctly, have been interested in stretching the limits of their art by looking

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515 Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria, op. cit., 82. Steinberg mentions another brilliant example of the same process that perverted one of the essential creeds of modernism in Dubuffet’s Modern Olympia that consists in a painting of a female figure that looks as if it has been rolled over by a machine. In this case, Dubuffet paints, not so much a flat object, as a flattened figure.

516 Johns quoted by Crichton, op. cit., 76.

517 Thierry de Duve put it in the form of a euphemism: “It is not devoid of value judgments, hierarchies, and exclusions.” This is the least one can say. See Kant After Duchamp, op. cit., (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996), 208.
towards other elements, other people that could be brought into their own narratives, thus always looking at ways of enlarging ranges of subject matters (Pissarro; Rauschenberg) or deepening their interests in pictorial and technical procedures (Cézanne; Johns). While doing this they were led to exchange their perspectives with each other. Both Johns and Rauschenberg went further than any one in this inclusive way of producing art during the ‘50s and ‘60s by even daring to bring into play other forms of art—performance, dance, music, cinema—[Illustration Dossiers L and M] whose mixture with painting was, as we saw in the second section of this essay, strictly prohibited by modernism proper. The main difference between Johns and Rauschenberg and other numerous performance artists of the ‘50s or ‘60s, is that they both have insisted, each in different ways, in marrying the practice of performance with the practice of painting (Johns more through the detour of language, puns and wits; Rauschenberg, through actual physical engagement with the world of the stage). To this extent only, it becomes more difficult to compare their works with those of the two French artists—although the latter two became fascinated in other unorthodox technical procedures. Namely, Pissarro and Cézanne became concerned in figuring out how one can paint forms without delineating them with contours. This was an anti-Kantian procedure: the form—understood as Kant, unlike Greenberg, understood it, i.e., the design, or the drawing of things—just disappeared, seemed to evaporate.

518 Of course, when it comes to trying out ‘unorthodox’ techniques, both Johns and Rauschenberg shared with Pissarro and Cézanne a deep commitment to exploring uncovered artistic processes. It is impossible to write a history of the major technical inventions in the 20th century without emphasizing the critical inputs Johns has had in ‘reinventing’ the technique of encaustic, and Rauschenberg in his innovative use of transfers of newsprint material on canvas.
Instead of drawing the contours of the forms of their objects, both artists began around the late ’60s-early ‘70s to create their forms by leaving an ultra-thin furrow of unpainted matter leaving threads of bare canvas visible. These lines, by contrast, give a certain relief to the object depicted. This highly unorthodox practice is visible through X-ray photographs of works by both artists executed while they were working together throughout the 1870s.\textsuperscript{519} These thin furrows of unpainted canvas hug the forms of the objects (trees, houses, etc) in the picture by raising barely visible masses of paint that define themselves through a line of non-matter. Generating volumes of paint by segmenting them from one another through lines of unpainted canvas—a practice that became more and more obvious with the late Cézanne, especially in his still-lives\textsuperscript{520}—hardly counts as a modernist gesture. More studies remain to be done about this interesting technical discovery that suggests that these early modern artists were far from reconciling the practice of their pictorial profession with the flat surfaces of their paintings, but were, in fact, doing the exact opposite: painting in three dimensions. Even though they may not have been as ‘radical’ as

\textsuperscript{519} I am most grateful to Charles de Couessin, of the Département de Conservation des peintures du Musée du Louvre, who invited me to look at the X-Rays taken of all the works by Pissarro and Cézanne when they were being transferred from the Jeu de Paume to the Musée d’Orsay.
\textsuperscript{520} On the subtle ambiguities of the physical presence of Cézanne’s “touch,” see Shiff, “Cézanne’s Physicality: the Politics of Touch,” in The Language of Art History, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 129-180. Also see Shiff’s essay “Apples and Abstraction,” in a forthcoming exhibition catalogue on Impressionist Still-Lives: Shiff, borrowing the phrase from Barnett Newman, emphasizes that Cézanne’s apples ended up looking like “super-apples,” or even like “cannonballs.” One can safely assume that what could be called—prolonging the cannonball metaphor—the “loaded physicality” of Cézanne’s apples very much stems from the technical procedures he explored with Pissarro back in the 1870s. A larger inquiry remains to be done (that would require the collaborations of the conservation labs of several museums) to attempt to understand how far back this procedure can be traced in the works of both artists. It is also probable (although not certain) that their study of Courbet’s works may have been a source of reflection leading to this procedure.
their American peers to come, in retrospect the introduction of this practice had vast
corsequences. The autonomization of a pictorial mass (detached from its drawing, or
from its form in the Kantian sense) would be re-explored by Picasso, Léger and
Matisse in different ways. Finally, the difference between painting objects in three-
dimensions on a canvas, and inserting three-dimensional objects inside a canvas (as
Johns and Rauschenberg did) in retrospect may not seem that wide—or to put it more
graphically, the difference between painting apples that look like “cannonballs” and
inserting two actual balls between two canvases is not so great. Symmetrically,
Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s explorations in the field of drawing led to complementary
formal results to those they established in painting. As first observed by Brettell and
Lloyd in their groundbreaking study of Pissarro’s corpus of drawings at the
Ashmolean Museum, the artistic problem of defining the contours and delineations of
objects was, there too, at the core of their concerns while working together. Brettell
and Lloyd observe in a drawing known as Study of Female Peasants Gleaning, “a
radical development in the drawing of the human figure.” They describe the
delineation of the figures in this drawing as “modular” and thus characterize the
importance of this kind of formal innovation—that corroborates the findings of
Charles de Couessin as far as the treatment of the delineations of objects are
considered in painting. Brettell and Lloyd explain:

521 Richard Brettell and Christopher Lloyd, A Catalogue of the Drawings by Camille Pissarro at the
verso.
The forms are built up with a series of short lines joining one another at sharp angles and the polygonal shapes that they assume are accentuated by the placement of the figures either parallel to the picture plane or at right angles to it. Indeed, this almost geometric method of drawing permeates the background of compositions, in addition to governing the figures, and is, in turn, related to the graphic work of Cézanne dating from this same period. 522

The procedure observed by Brettell and Lloyd leads to a further observation. The reflection that animates Pissarro and Cézanne (both in painting and in drawing) leads, in both cases, the process of drawing with chopped segmented lines, or painting with no drawn lines to an opening up of the formal boundaries between background and figure. The figure “exists within, and merges with, the structured confines of her setting.” 523 Both Pissarro and Cézanne will keep the lesson of this practice (what Brettell and Lloyd call “the significance of the polygonal style”) throughout their lives, and one may well see in these findings another parallel with the ultimate works by Cézanne where background and objects occasionally seem to fuse within each other.

* Music Boxes

522 Ibid.
523 Ibid.
Let us now look at two brief examples of works by Johns and Rauschenberg that will stress analogous dialogues between the two artists. Out of the four objects that survived an act of near-complete self-motivated destruction of his oeuvre as a beginning artist, in 1954524, a rare survivor is an extraordinary looking Construction with Toy Piano, 1954, (now at the Kunstmuseum, Basel.) [Ill. 183; see Ill. Dossier L] This object has taken on a signification it clearly could not have had when it was created, i.e. that of a vestige, or a relic of some disaster that struck and destroyed a whole ensemble of objects. This is perhaps partly what has led some critics to see in this early piece “a romantic, melancholy quality about it, even a hint of self-pity,” or “the nostalgic quality of a personal souvenir.”525 Another critic, less charitably, saw in this “virtual cabinet piece” “a predilection for compartmental divisions, stained surfaces, and nostalgic references.”526 There may be an element of nostalgia, or of melancholy about this slightly beaten up object, with its layers of collages peeling off the worn out wooden surface of this toy piano. This piece, however, possesses another major attribute that is not always mentioned: it makes noises when you press its keys. It is (or was) a real toy piano. Its aesthetic impact on the audience is

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524 “One day in 1954, Jasper Johns, then 24 years old, methodically destroyed all the work in his possession. This was the first of several acts of self-destruction by an artist who would eventually be known for his skill and daring at rebuilding his past.” Michael Crichton, Jasper Johns, (New York: Abrams, 1977 and 1994), 29. Johns thus characterized this act of auto-iconoclasm by saying that he wanted to destroy some idea about himself. See Mark Stevens with Cathleen McGuigan, “Super Artist: Jasper Johns, Today’s Master,” Newsweek 90 no. 17 (October 24, 1977): 66-79; republished in Writings, 165.


therefore multi-layered. This is exactly how Johns himself commented upon this piece:

I was interested in the idea of a painting that did more than one thing, that had another aspect. That was the reason for the sound. 527

Johns, in fact, throughout his artistic career has been interested in paintings that would not do just one thing. This work in many ways announces some of the artist’s interests that will substantially orientate the rest of his career. In 1960, for instance, he was referring to John Cage’s multi-dimensional and non-harmonic music in these terms:

I’m especially interested in the music of John Cage. I would like to do some experimenting with the relationship between his free-form sound and free-form art. 528

There could not be a better way to couch what analogy between different forms of art is about. We will see later how one can draw the same concept of “analogy” to compare the works by Cézanne and Pissaro with the works by Tintoretto or Veronese—whom they both admired, yet who are seldom ever mentioned in

527 Michael Crichton, op. cit., 76. (My emphasis.)
relationship to Cézanne and Pissarro. Shortly after Duchamp’s death, Johns published a short homage titled “Thoughts on Duchamp.” In this text, Johns not only pays a touching tribute to some one who had a great impact on his and Rauschenberg’s approach to art practices, but he also, via Duchamp, exposes how central the concept of inter-subjectivity has become:

Shortly after his death, there were those interviews published in two art magazines. Toward the end of one, Duchamp said: “I’m nothing else but an artist, I’m sure, and delighted to be.” The other ended, “Oh yes. I act like an artist although I’m not one.” There may be some malice in these contradictory self-descriptions or, perhaps, an unwillingness to consider any definition as being final. A fascination with the tentativeness of all states-of-affairs was reflected by Marcel’s indifferent manipulation of values and definitions attached to works of art. He was the first to see or say that the artist does not have full control of the aesthetic virtues of his work, that others contribute to the determination of quality.\footnote{Jasper Johns, “Thoughts on Duchamp,” in “Feature: Marcel Duchamp 1887-1968,” ed. Cleve Gray, \textit{Art in America} 57 no. 4 (July-August 1969): 31. Republished in \textit{Writings}, 22. (My emphasis.)}

This “tentativeness of all states-of-affairs” admirably characterizes what these four artists share in common: Pissarro with his chameleon-like quality (the fact that he was perceived as potentially drawing inspiration upon so many different forms of art);
Cézanne with his quasi-schizophrenic feature that applied to both his character and his art (he was some one who at times loved to shock for the sake of it; and at times, could prove to be sweet, generous and kind. His art very much combined these mixed qualities: intermittently switching from a set of open forms readily taking in the outside world to a set of quasi-solipsistic marks left there for the artist’s own usage only—for his eyes only.) In parallel with the former aspect of Cézanne’s work, Rauschenberg with his openness to grasp, or gulp down the over-flow of the world that passes by, and let the whole thing pour in and impregnate the surfaces of his wider and wider canvases; Johns in his ever-questioning mode of every state of everything he paints, every mark he produces, and constantly re-examining the links between the signs he creates and their referential—or between the signs themselves—constantly articulating a vertical and a horizontal procedure, as in crossword-puzzles at which he is frightfully good. Johns incidentally owns Rauschenberg’s Knee Pad, 1956, in which an actual crossword puzzle is included. One finds another crossword puzzle in the poster Rauschenberg drew to announce an exhibition of his work at the Dwan Gallery, in Los Angeles, in 1962. These crossword puzzles not only remind the observer of Johns’s Alphabet series, but they articulate two orthogonal axis in the form of a game; they keep you guessing. The answers are not obvious at first, and put together the answers of a crossword puzzle do not come up to any narrative, any global answer. As such, they offer a perfect metaphor for both Rauschenberg’s and Johns’s works. [See Illustration Dossier C]. Yet, the irony of all this is that there is
nothing tentative about the results that these four artists have produced: they appear perfectly in control of these mechanisms that involve chance, random order, incoherent or apparently senseless juxtapositions. The language they articulate, even if, at first, it doesn’t produce (much) sense, is still very much structured as a language. Both artists are indeed fascinated by what the language does: whether it be through performative expressions such as “I swear” (by Rauschenberg) to which “Liar” (by Johns) seems to be answering back, or whether it be through the inclusion of puzzles, puns, “rebuses” or any such language-oriented devices.

The text by Johns on Duchamp (quoted above) specifies a few of these points by addressing: 1. a concern for what Johns calls “the shifting weight of things” and “the instability of our definitions and measurements.” 2. this shift of our definitions is linked with another factor of creation, largely ignored before Duchamp, which is that the meanings of works of art is partly determined by others. What Johns and Rauschenberg did was to seek out a significant other who could readily attribute meaning to the works they would create. As Duchamp put it in his provocative fashion: “It is the spectator who makes the pictures.”

No one had stressed with more cogency (nor more humor) the importance of the role of the viewer than Duchamp did. In the case of Johns, it is the spectator (turned auditor) who can visually play the tune. Going back to the very first questions I raised in the first page of Section I—what about the role of the viewer when the viewer happens to be

530 Quoted by Crichton, op. cit., 83.
another artist?—these receive an unexpected answer with Duchamp—whose legacy is particularly vivid in the works of both Johns and Rauschenberg. The role of the viewer becomes so considerable that it may feel almost uncomfortable for her or him to carry suddenly so much responsibility—indeed, many viewers refuse the role devolved to them by these artists. It may therefore require someone with an artist or an artistic mind to step in the shoes of this super-viewer invented by Duchamp. No one expressed this sentiment more candidly, and more subtly than Leo Steinberg.

Steinberg describes his reaction when he first set eyes on Johns’s works. He explains that his reaction was “normal:” he disliked what he saw. Then, dwelling on his initial reaction, he began to wonder how he could evaluate what he saw, indeed taking his role of viewer as seriously as he was challenged to. In other words, he began to look at this work as an artist would. He explained:

> I am challenged to estimate the aesthetic value of, say, a drawer stuck into a canvas. (Drawer, 1957), [Ill. 161]. But nothing I’ve ever seen can teach me how this is to be done. I am alone with this thing, and it is up to me to evaluate it in the absence of available standards.\(^ {531}\)

Feeling alone, one looks for some one else to find some standards—whatever they be—in order to evaluate this work. This aesthetic experience demands a particular

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\(^ {531}\) Steinberg, Other Criteria, op. cit., 12; quoted by Crichton, ibid., who thus describes Steinberg’s situation: “He expressed anxiety, uneasiness, the feeling of uncertainty about where he stands.”
type of inter-subjectivity—that affords us new standards (necessarily subjective) for measuring, comparing, and evaluating art. The great thing about being two artists working together is that these sets of standards are always readily available: nothing guarantees that they will always match each other, but comparisons is always possible—and it is not therefore up to me alone to produce an esthetic estimation of a particular work. Drawer could offer another metaphor for the gesture the viewer is invited to make towards the work of art: pull the drawer (in hope of drawing the meaning out of it)—except, of course, that the drawer is stuck and will not open: nothing comes. All in this painting resists the investigative visual and mental scrutiny of the viewer in front of the canvas; the meaning (and the drawer) remain inside the work, or perhaps within the mind of the viewer attempting (physically or morally) to extract something out of this picture.

Steinberg is right: the absence of rules or standards makes one feel desperately alone—after all, standards and rules are conditioned by the fact that their validity is applicable to all. Breaking the rules is in essence walking out of a consensus; finding oneself alienated from others—the rules are not for me; they are for others; therefore, I am not for others (I quit). It is in the absence of rules that artists feel perhaps all a greater need for an other who can be there with them, and confirm (or invalidate) the way their work is progressing beyond rules. This is very much what Pissarro and Cézanne, and Johns and Rauschenberg, discovered in each other: rule-breakers who
found themselves a little alienated from others, who belonged without belonging. Each of them found that what the other had to say (through his works) was worth listening to, (or viewing) because it radically stood out of the conventional mode of making paintings. This was certainly the case with Rauschenberg and Johns, who, furthermore, found another pair of rule-breakers also ready to attempt everything in other media: John Cage, and Merce Cunningham.

The fact that Construction with a Toy Piano [Ill. 183] is one of the very first pieces known by Jasper Johns carries a certain portentous—albeit accidental—function within Johns’s works. A detail in this work that seems to have been overlooked already points out discretely to the beginning of the collaborative friendship between Johns and Rauschenberg. The same detail also points to a multitude of possible links it carries. Alongside the right edge of this piece, just above a red vertical rectangle, is one of the twenty or so labels that have been glued on to the old batted wooden surface of this object. This label reads: ‘HOTEL BILBAO,’ one then finds the address of the hotel and its location: TETUAN (Marruecos)—in English, Tetwan, the capital of Spanish Morocco. Tetwan is a city where Rauschenberg and Twombly stayed as they traveled together through Morocco between November 1952 and February 1953 in company of Paul Bowles whom they had met in Tangier. (Bowles was a writer and friend of John Cage). The same detail is, in fact, the very ‘subject-matter’—multiplied ten-fold—of a piece executed slightly earlier by Rauschenberg.
known as Untitled [Hotel Bilbao] [Ill. 182] most likely executed during the first half of 1953.\(^\text{532}\) A few months later, Rauschenberg and Johns met. Lilian Tone recounted the details of this meeting in her precise chronology of Johns’s work.\(^\text{533}\) [See also Appendix Two: Comparative Chronology of Rauschenberg and Johns.] One evening Johns ran into Suzi Gablik, an artist and art historian, who was accompanied by two people: a writer and Bob Rauschenberg whom she had known from Black Mountain College. Johns and Rauschenberg were bound to find a lot in common in each other. Two impoverished southern artists, they both were aspiring to an odd combination: to do serious art, while shaking and laughing at all serious rules about how to make art. In this, their common horizon was exactly parallel to that of Pissarro and Cézanne in 1861. In fact, even today, it is striking to notice how both Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, each individually, enjoy a good laugh. Humor was an essential factor in the modes of communication between Johns and Rauschenberg—and indeed, Pissarro and Cézanne, as Pissarro’s Portrait de Cézanne testifies. Untitled (Hotel Bilbao), Rauschenberg’s collage, was brought back by the artist to New York, and Johns therefore saw it shortly after their meeting. Rauschenberg’s collage can be folded. A horizontal sheet of paper is glued on top of a vertical piece of paperboard. The horizontal sheet of paperboard extends beyond the left edge of its paperboard support, and the extension can be folded back. The sheet of paper holds two rows of

\(^{532}\) Walter Hopps dates it to c. 1952, although given that Rauschenberg stayed in Tetwan from the very end of 1952 to the February 1953, it is more likely to have been executed in early 1953 before Rauschenberg and Twombly returned to Rome in February of the same year—and finally to New York.

\(^{533}\) Lilian Tone, “Chronology,” Jasper Johns, MoMA, 1996, 123.
HOTEL BILBAO labels: five labels in each row. The two rows are actually separated by a red line that reminds us of the red rectangle in Construction Toy Piano. However, the two rows of labels are interrupted by a blank in the middle: two labels on each side are missing. They’ve gone—although when the sheet of paper is folded back, it covers the blank and one no longer notices the ‘missing’ labels… One of these missing labels, however, can be found back on Construction Toy Piano. How exactly this process took place—how Jasper Johns got hold of one of these labels is not known. What is certain, however, is that this small example of the type of dialogues that immediately began to take place between these two artists testifies to the rich, playful and fun games that both artists were interested in at the time. Mutual respect for each other’s capacity to produce “real art” was accompanied with a definite sense of freedom and shared energy. Jasper Johns later on recalled these early days of interchange with Robert Rauschenberg:

Bob was the first person I knew who was a real artist. Everything was arranged to accommodate that fact.  

Everything also seemed to accommodate the fact that these two artists would bond together as two “real artists” reinventing new rules for the art game.

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534 Mark Stevens with Cathleen McGuigan, op. cit. Writings, 165.
Another good example of the same multiple usages found in the same work of art (art doing more than one thing) can be experienced in *Tango*, 1955, [Ill. 184]. Besides its intoxicatingly beautiful, shivering blue surface, there are at least two aspects that retain the attention of the viewer/auditor in this work of art. First, the painting is another, though more discrete construction that incorporates a music box fixed behind the painting which can be wound with an exposed key that comes through the canvas. The viewer is, therefore, (theoretically) solicited to intervene—and draw the sound out of it and hear what the painting ‘has to say.’ The tune that is played, however, is no longer the original tune of this hidden music box. Johns commented on this slight twist of sounds: “The music box played *Silent Night*, I fixed it to go ‘ping—ting—click’ instead.”

Another dimension of this work is embedded in its title: *Tango* is also the name of the famous Argentinian dance and rhythm, of which, incidentally, Jasper Johns continues to be an aficionado. Through its title, the painting suggests a toing and froing that corresponds precisely to the movement of the potential viewer/listener who gets close to the surface in order to turn the key and listen to this ‘blue’ piece; as he or she does just this, he/she loses ‘sight’ of the big picture and is soon prompted to go back to absorb the painting properly. Crichton summarized neatly the dynamic set in motion by the artist: “The painting provokes an interaction with the observer: it takes two to tango.”

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536 Ibid.
The manipulation of the sounds produced by the keys of the piano can be read as a discrete homage by Johns to two people—two people who incidentally counted just as much for Bob Rauschenberg himself, though in different ways and for different reasons: 1. John Cage who was known to have interfered in various ways with the strings of his piano, for instance, in order to transform utterly the sounds produced by each key; 2. Marcel Duchamp with his sound sculpture _Bruit Secret_ (With Hidden Noise) [Ill. 180], which the artist thus described:

WITH HIDDEN NOISE is the title for this assisted readymade: a ball of twine between two brass plates joined by four long screws. Inside the ball of twine Walter Arensberg added secretly a small object that makes a noise when you shake it. And to this day I don’t know what it is, nor, I imagine, does anyone else.\(^{537}\)

In turn, it is difficult to imagine that Rauschenberg did not have Johns’s _Tango_ in mind when he created his own _Tango_, though in a different medium. Rauschenberg’s _Tango_ was a _solo_ performance staged at the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo on November 20, 1964\(^{538}\). The piece consisted in Rauschenberg drinking a quart of milk

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\(^{538}\) This was not the only time that Rauschenberg seemed to respond to a piece by Johns by borrowing its title and transferring it into a totally different medium; see for instance _Shades_, 1964, an editioned sculpture-book published by ULAE that used the same title (in plural) as Jasper Johns’s _Shade_, 1959—a gray painting on canvas upon which a ‘real’ window shade had been laid down on the canvas. The piece by Rauschenberg consisted of six printed square Plexiglas sheets. Five of these could be picked
while a piece of music by Junosuke was playing. By 1964, of course, the ‘tango’ between Johns and Rauschenberg had broken. There was a definite sadness in the moving simplicity of this solo gesture—the milk possibly symbolizing the substance of life, or ‘innocence’—a term Rauschenberg used to describe White Paintings [Ill. 143]. Trisha Brown with whom Rauschenberg collaborated on several theater performance pieces since 1979 thus described Rauschenberg’s taste for innocence:

He cultivates an openness related to innocence that accompanies him to the studio. A clean slate approaching a clean slate. He arrives fresh at the scene of the accident he’s about to create.\(^{539}\)

There was also above all a sense of contradiction between the lonely position of this solo performer and the title of the piece. A week later, Rauschenberg while on tour with the Merce Cunningham Company was invited to a television interview by Yoshiaki Tono, a mutual critic and friend of Johns and Rauschenberg. During the interview, twenty questions were being addressed to the artist. To each question, the artist answered, not verbally (which if he answered in his native tongue would have remained incomprehensible to most of the Japanese television audience) but artistically. To each question, Rauschenberg proceeded in applying some paint, or

adding an object on to a large Japanese folding screen. Three friends of the artist, Deborah Hay, Alex Hay and dancer Steve Paxton were invited by Rauschenberg to contribute anything they wanted to this performance. The result of this four-hour performance became the combine titled Gold Standard.

Acts of active collaboration are, therefore, at the heart of the dynamics of the works by both artists. Johns stated this point clearly:

I wanted to suggest an active physical relationship to the pictures. In the targets, one could stand back or one might go very close and lift the lids and shut them. In Tango, to wind the key and hear the sound, you had to stand relatively close to the painting, too close to see the outside shape of the picture.  

Trisha Brown encapsulated the essence of collaboration as far as Rauschenberg is concerned in an interestingly detailed summary:

Collaboration is cocultivation. It’s the merging of two dreams into one. It’s life and death in the aesthetic zone. One entity makes an incursion into the possibilities/plans of the other—the choreographic into the visual, let’s say,

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540 Jasper Johns quoted by Crichton, ibid., 32.
541 This expression conjures up a particular sculpture by Rauschenberg titled Man with Two Souls.
and/or vice versa. Only desire or need will cause the incursion, and it will be bracing or delicate or serendipitous in the telling. Collaboration is a sleight of hand located in the mind, where both participants remain vigilant to their separate disciplines as they cantilever their expectations in suspense of the result. In our collaborations, Bob does not operate in a vacuum, but effects the development process with me.542

Naturally, the type of dynamics between the two co-artists who shared a studio on Pearl Street was different. Trisha Brown’s text tells us a lot, however, about the ‘style’ of collaboration in which Rauschenberg engaged. Rauschenberg and Johns may not have held separate disciplines when they shared a studio, but they certainly cultivated very different and individual ways of painting, or practicing art. One may be certain, in this sense, that both artists were vigilant to keep to each of their separate ways of working—while, at the same time, living in suspense of what a moment of interaction, a remark made, a question asked, might produce in the other’s work.

Rauschenberg, just about at the time (or a little before) he met Johns, had also created an object that could also be described as “polyvalent.”543 This was a free-standing old used crate made out of thick wood, about 11” high. Its title definitely resonates with

543 I borrow the term from Richard Field, op. cit. Even though Field applies the term to Johns, I feel that this is, indeed, one of the many characteristics that are shared by both artists’ works.
Johns’s two pieces executed slightly later: it is called Music Box (Elemental Sculpture) [Ill. 181].

It retained some traces of paint. This small crate is open on one side. All the other five sides carry long, tough nails that have been hammered through every single wall of the box, thus creating strangely rhythmical interaction of aggressive piques that all point to the empty center of the box. More accurately, it is almost empty. These nails form unequal rows inside the box, and thus hold three free small stones that seem to ‘live’ in this box, almost like birds. (There is also a small feather that looks as if it has been stuck on the background wall.) The point is that Music Box too can be used as a music instrument. This music box actually belongs to Jasper Johns. As I was once inspecting it rather closely, and with deference to the object, Jasper, visibly amused, picked it up in front of me and began to shake it. The three stones began to rattle through the nails, and the simultaneous shocks of the nails and the wood created a very unusual noise. Then Jasper told me that when Duchamp first saw and heard Rauschenberg’s Music Box, his first words were: “This is a song I have heard before.” This characteristically facetious response on Duchamp’s part evokes the inter-subjective kinship between Rauschenberg’s piece (in Jasper Johns’s possession) and Duchamp’s own piece, With a Hidden Noise. These works are not only made inter-subjectively—i.e., with the relationship of one person to another in mind—they are wholly dependent on what Crichton called “the function of the observer” (here the listener as well.) This brings to mind another brief remark by Pissarro himself: “Où il
n’y a pas un observateur, rien à faire.” The above examples all point to the fact that the making of these works of art embodies what Levinas has called “the transcendence of the “for-the-other” initiating the “ethical subject,” which initiates the entre-nous.” In fact, when Jasper Johns handed this object to me with the intent that I should ‘try it,’ I was so taken aback at first that I did not dare “shake this work of art” to test its sound effect. As a museum curator, I was being conditioned by the expectations we all have that works of art are “immanent:” they repose in themselves, for themselves, self-contained, possessing their own meaning and truth. They are not supposed to be “for-the-other”—to be given or passed around to some one.

* Liberation

Clearly none of these works—even the maculated blue surface of Tango—fit nicely within the idiom of high modernism. Another major distinction between the modernist charge and these four artists is that there is a certain alienating force at work within modernism: artists through modernism are not necessarily aware of being modernists, or they think they are practicing their art in a certain way, but in fact they are serving the cause of modernism for an entirely different reason. We saw the case of Cézanne who thought he was painting deep, but who, in fact, according to the modernist narrative, was unconsciously participating to the grand logic scheme of

544 CP/JBH, I, 286
545 Levinas, *On Thinking-of-the-Other: entre nous*, op. cit., xi.
reconciling the practice of painting with the flatness of its support.\textsuperscript{546} Cézanne’s own consciousness of his own practice was therefore alien—and irrelevant—to the course of history. This process of alienation is all the more ironic as these four figures stood out to liberate themselves through their art—and liberate their art through themselves.

We have already established that through its mega narrative, modernism suppresses almost all possibilities for any artist to have recourse to freedom, unless the determination they choose to enact for their own work happens to coincide with the particular historical moment they embody: any great artist operates by enacting the role that was devolved to him/her by history. In dire contrast, one of the factors that brings the forms of art, so distinct from each other, of these four artists together is the fact that their art practices were oriented towards, and motivated by a certain ideal of liberty (and liberation.) Cézanne, for instance, saw himself as something like the Zorro of modern art when he took upon himself to petition militantly to the Minister of Fine Arts Nieuwerkerke and demand the legitimate claim of all his peers to have the right to express themselves and show their art. This claim, wherein the two artists recognized and supported each other, remained of vast importance for Cézanne. Later in the 1870s, as Richard Brettell has shown, it was with the encouragements of Cézanne and Guillaumin that Pissarro was ready to abandon the impressionist group, as these three artists felt that it was being a little too soft. Brettell thus describes the alternative exhibition system chosen by Pissarro and Cézanne:

\textsuperscript{546} Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” \textit{op. cit.}, 89.
Together with his friends Paul Cézanne and Armand Guillaumin he had joined a frankly anti-bourgeois Union of artists founded by Alfred Meyer, with whose politics he sympathized. It was Cézanne who finally convinced Pissarro to withdraw from the Union exhibition and to join forces with the Impressionists, a decision that seems to have been made largely because the Union artists were not of a uniformly high standard.  

Cézanne had this very lucid remark whereby he saw a direct correlation between the liberation of the artistic career and the French revolution: “il a fallu la révolution pour qu’on redécouvre la nature.” In a way, Cézanne and Pissarro hit it off in the 1860s in recognizing in each other a militant-like determination to further liberate artistic practices. Not only were they encouraging each other to dispel the weight of the past tradition, especially as it had been misconceived by the Académie des Beaux-Arts, but they were also hoping under Pissarro’s aegis to strip the practice of painting in front of nature to its simplest essence, and to do away with what Cézanne would call the “rhetorics” of landscape painting. This was true in two ways: 1. this process of liberation (or “liberté absolue”) would target the shackles of all previous traditions as imposed by the retardataire school system in mid-19th century Paris. This claim soon

548 Conversations, 115.
549 Ibid. : “On arrange… Rousseau, Daubigny, Millet. On compose un paysage, comme une scène d’histoire… Je veux dire, du dehors. On crée la rhétorique du paysage, une phrase, des effets qu’on se passe. La machination de la toile que Dupré, disait Rousseau, lui avait apprisse.” (My emphasis.)
took a very definite political tone with Pissarro whereby liberating one’s sensations while painting in front of nature, and liberating the foundations of society from the weight of its oppressors became one and the same program: “on ne croit plus en l’autorité ou Dieu!” Pissarro exclaimed.\textsuperscript{550} It is not excessive to say that Pissarro’s anarchistic sympathies grew out of his and Cézanne’s fierce opposition to the prevalent cultural and academic system in mid-century France.

Cézanne was more than ready to go along with the first part of this statement—getting rid of all authorities, especially when it applied to the regulations of the art world. Later in life, even though he developed a certain belief in God, it is fair to say that Cézanne believed in God in the same way he painted: in his own unmistakable and unique way.

2. This process of liberation also has to be understood as a liberation from themselves by opening up to others—or by being transcendent in their immanence, as Levinas puts it—, and by questioning every formula into which their art might turn (this, modernism could not comprehend) and by engaging a serious interest in what was least acceptable at the time, not only in terms of artistic practice but also in terms of the people with whom they would associate. This could not be grasped by modernism which, even though it turns the practice of rebelling against tradition into a tradition itself, imposes a particular sense, a particular logic on this tradition of the new: modernism, in the end, takes the figure of a snake biting its own tail. There is, therefore, a contradictory force at the heart of modernism, which was considerably

\textsuperscript{550} CP/JBH, IV, 271.
tested by the daily practice of these four artists, as they worked two-by-two, and as they, each of them in very distinct ways, opened themselves up to numerous others, other interests and other segments of life. What was left out of the modernist story was the fact that these people, as all people, spoke to each other, not only with words, but also through their art. [See Frontispiece Illustration] Modernism pays attention to the development of modern art and articulates the logic that binds these developments. This logic stems from attempts to produce a quasi-organic sense out of the succession of forms and movements adopted by modern art. The logic tends to override the forms of art it is supposed to explicate.

*Modernist Models vs. White Contradictions*

Habermas recalled a radio interview given by Adorno in the 1960s in which the question of the logic (or the ‘model’) presiding over the unfolding of history was at stake:

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In 1967, when RIAS\(^{551}\) called on Adorno to speak on the subject of ‘aesthetic models of the present,’ Adorno responded that the popular concept of model
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\(^{551}\) Habermas is referring to RIAS Berlin, the American Radio Station of West Berlin. Founded by the United States on February 7, 1946 as DIAS (Wire Broadcasting in the American Sector), it soon became known as RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) and was always at the center of the critical opposition between the administrations of East and West Berlin. Never giving in to propaganda, RIAS attempted always to remain faithful to the guidelines of American journalism by producing rational,
was itself the problem. ‘Model’ still suggests the sort of substantive, general, binding orientations that are lost to us in modernity.  

We can take this remark as another confirmation from Adorno, whose teaching assistant Habermas was in the early 1960s, that there is, indeed, something anti-modern about modernism—although, of course, here is a typically modern irony: modernism is inconceivable outside of modernity. This model itself has a logic and critical, objective reports of the ever-volatile situation between the two parts of the ex-capital of Germany during the Cold War.

552 Jürgen Habermas, in an interview with Michael Haller on “What Theories Can Accomplish—and What They Can’t,” in The Past as Future, trans. and ed., Max Pensky, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 103. ‘Modernity’ is clearly distinct from modernism: one could even say, following the thread offered by Habermas and Adorno, that insofar as ‘models’ of thinking tend to have been lost to us in modernity, ‘modernism’ runs counter to modernity.

553 One of the main problems attached to some theories of modern art is that the concept of modernity is often confused with a dating device: “modern” would then simply mean “new” or “recent,” whereas modernity principally is a period that has characterized itself by a general detachment from an uncritical acceptance of traditions, and from heteronomous powers. Modernity is, therefore, equitable with the gradual conquest of autonomy at the hands of individuals. The question is, therefore, not so much when it happened as how it happened for whom: according to different schools of thought, and according to the criteria selected in evaluating the development of autonomy, the modern period can be described as beginning with the Renaissance (this is the usual understanding of modernity held among medievalists, for instance), or it can refer to the period of the Enlightenment and the 18th century whereby the two major democratic systems saw daylight (this is an application of modernity that is prevalent among philosophers, and especially political theoreticians, but also among most cultural historians. In the field of art history, see Thomas Crow, Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995). Finally, modern can also be ascribed to the last century when it then refers to the last chronological moment in the development of art. This is the weakest sense of the term modern, in that it tends not to articulate what makes this recent moment called ‘modern’ specifically and ideologically different from previous moments. See, for instance, Silvio Gaggi, Modern/Postmodern: A Study in Twentieth-Century Arts and Ideas, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 17: “It may be that the term postmodern is unfortunate, for the obvious reason: if modern is used to describe that which relates to the present or the most recent, how can anything (except the future) be postmodern?” (I emphasized the expression “for the obvious reason” as I see nothing obvious there at all myself. The simplest proof of this is that one can very much be part of one’s time and yet hold anti-modern positions. Modern, therefore, does not mean “which relates to the present or most recent.” More to the point, “modern” relates to the consciousness of a difference between the present time and what precedes. As Habermas points out, “aesthetic modernity is characterized by attitudes which find a common focus in a changed consciousness of time.” In this sense, one understands why people at the time of Charlemagne in the
a history that has been abundantly explored.\(^{554}\) When Hans Belting exposed his concept of the end of history of art, he had in mind precisely this moment (contemporaneous with the advent of Rauschenberg and Johns) where the notion of a continuous development, a logically traceable progress, and evolution was finally questioned and brought to an end. In different modes, this notion of a continuous progress was very brought to question by Rauschenberg’s \textit{White Canvases} namely, and following this important moment, by Johns’s \textit{Flag}. This is how Rauschenberg describes his \textit{White Canvases} in a letter, much quoted recently, written to his dealer Betty Parsons:

\begin{quote}
they are large white (1 white as 1 GOD) canvases organized and selected with the experience of time and presented with the innocence of a virgin. Dealing with the suspense, excitement and body of an organic silence, the restriction and freedom of absence, the plastic fullness of nothing, the point a circle begins and ends. they are a natural response to the current pressures of the
\end{quote}


\(^{554}\) The most succinct and efficient reconstruction of the logic that led to modernism, from Vasari to Greenberg, can be found in Hans Belting, \textit{Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte}, (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1983).
faithless and a promoter of intuitional optimism. It is completely irrelevant that I am making them—Today is their creator.\textsuperscript{555}

It seems difficult to me to reconcile these works, and the statement by the artist that accompanied them, with the claim that these can be read as “a newfound engagement with the development logic of modernist painting.”\textsuperscript{556} It is true, of course, that when one reads another statement made by the artist in which these paintings “bear the contradictions that deserve them a place with other outstanding paintings and yet they are not Art because they take you to a place in [sic] painting art has not been. (therefore it is),”\textsuperscript{557} one may legitimately wonder whether this is not a rehearsal of a typical modernist claim to push the game one nudge further. This is very much how Joseph reads in this text a modernist message and he interprets the latter part of this statement especially as a future-oriented statement: not so much “therefore it is” but “therefore it will be.” According to the mechanical wheel of history the present canon cannot (in 1951) accept the transgression committed by Rauschenberg, but in due time, the canon will be reformed and it will accommodate these works. The fact is, however, that Rauschenberg did not write: “therefore it will” but kept it to the present tense: “therefore it is.” If one takes his words seriously, one has to ask how his

\textsuperscript{555} Reproduced in Walter Hopps, (Exh.), Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s, op. cit., 230. As pointed by Branden Joseph, this important letter was inaccurately transcribed by Mary Lynn Kotz, Rauschenberg: Art and Life (New York: Abrams, 1990), 78. For a modernist interpretation of White Canvases, see Branden Joseph, “White on White,” Critical Inquiry, vol. 27 no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 90-121. (I am keeping Joseph’s faithful transcription of this text, although I did not feel that keeping Rauschenberg’s typos would add anything to the text he wrote on these paintings.)

\textsuperscript{556} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{557} Hopps, op. cit., 230.
statement is applicable to the present moment: October 1951. It is singularly difficult to make any sense out of this last statement. The statement takes the form of an odd kind of syllogism: 1. given the contradictions they bear, these works deserve to be seen next to “other outstanding paintings;” [One, therefore, assumes that what these paintings hold in common with other outstanding works is the fact that they bear contradictions.] 2. however, these paintings are not Art, because the point towards which they have directed you is one where painting has never been; [These paintings have exited the realm of art by taking you somewhere else. Where? To the realm of non-art or life?] 3. given that there is a contradiction between Proposition 1 (the major) and Proposition 2 (the minor), and given that contradiction seems to be a condition for great art, Proposition 3 (the conclusion) is that these paintings are great art: “therefore it is.” Rauschenberg, who is not a logician, seemed, however, already seriously intent on articulating his ideas about the passages between art and non-art, or art and life, as he says—in ways that are, however, from a logical standpoint (and therefore, from a modernist point as well) slightly fuzzy. Here, Rauschenberg meets to some extent Pissarro and Cézanne by opening up his art to non-art. He shares with the two French artists the belief that the job of an artist is to be a mere ‘reflector’ (réfléchisseur). The White Paintings lie at the crux of the opposition between art and what lies outside art. Rauschenberg made it very clear when he said that “the whit [white] paintings were open composition by responding to the activity within their

558 Conversations, 135.
reach.” What he has in mind when he refers to this point where these paintings have taken you has, therefore, very little to do with “the developmental logic of modernist painting:” the activity that takes place within the reach of these White Canvases is your own activity as an observer, a by-passer. The point where these paintings have taken you, therefore, is yourselves. Rauschenberg was right: art (at least, visual art) had not gone that way yet—it had already with the practices of Cage and Cunningham. (See Illustration Dossier K and L). “Suspense,” “excitement of an organic silence,” “restriction and freedom of absence,” “the plastic fullness of nothing:” these phrases have little to do with the type of vocabulary that the “development logic” of modernism would convey. As Rauschenberg states, these canvases are inseparable from the “experience of time:” “Today is their creator.” The experience of time Rauschenberg is alluding to is not the kind of “time” that art history manages: the sequential time in which one great artistic moment (or transgression) succeeds another. First of all this experience of time described by the artist is “presented with the innocence of a virgin.” One may assume, therefore, that the artist is referring back to the prime origin of time, to the origin of history, whereby no ‘transgression’ has yet been perpetrated. Secondly, the terms Rauschenberg uses to describe his experience (or your experience) of time in front of these paintings (suspense, excitement, etc.) conjure up a phenomenological experience of time rather than an historicist one. These canvases, after all,

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Rauschenberg tells us, are a *response* and they naturally invite other responses: they invite *others* (“you”) to respond. The reason why these paintings have virtually nothing in common with white monochrome paintings—from Malevich to Manzoni or Ryman\(^{560}\), is because they are not offered as the site of a two-dimensional space where the formal supremacy of the *surface* lies unchallenged. Instead, these works propose to be the site of an encounter: between the primal innocence of a virgin and today (their maker, i.e. us, their viewers, or voyeurs); between the faithless and the optimists; between the fullness of the moment and organic silence; between *me* (the artist) and *you* (viewers whom I am taking to a point where art has not been); between here and there. These *White Canvases* are utterly uninteresting as a formal statement; they are not, however, as far as the site of a meeting is concerned. These works offer the stage where a set of relations to others take place. The others are not represented on these surfaces: they are invoked. Levinas thus defines this type of relationship:

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\text{This bond with the other which is not reducible to the representation of the other, but to his invocation, and in which invocation is not preceded by an understanding, I call *religion*. The essence of discourse is prayer. What distinguishes thought directed toward a thing from a bond with a person is that}
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\(^{560}\)Ryman’s monochrome paintings and Manzoni’s *Achrome* sculpture date to the early ‘60s, i.e. ten years later than Rauschenberg’s *White Canvases*.
in the latter case a vocative is uttered: what is named is at the same time what is called.\textsuperscript{561}

Levinas takes care to warn his readers that he is referring to the word \textit{religion} without referring to the word \textit{God} or the word \textit{sacred}. There is no theological, nor mystical connotation to the formal structure of the meeting with the other which he is interested in analyzing. Instead, Levinas explains what he had in mind with words that, serendipitously, fittingly apply to Rauschenberg’s \textit{White Canvases}:

The object of the meeting is at the same time given to us and \textit{in society} with us, but \textit{without that event of sociality being reducible to any property whatsoever revealed in the given}—without knowledge being able to take precedence over sociality. If the word religion is, however, to indicate that the relation between men, irreducible to understanding, is by that very fact distanced from the exercise of power, but in human faces joins the Infinite—I accept that ethical resonance of the word and all those Kantian reverberations.\textsuperscript{562}

If it is possible to interpret the \textit{White Canvases} in this way—this is, of course, by no means the only possible interpretation, given that by definition these works are open

\textsuperscript{561} Levinas, \textit{op. cit.}, 7.  
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid., 8. (My emphasis.)
to a quasi-infinite number of interpretations since they take us back to ourselves—one
might begin to understand the degree of excitement felt by the artist, and his
(tautological) need to share with the rest of the world this new discovery as some
“emergency” as he put it to Betty Parsons. In turn, Levinas’s interpretation enables us
to shed some light on the then recent religious connotations that some of
Rauschenberg’s titles carried: The Lily White, [Ill. 38], Crucifixion and Reflection,
[Ill. 39], Mother of God, and Trinity. Rauschenberg certainly joins Pissarro’s call: “on
ne croit plus en l’autorité ou en Dieu !” However, the concept of a ‘religion’ without
God (as Levinas outlines it) might offer a good lead to what these paintings are about.

The flatness of the support of these White Canvases is absolutely inconsequential, or
rather, it is consequential only insofar as it mimics the flatness of a mirror. In the
same way as only three years later, Flag was going to offer a parody of modernism,
White Canvases function as a mockery of the modernist enterprise: “the truth of the
lies in our peculiar preoccupation.”\[^{563}\] The actual physical quality of the linen surface
is seldom given much attention by Rauschenberg commentators. There is a good
reason for this: there is nothing to say about it. It is difficult at first to say whether the
canvases in question were not just hung almost straight after having been bought from
the paint supplies store—or whether they were neatly coated with a layer of
innocuous white paint. Just like Jasper Johns would do with Flag, Rauschenberg
pushed the logic of formalism to a point of sheer absurdity by strictly respecting the

\[^{563}\] Rauschenberg to Betty Parsons, in Hopps, op. cit., 230.
rules of its game and applying them to the finest point, thus showing that a performative contradiction lies at the heart of the modernist equation. These canvases covered with a layer of thin, homogeneously applied, white pigment do not conceal the truth of their medium, nor their surfaces. Yet, the result is that the medium seems to have gone: nobody would dream of coming close to these works in order to inspect the finesse or the quality of the formal properties of their medium, the richness of their marks, the subtlety and quality of the pigment. All such formal characteristics have been pulverized and lost within the bland and neutral (almost imperceptible) whiteness of these canvases. The person who perhaps best understood this point was Clement Greenberg himself: he found nothing to say about these works for fourteen years! His silence, however, was ominous. He knew that these works had struck a sensitive nerve at the core of the system he had been advocating.

* Past Art Seen under the Light of the Present

That notion of a logically traceable progress had found its source with Vasari, and culminates with Hegel, before finding a final (and at times, caricatural) repeat in Greenberg. With the gradual erosion of this model—although traces of it are still very alive today—the idea (and ideal) of a form of art that can be precisely defined, and that would feed a type of aesthetic experience that was as clearly definable as the

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564 Up to this point, I follow Joseph’s argument.
works of art in question, was also brought into question. Donald Kuspit has emphasized the fact that with postmodernism came the bankruptcy of the idea of “style.” He too sees the roles of both Rauschenberg and Johns as important factors in the demise of this concept. He describes the postmodernist work of art

… as a conglomerate of styles and materials, as an assemblage that refuses a facile unity. You can see how this would relate to what Rauschenberg does. He, along with Johns, was one of the precursors of Postmodernism. The work of art becomes an irreducible complex of materials, forms and symbols, achieving a mental rather than physical unity, one which is no more than an all-at-once unity, a unity in terms of the work’s fit into existing preconceptions of itself as well as of the life-world, i.e., a unity comprehensible only in terms of the work’s correlation or lack of correlation with an existing mentality. The art means to work directly on the mentality, rather than subliminally or abstractly, as in the case of Modernism.

This is, roughly speaking, what a broad agreement sees as one of the signs of the beginning of post-modernity—how one values or interprets these signs is, however, is not likely to be soon a subject of agreement. I will discuss in the final section where

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some of the excesses of this novel situation (without any particular ‘model’ to follow) have led us. But before addressing a critique of our post-modernity under the light of what an inter-subjective practice of the arts can produce, let us at least reap the benefits of this change. The sudden diversity found in our present artistic and cultural present—a diversity that found a wide opened gate through the art practices of Johns and Rauschenberg in the 1950s and 1960s—may not just lead us forward in wonder of what the future holds for us, but it may also lead us backward with new eyes. Suddenly, the past itself appears, at the light of our more diverse present, less uniform, less simple than modernism had let us expect. Thus Rauschenberg and Johns help us see Pissarro and Cézanne afresh—or, at least, without a ‘model.’ Yves Michaud exposes the same idea:

Cette diversité dans le présent et à l’intérieur de la culture « occidentale » conduit à la redécouverte de la même diversité dans le passé et dans l’espace. Les yeux se sont ouverts sur un passé plus bariolé et moins exclusif qu’on le disait, un passé où il y eut toujours des conflits d’images et d’écoles, avec des phénomènes temporaires de prédominance et d’autres de latence. Le regard s’ouvre aussi sur une diversité géographique qui fut en partie reconnue mais aussitôt méconnue et refoulée dans l’idée du musée imaginaire à la Malraux et dans la précipitation militante de quelques artistes à vouloir partout faire
progresser le modernisme, y compris dans les pays où il n’existait pas et finissait par arriver sous la forme d’un cargo-cult à peine déguisé.  

Jasper Johns developed the same theme pithily:

Old art offers just as good a criticism of new art as new art offers of old.  

This is undeniably one of the gains of this post-modern phase, and, one of the powerful reasons why the inconsequential idea of a return to the past appears undesirable. For now, the impact of this intuition is that it will be possible to address the works, not only of Johns and Rauschenberg, but also of Pissarro and Cézanne and de-simplify their own methods of work: this will be apparent not only with Cézanne whose multifarious works had to be considerably edited in order to fit in the various modernist models, but also with Pissarro who was disparaged by his peers, and possibly too by art historians, for not having retained a consistent “style” throughout his life. The abandon, in part, of the modernist three-story division of Cézanne’s œuvre will not only allow to ask the question of what the nervous and taxing rawness of Cézanne’s youth works meant to his friend Pissarro, but, eventually to the older Cézanne himself; it should also open up new vistas within his still ever-complex and

567 Yves Michaud, op. cit., 28-29.
incoherent-looking, or simply baffling, oeuvre. Even though, Maurice Denis played an important role in setting out the base for a three-fold division of Cézanne’s oeuvre, it should also be remarked that some of his commentaries are surprisingly refreshing and intriguing. Referring precisely to the question—put so pithily by Johns of the useful critical dialogue between old art and contemporary art—Denis thus formulated the problem for Cézanne:

Et c’est ici la caractéristique essentielle de Cézanne. Sa tournure d’esprit, son génie ne lui permettent pas de profiter directement des anciens : il se trouve vis-à-vis d’eux dans une situation analogue à celle où nous l’avons surpris en face de ses contemporains.\(^569\)

In other words, Cézanne deals with Poussin in the same way as he deals with Pissarro. Cézanne enters one form of dialogue or another. What Denis did not mention, however, is the obvious difference between one form of dialogue and the other. The first dialogues take place between Cézanne and dead artists; the second, with living artists. The second sort of dialogues creates continuous responses from the interlocutor; the first one does not. However, when he says, for instance, “I did not imitate Pissarro and Monet any more than I imitated the great ones of the Louvre. I tried to do my own work—a sincere work, naïve, according to my ability and my

\(^{569}\) Denis, in *Conversations*, 171.
Cézanne is yet again referring to this theory that it is only through the contact with *others*—be they old or young, dead or alive—that he is able to return to nature—i.e., return to himself via a contact with nature.

*Imagination vs. Imitation of the Past*

What he is saying, in essence, is that what he got from Pissarro is no less, but no more either, than what he got from his visits to the Louvre. The whole argument can be summarized in a distinction that Pissarro and Cézanne established between imagination vs. imitation. Being led by imagination rather than imitation, they could afford to go to the Louvre without losing themselves:

Moi aussi, j’ai voulu goûter à l’imagination. Delacroix m’entraînait, les maîtres du Louvre m’y poussaient. Ma jeunesse a été remplie de toiles exaltées, où tour à tour je refaisais à ma manière Véronèse, Ribera, Le Caravage, le Calabrèse, Courbet et Delacroix lui-même.  

However, the sentence that immediately follows suggests that in fact Cézanne in his youth was not only taken by the ‘exalting’ charm of the works of the artists he

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570 Emile Bernard, “Une conversation avec Cézanne,” in *Propos sur l’art*, op. cit., 227
571 Ibid.
mentions, but that, in fact, he, at that point, receives their ‘influence.’ The two people who taught him to look at old masters just for the sake of painting, while retaining the freedom of one’s imagination, were, in fact, Monet and Pissarro:

J’ai compris lorsque je rencontrai Monet et Pissarro, qui eux s’étaient débarrassés de tout ce bagage, qu’il ne fallait demander au passé que l’enseignement de la Peinture. Ils avaient comme moi l’enthousiasme du grand romantique, mais au lieu de se laisser entraîner par ses vastes machines, ils ne recherchaient en lui que les bénéfices du coloris d’où devait sortir une nouvelle application de la palette.

In other words, the contact with the elders is fine provided that one knows what one wants to get from them—going to the Louvre blindly, as it were, or passively, is the surest way to receive influences (which is almost as bad as influenza in the ideological system of the impressionists). It is certainly not the way that Monet and Pissarro recommended for Cézanne. According to Bernard, therefore, an artist (following Cézanne’s, Pissarro’s and Monet’s paths) should visit the Louvre proactively. Thus, the artist is free to “return” to nature, facing oneself with the

573 Bernard, op. cit., 227.
574 This paradoxical set of guidelines about how to ‘use’ older art led to some of the ambivalent statements that both Pissarro and Cézanne are known to have produced about the Louvre. Cézanne claims that Pissarro once declared the Louvre should be burnt; on the other hand, the same artist was appalled when the French government threatened to introduce an entrance fee to visit the Louvre!
visual ingredients that one needs in order to execute one’s sensations. Cézanne is then able to give us a snapshot as to what made the artistic personality of both of the artists he mentions, unique:

Pissarro a fait la nature comme personne, quant à Monet, je n’ai jamais rencontré un pareil metteur en place, une facilité si prodigieuse à saisir le vrai… [Cézanne is then led to take his own conclusion for himself:]
L’imagination, c’est très beau; mais il faut avoir les reins solides; moi, au contact des impressionnistes, j’ai compris que je devais redevenir un élève du monde, me refaire étudiant, tout simplement.575

One now understands better what Cézanne meant when he pronounced the above statement:

Je n’ai pas plus imité Pissarro et Monet que les grands du Louvre. J’ai tenté une œuvre à moi, une œuvre sincère, naïve, selon mes moyens et ma vision.576

The problem with the notion of ‘influence’—besides its simplistic definition of artistic procedures—is that it does not suppose to produce a response: a cause or a

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576 Ibid., 227.
factor of influence is a flux of active force or power that leaves an impact on something or someone. “Influentia” in Latin designated the supposed flowing of an ethereal fluid from the stars that was supposed to affect the characters and actions of people. Needless to say, the idea of a “reciprocal influence” was utterly meaningless to the astrologers who developed the concept: those who received the ‘influentia’ could not claim to influence the stars in return. The notion of influence is therefore inherently defective. Yet, the vocabulary in art history is still so impregnated with this concept that it will take a while before we find a suitable term that conveys the much more complex dual process of exchange at work through artistic interchanges.

Modernism did not emerge ‘out of the blue.’ It served a purpose and fulfilled a need. The reason why Greenberg was so warmly embraced in the New York art world of the post-WWII period, is that he produced what was so badly needed out of modern art: some sense. That sense had to be clear, rigorous and dogmatic: it could not give way to gray areas. Acceptance that things were not always black or white could have only fueled the then strong feeling of unease, inadequacy and doubt expressed towards modern art. Modernism gained a lot through this effort in explicatory efficiency—it is true that the succession of art movements that appear to call one another, from impressionism to the “proto-pop” artists, or from Pissarro and Cézanne to Rauschenberg and Johns, makes a good deal of sense. Incidentally, as I am mentioning “gray areas,” I wish to salute, through the double meaning of this
expression when applied to Johns’s work, my good friend Richard Field: not only Johns’s early—and most recent—works could qualify him for the title of the Master of Gray, but it is indeed also true that, in another sense, “gray” is also the semantic color of Johns’s art practice [See III. Dossiers I and J]. As Field has noted, “the essence of Johnsian work is its multivalenced character.”

The powerful explanatory tools of modernism resulted in a loss elsewhere. Namely when it comes to thinking about the impact of an artistic decision freely motivated, modernism is no good because it is conceptually ill equipped to think about improvisation, spontaneous decision. There is no room within modernism to think about either gray nor chance: there, Johns and Rauschenberg who claimed to put to use the Duchampian chance principle in their work, could be certain to touch the Achilles heel of the modernist enterprise. Similarly, modernism appears very limited when it comes to addressing the role of liberty in art processes, given that liberty tends to put a brake on the apparently self-generated dynamics that propels the progress of modernism and produces, with or without the artists’ consent, one artistic movement after another. Now, it will soon become clear that liberty—through a multitude of forms—is a truly essential factor in the creative processes of all the four artists under focus in this essay. Given these two limitations (the inadequacy of modernism to think about improvisation, and liberty), there is a third limitation that is

the combination of the other two: modernism is incapable of thinking about dialogues or conversations, given that conversations are always based on a freely improvised exchange. No conversation can ever take place under coercion: freedom is therefore a condition of possibility of all conversations. No conversation begins if the protagonists already know everything that will be said, including how the conversation will end. All conversations are, therefore, to some degree at least, improvised. Yet, under modernism the people who produced high art tended to be seen more as vehicles of the progress of art, than as subjects engaged in a particular exchange. “Two-by-two,” these four artists freely engaged into artistic conversations with each other—and sometimes with others—never knowing what the end of that conversation would bring, and ready (until the end of their interchange) to resume the discussion they had had with the other where it had been left, or even start all over again.

* Looking for Analogies rather than Influences in the Art of the Past

It is, Cézanne tells us, through a detour via others that one most surely reaches oneself. The danger is to lose oneself in the other: one must be vigilant to quit the other and return to oneself. That danger has a name, as we saw, in Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s vocabulary: imitation—as opposed to imagination or invention. Pissarro thus designates this opposition: “autre chose est d’inventer ou d’imiter,” he wrote, in
the last decade of his life at a time when he and Cézanne no longer had much contact. The two of them, however, clearly continued to think alike. Pissarro then launched the sketch of a theory of modern art. The theory went like this: there is by now (1898) a “general type” that has resulted from the works of the great modern artists. That “general type” must, however, be reinterpreted “according to our individual point of view.” The aim—the ultimate aim—of art for Pissarro, as for Cézanne, is “le retour à la nature,” and, Pissarro adds, “l’on ne fait dans ce sens qu’en observant la nature avec notre propre tempérament moderne.” Pissarro is in absolute agreement with Cézanne. He puts it in the form of a paradox to which Cézanne would have gladly signed his name as well: one should follow whatever model “from our own individual vantage point.” Cézanne and Pissarro seem to hum the same hymn in chorus: nature comes first and last, and it is, paradoxically, by being subservient to nature that one best reaches one’s self as an artist. Nature’s call, exacting as it is, is a source of liberation of the self: “On n’est jamais ni trop sincère, ni trop soumis à la nature,” says Cézanne. And Pissarro, again at the same period, in the late 1890s, not knowing what Cézanne says down in the South of France, rehearses the same theme:

578 CP/JBH, IV, 504.
579 Ibid.: “autre chose est d’inventer ou d’imiter. Nous avons aujourd’hui un type général que nos grands artistes modernes nous ont légué, nous avons donc une tradition d’art moderne.”
580 Ibid.
581 Ibid.: “en le modifiant à notre point de vue individuel.”
582 Conversations, 119.
A quoi bon regarder en arrière et jamais la nature si belle, si lumineuse et si diverse de caractère ? Toujours dans la poussière des vieux maîtres, que l’on ne devrait pas démarquer sous prétexte de les vénérer, il me semble qu’il vaut mieux suivre leur exemple en cherchant nos éléments dans ce qui nous entoure, avec nos propres sens.\(^{583}\)

Pissarro becomes sensitive when one touches upon this subject: proceeding in art by imitation of older models does not only seem absurd to him, but it is an insult, he finds, to the model itself. Pissarro, who loves Rembrandt, finds it offensive to see Rembrandt “put to contribution” through such disagreeable imitations as those by Alphonse Legros. Pissarro then virtually loses his temper:

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\text{Quand on aime Rembrandt comme je l’aime, je trouve les imitateurs trop au-dessous, vraiment non ! C’est par trop pénible, sourd, plutôt noir de ton et même les motifs de chaumière coniques sont par trop chipés.}^{584}
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In other words, everybody loses in this imitation process: both the imitator (who loses himself) and the imitated (who is defaced.) Pissarro, however, just like Cézanne, continues to believe that one must look at older art (which he genuinely loves), although not from the standpoint traditionally taught by art history: from the path of

\(^{583}\) CP/JBH, IV, 458
\(^{584}\) Ibid.
traceable visual of formal influences. Here, Pissarro and Cézanne tend to meet Manet in front of the same dilemma: what to do with the art of the past? Denis couched the same paradox on Cézanne’s part:

Ce que d’autres ont cherché et parfois trouvé dans l’imitation des anciens, la discipline que lui-même dans ses premières œuvres demande aux grands artistes de son temps ou du passé, il la découvre finalement en lui-même. Et c’est ici la caractéristique essentielle de Cézanne. Sa tournure d’esprit, son génie ne lui permet pas de profiter directement des anciens : il se trouve vis-à-vis d’eux dans une situation analogue à celle où nous l’avons surpris en face de ses contemporains. Son originalité s’exalte au contact de ceux qu’il imite ou qu’il subit.

The parallel between Pissarro and Cézanne is not limited to the way they both conceived of their relationship to the art of the past that would not be dominated by the concept of influence—or imitation. The parallel extends to their preferences. Cézanne’s fascination for Veronese, Tintoretto, and Titian has already received some attention. What has, to my knowledge, never been a subject of attention is the fact

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585 See Michael Fried, Manet’s Modernism or the Face of Painting in the 1860s, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 45. Fried clearly summarized the paradox at heart: Manet’s “problem was not how to overcome the power of the past to determine the present, but what to make of a past that had lost the power to do just that constructively.”
586 Denis, Théories; in Conversations, 171. (My emphasis.)
587 See Reff, “Painting and Theory in the Final Decade,” Cézanne: The Late Work, (Exh.), (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 48. Reff emphasizes that one of the chief interests Cézanne held in
that Pissarro and Cézanne, up until the ends of their lives, both held essentially the same artists as their favorites. These artists (Tintoretto, Veronese, Rembrandt), however, present very few obvious visual kinships in their works with the art of Pissarro or Cézanne. On the whole, these relationships between Cézanne/Pissarro and the artists of the past whom they loved (the word ‘love’ is not too strong when one reads the type of statements they both wrote about these artists) run counter to a tendency in art history that could be described with one word: ‘iconocentrism.’ Whatever artistic relationship an artist may have had with something or some one else, it must have left a trace in-the-picture (or the icon) of the subject who experienced that influence, otherwise it may be discarded. Reff’s strategy in discussing Cézanne’s interest in older art is symptomatic of this iconocentric trend in art history. The principle of his inquiry is simple: given that Cézanne’s interest in old masters is not visible on the surface of his paintings, the proof of his interest must lie underneath the surface of his work, and thus remain in the picture (in the way the Renaissance artists prepared their works before painting them). In contrast with this iconocentric approach to art history, the method I am proposing is, of course, not iconoclastic in any sense. All I am suggesting is that visual stimuli immediately translate themselves in our brains in a much more complex way than a merely visual one. Baxandall has already amply demonstrated some of the aporias of where a strictly visual focus in the study of visual arts would lead by stressing that if the masters of the past was in “their methods for preparing and underpainting the canvas.” While certainly plausible, this interest in the physical preparation of canvases cannot have exhausted the ongoing profound interest that Cézanne kept in the Venetian school.
interests of the visual arts were to remain purely visual, they would by the same token become ineffable.\textsuperscript{588}

When Pissarro looks at a picture by Rembrandt,\textsuperscript{589} he seems to be saying something like this: “I look at this picture by Rembrandt, and I love it; it makes me think of the intensity and the power of life around us.” It is not by imitating Rembrandt’s dark palette (in the way Legros does) that he feels he will ever get close to the emotion that he detects in Rembrandt’s work. What I am saying is that the X—product of a relationship between an artist and what he enjoys looking at—cannot always simply be translated in visual terms. What Pissarro angrily disputes to Legros is (to put it in Kantian terms) that he turns the artistic equation between two artistic relationships into a simple mathematical analogy: after he looked at Rembrandt, Legros produces an object that was predictable. Today, one could say that a computer could have generated the same result.

For Pissarro as well as for Cézanne, the relationships and the processes count more than the objects themselves. This is why neither artist would consider concealing the traces of their facture. Here again, they both are extraordinarily close to one another

\textsuperscript{588} Michael Baxandall, “The Language of Art History,” New Literary History, 10 (Spring 1979): 453-464. For a very lively discussion of these remarks set in parallel with Nelson Goodman’s work, see *Catherine Lord and José A. Benardete, “Baxandall and Goodman,” The Language of Art History, op. cit., 76-100.

\textsuperscript{589} Pissarro was used to keeping a photograph of the Louvre’s Bathsheba with him.
in their technical conception of what an artist is supposed to do: their conception of “harmony” is very similar and closest to the musical conception of harmony.

An artist is not the sum total of all the artistic visual data he has stored up. In fact, there is a funny paradox at the heart of the beginnings of these artists: all four artists grew up in places that were empty of art: Pissarro in St. Thomas, Cézanne in Aix (he, of course, could have access to the relatively small collection of the Musée d’Aix); Rauschenberg in Port Arthur, Texas; Johns in Lake Murray, South Carolina. Out of the four, Cézanne is the only one who took drawing courses in the city where he was born; he is also the only one who could have seen antique sculptures in his city museum—copies of which he drew once he joined the drawing school of Aix when he was eighteen years old.590 Pissarro is known to have been following drawing classes after he was sent to a middle-high school in Paris from age 10 to 18. Christopher Lloyd has attempted to reconstruct the possible graphic context that was Pissarro’s. As a young man, he may have seen popular periodicals and illustrated magazines.591 The situation with the two others was even more extreme. In the oil refinery town of Port Arthur, Rauschenberg, together with his parents and sister, attended the Church of Christ—“an austere fundamentalist sect that frowned on social

dancing, card-playing, movies, and almost everything else.” Needless to say, Rauschenberg’s education did not offer the most propitious foil for an art education. Yet, as a child, he became noticed for his love for animals—clearly a feature that he definitely shared with Pissarro—and for drawing all the time on almost anything he touched—eventually painting onto a bed was not out of tune with Rauschenberg’s past as a youth. As for Johns, when he was two or three years old, he was sent after his parents’ divorce to stay with his grandfather in Allendale, South Carolina. There surely, he neither was exposed to a lot of art. Yet, as he put it, “I started drawing when I was three, and I’ve never stopped… This is all I’ve ever wanted to do.” After graduating from high school, he attended the University of South Carolina for three semesters and took classes in art history, which he disliked. Much later on, in 1977, he reflected on his childhood and upbringing and explained:

Art history is about paintings, isn’t it? I never really saw paintings. You understand, there were no paintings in South Carolina to see, so you just looked at things, these little things in books.

593 The artist’s sister Janet remembered a time when Bob counted among his pets “a horned toad frog, a nanny goat, a banty rooster, some goldfish, two adult hunting dogs that had a family of nine puppies.” See Tomkins, ibid. Rauschenberg as a young man wanted to become a vet, but as he did not want to go to Texas A&M, he enlisted as a student at the school of pharmacy at the University of Texas at Austin—he stayed there six months. (Tomkins: 16-17.)
Johns thus describes the gap he experienced from looking at slides to discovering a real work of art by Picasso after he moved to New York in 1953:

I remember the first Picasso I ever saw, *the first real Picasso*. I could not believe it was a Picasso, I thought it was the ugliest thing I’d ever seen. I’d been used to the light coming through color slides; I didn’t realize I would have to revise my notions of what painting was.

On the whole, even if Cézanne was able to go the Musée d’Aix as a child, and Pissarro was probably taken to the Louvre after he was sent to Paris to go to middle school, these artists did not look at art in earnest until they began to make art—and it never stopped.

Pissarro’s acute interest throughout his life in works by artists of the past did not leave many traces in his work. As a result, this is an aspect of his work (in strict parallel with that of Cézanne) that has tended to be ignored. This is why on the whole, they have not really been the focus of any in depth study.\(^595\) We have seen how much admiration Pissarro held for Rembrandt. His younger colleague seems to echo him

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\(^595\) The Cézanne studies have an advantage over the Pissarro studies given Cézanne’s most famous statement (“Imaginez Poussin refait entièrement sur nature, voilà le classique que j’entends.” *Conversations*, 150) On this, see Richard Verdi, *Cézanne and Poussin: The Classical Vision of Landscape*, (Exh.) (Edinburgh and London: National Galleries of Scotland in association with Lund Humphries Publishers, Ltd., 1990.) One would hope that a similar exhibition could take place for Pissarro that would immerse Pissarro’s art within the context of the artist’s numerous visual references.
frequently in his marks of eulogy for Rembrandt as well as Rubens and Titian. What set off their admiration is not a particular ‘style’ of painting, nor a particular interest in certain ‘motifs.’ This would lead to imitation. What Cézanne and Pissarro admire in these artists is precisely the way they have to “infuse their personality in every bit of chair” that they ever painted:

Eh ! bien, Rembrandt, Rubens, Titien savaient d’un coup, dans un compromis sublime, fondre toute leur personnalité à eux dans toute cette chair qu’ils avaient sous les yeux, l’animer de leur passion, et avec la ressemblance des autres, glorifier leur rêve ou leur tristesse… Exactement… Je ne puis pas moi…

Both Johns and Rauschenberg, likewise, have engaged in looking at old art since their earliest days as artists as well. Lawrence Alloway was quite right to point out to the stark contrast there is within Rauschenberg’s work between his usual “quotations from waste lot or junk shop and the blurred traces of ‘real life’ photographs” which all allow “the form or the textures of life [to be] abruptly present.”

596 Cézanne to Gasquet, Conversations, 154. One finds there a fascinating short précis of the history of Western painting that reveals a lot about Cézanne’s personality and his preferences. Most telling is the way he praises Velazquez by explaining that Velazquez took his ‘vengeance’ against the King of Spain who he hated by depicting all the ugly flaws of his family. This story is not terribly original, although Cézanne’s conclusion, pronounced with a touch of admiration, clearly is: “Sa haine et son objectivité n’ont fait qu’un…” Cézanne seems to recognize himself in this portrait of Velazquez, thus also giving a certain noble credit to his otherwise very difficult temperament. Cézanne then compares Velazquez to Flaubert—whom Pissarro held in great admiration too.

could come as a surprise, if not a shock, to many readers of *Vogue* in 1965 when this article was published to read that Rauschenberg was equally enthralled by Leonardo’s work, and especially the artist’s early *Annunciation* in the Uffizi. In 1959, in the artist’s statement for Dorothy Miller’s show *Sixteen Americans*, Jasper Johns named the three pivotal artistic references in his work: Leonardo, Cézanne, and Duchamp. He actually listed these artists in a non-chronological order: from Cézanne, he retained what he called (after one of his teachers) “the rotating point of view.” From Duchamp, he retained (quoting Duchamp) the suggestion “to reach the Impossibility of sufficient visual memory to transfer from one like object to another the memory imprint.” Finally, from Leonardo, he retained (quoting Leonardo’s line: “Therefore, O painter, do not surround your bodies with lines…”) the idea that “the boundary of a body is neither a part of the enclosed body nor a part of the surrounding atmosphere.”598 This idea could incidentally apply word for word to the technical innovations explored by Pissarro and Cézanne on how to paint/draw the contours of objects by delineating them with neither paint nor drawn lines. What is very striking, however, as one reads these two statements from Rauschenberg and Johns is that Leonardo was, to both of them, for different reasons, of critical importance. While Pissarro and Cézanne shared a strong attachment to Tintoretto, Veronese, and Rembrandt, Johns and Rauschenberg did as well to Leonardo. The list, of course, does not end there for either artist—Rauschenberg’s ongoing interest in the Vienna

Venus at her Toilet by Rubens offers but one obvious example of this artist’s engagement with the art of the past.

What did they find in these artists—at first sight so utterly different from them? Of all things, Cézanne praised the capacity of dreaming of these great artists: hence, one should not turn to them to ask for formal painting recipes, or formulas, or traceable visual influences. It is more in these artists’ capacity of dreaming that these artists may have had an impact on Pissarro and Cézanne—and on Johns and Rauschenberg. As we know with Jasper Johns especially, dreams are not to be dismissed as a powerful constructive element. Instead, it is through a process of imagination and of analogy that Pissarro and Cézanne are to apply what they see back onto their art. The concept of analogy can be especially useful here. Kant describes it in these terms:

In philosophy analogies signify something very different from what they represent in mathematics. In the latter they are formulas that assert the identity of two relations of magnitude, and are always constitutive, so that if two members of the proportion are given the third is also thereby given, i.e., can be constructed. In philosophy, however analogy is not the identity of two quantitative but of two qualitative relations, where from three given members I can cognize and give a priori only the relation to a fourth member.
but not this fourth member itself, although I have a rule for seeking it in experience and a mark for discovering it there.\textsuperscript{599}

Kant further explains that analogies are not constitutive but regulative—analyses compare relationships between objects themselves and tabulate these relationships, not the objects. Given that art history tends to be mostly object-oriented, the description of relationships that do not constitute measurable or visible objects, has been largely left out. In other words, Cézanne sees in Delacroix (whom he refers to as “la plus belle palette de France”) an artist who allies charm and pathos, and who successfully makes color “vibrate.”\textsuperscript{600} Charm, pathos, and vibrations of color are three combined subjective relationships between observer Cézanne and paintings by Delacroix. This relationship will be very similar to another relationship between different terms: Cézanne as an artist, and his paintings. The result of this second relationship will, however, differ considerably from the objects of the first relationship—even though the two relationships (charm, pathos, and vibrating colors) will be very similar. The phenomenological experience of “vibrating colors” that Cézanne detects in Delacroix never found a direct visual translation in Cézanne’s works. It does find an interesting analogical corollary in Johns’s description of

\textsuperscript{599} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, A 179/B222, \textit{op. cit.}, 297-8. Part of this text is also quoted from a different translation (without a source) by Thierry de Duve in epigraph of Chapter 2 in his \textit{Kant after Duchamp}, 89. Kant explained that analogy, even though it is restricted to \textit{relationships} between terms and not the terms themselves, “does not signify (as is commonly understood) an imperfect similarity of two things, but a perfect similarity of relations between two quite dissimilar things.” \textit{Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that will be able to come forward as Science}, in \textit{Immanuel Kant: Philosophy of Material Nature}, trans. James W. Ellington, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985) §58.

\textsuperscript{600} Cézanne to Gasquet, \textit{Conversations}, 142.
Leonardo, however. The analogy preserves the differences between these two artists, while drawing a close parallel around the notion of treating contours. With Cézanne—as he appreciated the same phenomenon in Delacroix—his color surfaces, and the contours of his watercolors vibrate, though through very different means from those used by Delacroix. With Johns, it is more the concept of the undecidability of where the contours actually begin or end that retained his attention. In this sense (as in several others), one can say that Johns is closer to Pissarro’s practice; Rauschenberg to Cézanne’s.

Pissarro, however, also owned works by Delacroix, and shared Cézanne’s passion for this artist: what he took from Delacroix was a sustained intensity in the treatment of simple subjects, such as landscapes, and a sense of heightened hues that Signac also revered in Delacroix—although, here again, there is little visual or formal detectable visual ‘influence’ either from Delacroix to Pissarro, or from Delacroix to Signac. Thus, in a way, Pissarro and Cézanne as they looked at Tintoretto or at Delacroix, or Johns and Rauschenberg as they looked at Leonardo, force us to rethink the categories of art history. Rauschenberg gives us the cue when he says: “I want to escape categories.” Analogies offer a more suitable tool of explanation for the types of relationships that Cézanne and Pissarro, as well as Rauschenberg and Johns, posited between themselves and, between themselves and the past. As we saw, the terms in each relationship are different; yet, the relationship (or proportion) between

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601 Quoted by Alloway, *Vogue*, op. cit., 155.
Kant had warned us, however: through an analogy (understood according to the philosophical method), the deduction of a third term after one possesses the first two terms and their relationship is not easy. Analogies in art tend to function like philosophical analogies: the ultimate result of a given relationship can never easily be surmised.

One of Cézanne’s favorite works of art was Tintoretto’s *Adam and Eve*. Cézanne put his enthusiasm to the account of the fact that “everything is there:”

C’est l’arche immense. Toutes les formes d’existence, et dans un pathétique, une passion, une *invention* incroyables.\(^{602}\)

Then follows an extraordinary text that, not only offers more precision on what Cézanne saw in Tintoretto’s work (much of it he only knew through photographs, since he never went to Venice—but as he put it, if he had been, it would have been for Tintoretto):

Je me souviens, dans une *Tentation du Christ*, qui est à San Rocco, je crois, d’un ange aux seins gonflés, avec des bracelets, un démon pédéraste et qui tend avec une concupiscence lesbienne, oui, des pierres à Jésus, on n’a rien inventé de plus pervers. Je ne sais pas, mais chez vous, quand vous m’avez

\(^{602}\) Ibid., 138. (My emphasis.)
passé la photo, ça m’a produit l’effet d’un Verlaine gigantesque, d’un Arétin qui aurait eu le génie de Rabelais. Chaste et sensuel, brutal et cérébral, volontaire autant qu’inspiré, sauf la sentimentalité, je crois qu’il a tout connu, ce Tintoret, de ce qui fait la joie et le tourment des hommes… Ecoutez un peu, je ne puis pas en parler sans trembler…

The intensity of his dialogue with Gasquet around Tintoretto, echoed over and again throughout other testimonies, is a safe indicator that Cézanne’s enthusiasm for old masters and museums survived the period of his return to nature. Moreover, it is again the type of qualities that Cézanne finds in this artist that reveals, not only what he as an artist is looking for in another artist, but what he was like as a human being in front of his canvases: he lavishes great praise over the associations of opposite qualities that he identifies in Tintoretto’s works: chastity and sensuality, brutality and intellectual appeal, will-power and inspiration. Tintoretto manages to associate all these qualities without falling into the trap (that both Pissarro and Cézanne abhor): sentimentality. Cézanne finally refers to a self-portrait by Tintoretto at the Louvre (for which he gives a wrong location) of which Manet painted a copy. Pissarro

603 Ibid.
604 Cézanne refers to Veronese and Tintoretto more often than to any other old masters throughout the interviews and souvenirs published as Conversations, op. cit. Cézanne goes so far in his admiration as to call Tintoretto “le plus vaillant des Vénitiens,” and to offer his unequivocal approval when Gasquet says “Il est plus grand que Titien.” Op. cit., 139.
605 Cézanne completely identifies with Tintoretto. When Gasquet tells him about the self-portrait of the Louvre: “on dirait un Cézanne,” Cézanne’s immediate response is: “Ah ! je voudrais bien… Vous savez il me semble que je l’ai connu. Je le vois, rompu de travail, harassé de couleurs, dans cette chambre tendue de pourpre de son petit palais, comme moi dans mon cafouchon du Jas-de-Bouffan…” Ibid., 138.
certainly shared Cézanne’s enthusiasm for Tintoretto and Veronese. During a trip to Burgundy, (where his wife originated from), Pissarro stopped by in Lyons and visited the museum. He wrote a fine review of this museum and its contents. After comparing the style of display of the Puvis de Chavannes (and its “effet splendide”) to the way the Rouen museum displayed its own decoration by Puvis, Pissarro then proceeds in listing the artists that most impressed him during his visit:

Dans le musée, des Primitifs superbes, des Tintoret, des Véronèse, un Greco, des Claude le Lorrain, etc.  

Pissarro and Cézanne shared much more than years of artistic collaboration in and around Auvers. The fascinating pictorial dialogue that stemmed from this joint experience was, in effect, also the result of what these two artists shared in common. In brief, they shared very similar aesthetic conceptions as to the role of the artist, and they shared similar artistic tastes when it came to judging the contents of the history of art—in a way that was very dissonant from a theory of ‘chain of crests.’ The ground on which Cézanne so strongly related to Tintoretto had nothing to do with the fact that this was one of the most eminent representatives of the Venitian school, but with the fact that, like him, Tintoretto suffered a great deal and ended up, after his daughter’s death, very much on his own. Here was an artist, Cézanne presumes, who found it as tough as he to reconcile the contradictory facets of his personality. What

606 CP/JBH, IV, 498.
Pissarro found in Tintoretto, Veronese, and Greco, (even though, unlike Cézanne, he did not develop what especially he saw in these artists) was most likely the indices of forceful personalities, unlikely to ever be tempted to compromise their own standards with the pressures of the outside world. In other words, both Pissarro and Cézanne—whose interests in old masters are too often promptly dismissed because of their pronouncement that the Louvre should be burnt—in part found each other through these dialogues with the history of painting; in part, they also found themselves in the artists whom they both favored.

*Live vs. Imaginary Dialogues*

Old masters, whether imitated or not, do not respond: they do not speak. Living artists do. The compendium imitation/originality led, as far as Pissarro and Cézanne were concerned, to a real pictorial conversation. [See Ill. Dossier A] It is precisely through this shared notion of the individual artist as some one who returns upon himself through a detour through others that Pissarro and Cézanne announce a conception of the artistic individual, which finds its parallel philosophically in a whole tradition that essentially begins with Fichte and continues to this day with Habermas, in Germany, and Renaut, Ferry, Todorov in France. Essentially, the principal direction of this current is this: the individual is not a fixed essence, the mark of an unchangeable singularity; the individual is a process. This process of self-realization reaches its
own goal through the other. It is, according to Habermas (who found the source of this notion partly in George Herbert Mead\(^\text{607}\)) through the internalizing process of various tension-filled and sometimes even conflicted expectations that the “autonomization of the self” takes place. He explains:

to a certain extent the individual itself must first posit itself as a spontaneously acting (selbsttätig) subject. To this extent, individuality is not conceived primarily as singularity, nor as an ascriptive feature, but as the self-realization of the individual (des Einzelnen).\(^\text{608}\)

Cézanne and Pissarro, as well as Johns and Rauschenberg, had intuitively observed, before Habermas would articulate it, that:

Individuation is pictured not as the self-realization of an independently acting subject carried out in isolation and freedom but as a linguistically mediated process of socialization and the simultaneous constitution of a life-history that is conscious of itself. The identity of socialized individuals forms itself simultaneously in the medium of coming to an understanding with others in language and in the medium of coming to a life-historical and intrasubjective


unders
[176x673]tanding with oneself. Individuality forms itself in relations of
intersubjective acknowledgement and of intersubjectively mediated self-
understanding. 609

For Pissarro and Cézanne, this process of individualization through an
“intersubjective acknowledgement and intersubjectively mediated self-
understanding” took shape through the linguistic medium of painting. With Johns and
Rauschenberg, as we have seen, this took a much more diversified array of media. As
far as Pissarro and Cézanne were concerned, this process of individualization took
two different routes: one that took them through the Louvre, the other took them
through a sustained (if but intermittent) contact with each other. One led them to face
dead artists of the past; the other to face each other and those artists who had chosen,
like them, to engage in this process of self-realization through others. There was
surely nothing heroic about this process. Heroes know themselves, and are contented
with a consciousness centered upon their egos. In the process that led to the pictorial
dialogue that unfolded through twenty years between Pissarro and Cézanne, the
situation was more complex. [See Ill. Dossier A, nos. 1-37] There,

self-consciousness forms itself on the path from without to within, through the
symbolically mediated relationship to a partner in interaction. To this extent it
possesses an intersubjective core; its eccentric position attests to the tenacious

609 Ibid., 152-3.
dependence of subjectivity upon language as the medium through which one recognizes oneself in the other in a nonobjectifying manner. As in Fichte, self-consciousness first arises out of the encounter with another ego confronting (entgegengesetzt) me.\(^6\)

This process, which in painting took place between Cézanne and Pissarro analogously takes place for all of us in our apprenticeship of communication through language. This analogy brings the practice of painting down to the level of a simple conversation: there is, for sure, something unacceptable about this, in modernism. In its various models, modernism has left little space but for heroes, or semi-gods, who are essentially silent with each other. When they speak, it is to history, or to the posterity. They may well have carried the torch from one defining moment to another: from Manet to Cézanne, and hence, from Picasso to Pollock and Newman, and finally to Johns and Rauschenberg, and their so-called (il)-logic of the “far-out,” the history of modern art is one of high achievers who acted, if not alone, one-by-one, and each for oneself. A question one may ask is: what do these people have to tell us? And, beforehand, what did they have to say to one another? Modernism looks at individual artists as monads: with no windows on to others, each individual functions by him/herself, enclosed in its self. One of the oft-observed shortcomings of modernism is that, as a result of this logic, it leads straight into a kind of Pantheon. In parallel, it

\(^6\) Ibid. 177-8. This development indeed brings us back to the concept of reciprocal individuality developed by Fichte.
might also be argued that one of the shortcomings of post-modernism has been a
fastening of this whole process by which semi-gods (virtually) no longer exist, but
have been replaced by stars, or idols. The fast process of idolization is certainly as
complex, and problematic, in many ways as the modernist process of turning major
actors into heroes. The two boil down to a process of hagiography, anyway. Roger
Cranshaw and Adrian Lewis point out to this phenomenon as far as Rauschenberg is
cconcerned:

One of the most difficult things for a living artist to cope with is to become an
object of hagiography in some quarters, vicious critical dismissal in others…
Perhaps, unwittingly, critics have punished Rauschenberg for his vaunted
precociousness. Openness has long been noted to be the fundamental feature
of Rauschenberg’s work and character. It is obvious, then, that feedback in the
sense of sensual and intellectual involvement with the works, implying above
all the need for dialogue, was seen by the artist as an absolute aesthetic
necessity. This dialogue has always been denied Rauschenberg.611

While it is difficult to disagree with the first part of this statement, the conclusion
reached by these two authors could be disproved by many examples: in fact, one
could claim that Rauschenberg through his art has been thriving on dialogues that

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611 Roger Cranshaw and Adrian Lewis, “Re-reading Rauschenberg,” Artscibe 29 (June 1981), pp. 44,
50. Quoted by Thomas Crow, “This is Now Becoming Robert Rauschenberg,” Artforum, vol. 36
(September 1997), 97 sqq.
took multiple forms. One can then argue about the quality or the significance of these dialogues but one cannot say that they have been “denied” to the artist. Two relatively recent examples will suffice as evidence: the massive undertaking known as ROCI; and the most recent project the artist has shown at the Whitney museum known as “Synopsis Shuffle.”

The modernist enterprise rests on a process of fetishization: the end product is of far greater interest than the development that led to the making of the end product. This is precisely what Jasper Johns opposed:

I’ve never been interested in the idea of movements. I’m very devoted to the idea of one person working, and seeing what he does.613

Again, modernism is interested in things, in works of art as symbolic objects, and not as emanations of people, nor as objects addressed to the attention of other people. Those who “made it” retain a position of significance and worth within the modernist edifice only insofar as they made great works of art. Of course, the criteria of evaluation of what “making it” amounted to had to remain ultimately unquestioned because it was a given result of what history had decided.

612 For another reasonable critique of this argument, see Thomas Crow, Artforum, 142.
613 Jasper Johns in an interview with Vivien Raynor: “Jasper Johns: ‘I have attempted to develop my thinking in such a way that the work I’ve done is not me,’” Artnews 72 no. 3 (March 1973), 20. Republished in Writings, 142.
The historicist argument that sustained these constructions was something like this: history has thus decided, and it is my role as an authoritative art critic to hear the voice of History and transcribe it for you. It is interesting that this kind of position towards history has permeated not only in Clement Greenberg’s writings, but also John Rewald’s.

We are abusing the advantages of hindsight, [Rewald wrote] if we refuse to let those who fall by the wayside into oblivion.⁶¹⁴

Rewald saw in any effort to offer “a total picture of the artistic achievements offered by nineteenth-century France” a “danger:” “This is neither ‘justice’ nor ‘clarification’; it is instead a dangerous manipulation that diverts the powerful flow of the mainstream of history.” In the same text, Rewald goes on describing Pissarro as “one of the great Impressionists and an essential figure in the evolution of modern art” and vituperates against those who equate him with Gérôme who happened to die the same year as Pissarro, but who was no more than “a dried-out practitioner whose

main concerns were with Oriental picture postcards and slick nudes…” Rewald’s source of conception of the role of history is a book by Nietzsche: The Use and Abuse of History. The same quote would have served Greenberg just as well, in particular in his essay of 1939, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch.” The two reconstructions (Rewald’s and Greenberg’s) are animated by the same intentions, and both lead to the same scorn for democracy, “the mere onlookers” or those who claim to have “the monopoly of good taste” (all these expressions are from Nietzsche, being quoted by Rewald) although “good taste” (Nietzsche’s sarcastic and patronizing phrase to point to the conventional taste of the people is a notion that Greenberg amply recycles in “Avant-Garde and Kitsch:” it boils down to nothing more than castigating as vulgar, common, or conventional the taste of those who do not like (or do not know) the art that is being sanctimoniously granted the status of being historically valid. Here is the quote by Nietzsche that Rewald puts to use in his application of history:

615 John Rewald, op. cit.
616 Clement Greenberg, Collected Essays, I, 5-22.
617 A sentence like this: “all kitsch is academic; and conversely, all that’s academic is kitsch” could have been signed by Rewald, just as well as by Greenberg. (Greenberg, Ibid., 12). No text carries to a further degree an attitude of condescending discrimination against the poor “peasant” who “in the end… will go back to kitsch when he feels like looking at pictures, for he can enjoy kitsch without effort.” (ibid., 19)—not to mention the astonishing degree of political blindness that links ‘kitsch’ with totalitarianism—as if kitsch did not exist in democracies as much as it does elsewhere. The fact is that ‘kitsch’ means nothing in totalitarian ideology: there is the art that is sanctioned as working for the cause of the regime, and the art that is not—the art of the dissenters who tend to put their lives at risk to do the art they choose to make. In democracies, there is no such dividing line between the right sort of art and the wrong sort of art: the concept of “kitsch” is the conceptual product of those who claim to be qualified to draw such a dividing line for all, and who know the difference between good art and bad art—a claim Greenberg openly made until the end of his career. In the end, Greenberg comes up with this astonishing paradox: kitsch represents the taste of the uneducated masses and it is upheld by the totalitarian regimes that ironically need to keep the masses under control (and need to “ingratiate themselves with their subjects”; paradoxically, however, it is in democracies that the taste of the masses is most severely criticized by Greenberg (and Rewald). So, here is the Greenbergian irony: popular taste (=kitsch) dominates in regimes where people have no voice of their own; elitist taste rules
‘The great moments in the battle of individuals form a chain of crests that links humanity through the ages, and the highest points of those vanished moments are yet great, luminous, and alive.’

Rewald quotes a whole paragraph from Nietzsche’s book—which usefully clarifies the positions central to modernism and historicism, as I have sketched it above, that Rewald also adopts in his ‘model’ of history. What Rewald, invoking Nietzsche, apparently did not see is that the very same argument could be used to condemn the very artists whom he defended: it all depends on whom one places at the peak of the mountain. It also, therefore, depends on who sees the chain of crests, and who evaluates it.

More or less at the same time as Rewald was working on his History of Impressionism, and as Greenberg was writing his first articles of art criticism, a

in regimes established by popular vote. This paradox does not seem to have disturbed Greenberg in the least. This whole simplistic argument collapses as soon as one critiques the Manichean dichotomy on which it is based: between those who have taste, and those who don’t, and as soon as one questions on what ‘base’ these distinctions are made. Between the “purists” who “value [art] much more than any one else does” and the rest of the world, is the dividing line that clear? Ultimately, also another question looms large on Greenberg’s horizon: is it certain that one is better off belonging to these “purists” than to the rest of the world? Besides, instead of one dividing line, one may introduce a multitude of distinctions between, not two, but numerous competing aesthetic forms that have equal validity claims, but remain vastly different, and satisfy different groups and individuals. The question ceases to be “what/who is the best?” but what aesthetic experience, in a given context, satisfies best such or such individual, or group, according to what criteria? The question(s) become(s) obviously much more complex but also provides a much more fecund (and tolerant) base of discussion for our present context.

Rewald, op. cit., quoting Nietzsche, ibid., 11. (My emphasis.)
curator called Gerald Johnson assembled together an impressive group of paintings by old masters—from Cranach to Goya, whose death year, 1828 (two years before Pissarro’s birth) was the sign of the beginning of the end of serious aesthetic values—for the Baltimore Museum in 1943. These paintings came from legitimate European collections that had found their ways to the States during the war for safe keeping reasons. Impressive as this exhibition was, there was conspicuously not a single modern ‘masterpiece’ in the selection: in fact, a mildly anti-modern tone ran through the brief introductory essay written by the curator. Yet, the argument that tied these works together was a reprise of the Nietzschean theme of the ‘chain of crests’ linking humanity through the ages:

Every picture in this collection is one that the world has acclaimed as carrying a universal appeal. Whether the subject is a roistering peasant or a beautiful woman, a laughing soldier or a tormented martyr, in every case the subject is only a hint, a suggestion of something mightier than the subject, mightier than the craftsman and the craft—the ancient and ever new, hopeless and enthralling quest of mortal man for the immortal ideal.619

Lest the distinction made against modern practices had not struck the audience with sufficient clarity, the cover of the catalogue bore nothing but a quote by Sir Joshua

Reynolds; the typography was set in bold Gothic letters with the forceful intent of a manifesto. This probably was meant to bring to a close all possible disputes as to the unsurpassed supremacy of the masters of the past over the present. This quote by Reynolds foretold the Nietzschean theme of the chain of crests. The intentions of both Reynolds, and the curator who quoted him were symmetrically opposed to the motivations held by Rewald and Greenberg; yet, they were using almost exactly the same language. The words by Reynolds that ornamented this exhibition catalogue in 1943 were these:

The works of those who have stood the test of ages have a claim to that respect and veneration to which no modern can pretend… There is no danger of studying too much the works of these great men.620

It is an extraordinary fact that this metaphor of ‘the chain of crests’ or of ‘those who have stood the test of ages’ could be invoked with the same hammering dogmatic tone by modernists and anti-modernists alike. Even most recently, Cornelius Castoriadis cast a stern condemnation of contemporary culture at large based on the same argument. The premise of his argument was a simple and blunt assessment: “Contemporary culture is, as a first approximation, worth nothing [nulle].”621 Rather

620 Joshua Reynolds, ibid. (Cover text.)
than leaving it at this expression of a personal preference, Castoriadis attempted to find some objective proof for his assertion. He found this proof in a test quizz that, if answered, would have a devastating impact on the contemporary art world. Let us ask, Castoriadis suggested,

the most notorious, the most celebrated of contemporary creators this question, eye-to-eye: Do you sincerely consider yourself to be at the same mountain crest [sur la même ligne de crête] as Bach, Mozart, or Wagner, as Jan Van Eyck, Velazquez, Rembrandt, or Picasso, as Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, or Frank Lloyd Wright, as Shakespeare, Rimbaud, Kafka, or Rilke? From how many contemporaries would a positive response not make us smile?⁶²²

Leaving aside the certain naivety (that may also make us smile) that consists in lumping together these names, and the considerably arbitrary decisions that led to this particular selection of ‘mountain peaks,’ there is, at the heart of this position, a disingenuous refusal to consider that the same generalization could be made about every profession in the humanities: who is the philosopher who can compare today with Plato or Hegel? Who is the author who can compare with Dante or Shakespeare?

The notion of an unrivaled genius, in whatever activities, is simply no longer a factor

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⁶²² Ibid. and Ferry, 242. (Modified translation)
in the lifeworlds of our societies—for better or worse. This being said, this type of judgments also reveals a refusal to keep an open eye (and mind) for any possible exceptions to this blanket statement. It reveals more about the position of the author of this statement than it does about the contemporary state of culture.

For our present argument, what is interesting is that the same heroic model (the theory of the ‘chain of the crests’) provides support to some for their anti-modernist preferences, to others (Rewald, Greenberg) for their modernist positions.

*What Can the Art of the Present Teach Us about the Art of the Past?*

Castoriadis was perfectly entitled to his judgment on the state of contemporary culture, but his statement—even in the form of a question whose answer is seemingly too obvious to be asked—raises other questions: first of all, the premises of his observations are not entirely correct. Just like Pissarro and Cézanne had done with artists of the Louvre, many contemporary artists continue, certainly with very different aims and results, to engage in a close dialogue with artists of the past. In fact, one of the more interesting counter-examples to Castoriadis’s blanket statement is an exhibition in which one could find heartening substance to sustain the very opposite view to Castoriadis’s: one saw side-by-side works of art by contemporary artists next to works by old masters. The juxtapositions, with a few exceptions,
offered nothing to smile about. There, for instance, Jasper Johns, among other artists, was dialoguing with Manet. The context of these dialogues was an exhibition titled *Encounters: New Art From Old* and took place under the noble roof of the National Gallery. The idea of the show consisted in setting up dialogues between living artists and ‘old’ artists: among the more fascinating results were, to my eye, the following pairs: Louise Bourgeois’s response to Turner, Stephen Cox to Piero della Francesca, Ian Hamilton Finlay to Claude Lorrain, Richard Hamilton to Saenredam, David Hockney to Ingres, Jasper Johns to Manet, Anselm Kiefer to Tintoretto, Claes Oldenburg/Coosje van Bruggen to Vermeer, Cy Twombly to Turner, Jeff Wall to Stubbs. Frank Auerbach, whose work ‘encountered’ Constable’s *Hay Wain*, explained how he sees his relationship with past art, with words, modest and enlightening, that shed a different light on the relationship between present and past. Comparing a work of his to one by Monet, Auerbach seemed ready to admit, at least partially, Castoriadis’s sentence:

…if you see a picture of yours reproduced across the page from one by Monet, you feel miserably inferior. I mean, a Monet seems so grand and one’s own painting so jejune and papery. Sooner or later you’re going to see something that makes you feel a dwarf. And that keeps you going.624

It is a very different thing altogether to hear from Auerbach’s own mouth the acknowledgment that he feels “inferior” to Monet, or to read from Castoriadis’s pen that all present art is inferior (or worth nothing). The difference is that between an act of humility on the behalf on an artist qualifying his own talent towards an artist he admires, on the one hand, and a pontificating remark discarding all art from the past, on the other.\textsuperscript{625} The former is a sign of self-reflection and humility; the latter is a sign of a lack of generosity and self-reflection. The latter takes the form of a death sentence; the former opens up new invitations and suggests encounters: “it keeps you going.” On the other hand, Auerbach adds this statement, with the same serene tone of voice that echoes a similar statement by Jasper Johns vs. Castoriadis:

I don’t think you can understand the art of the past until you understand the art of the present.\textsuperscript{626}

To the theory of the “chain of crests” that presides over the writing of much art history, I prefer the metaphor used by Morphet in his exhibition catalogue: that of “encounters.” This reflects much more the type of experiences that each artist shared with each other—and with other artists. One could, in this sense, speak of an

\textsuperscript{625} Of course, the symmetrically opposed view also exists: many contemporary critics or artists do not look at any form of art that precedes a certain artist (e.g., Duchamp), or a certain date. Needless to say, such views are just as reductive and impoverished as their opposites.
\textsuperscript{626} Morphet, Ibid, 29. The statement by Johns (quoted above) is: “Old art offers just as good a criticism of new art as new art offers of old.”
encounter (Pissarro meets Cézanne; Rauschenberg meets Johns) around other encounters with other artists, dead or alive. (We have already seen the example of Pissarro and Cézanne gathering around their mutual fascination for Rembrandt, Tintoretto, Veronese, Greco.) Being laudatory about Monet’s “victory” against the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he then qualifies his statement by insisting that the victory is against the Ecole, not against the artists whom the Ecole claims as models. In other words, the attacks launched by Pissarro and Cézanne against the Louvre are to be understood not so much against the Louvre itself, as against the way the Ecole des Beaux-Arts utilized the Louvre—through a method of “imitation” (Cézanne would say) or “appropriation” (Pissarro would say). Cézanne explained himself:

Loin l’idée enfantine que l’art ancien soit surpassé ! Les meilleurs peintres, se dénomment-ils Courbet, Manet ou Monet, ne peuvent faire oublier les Michel-Ange, les Raphaël, les Léonard, les Titien, les Giorgione, les Tintoret, les Véronèse, les Rubens ; ils ne feront même pas trembler les petits maîtres français, flamands ou hollandais ; ils n’effaceront pas les primitifs ; et là n’est pas leur ambition. Ce ne sont point des anarchistes qui veulent recommencer le monde et le faire dater à eux ; nés très doués, ils se sont dit : « la peinture contemporaine est viciée, l’Art après avoir erré dans les musées a vécu de formules académiques ; pourtant les Maîtres, que nous connaissions mieux que personne, que nous admirons plus que tous, n’ont rien de ces dogmes froids,
lourds et sans vie ; c’est donc qu’ils ont puisé leur classicisme à la nature…

Retournons à la nature ! » 627

Again, one finds the predominant theme in Cézanne’s aesthetic positions that it is via a detour through the old masters that one eventually can “return to nature” and thus find oneself. The two people whom Emile Bernard credits for having enabled Cézanne to perform his return to nature, are Monet and Pissarro. The text in which Bernard describes the passage from Pissarro to nature—even if it resorts to a few simplifications—is interesting to read:

Paul Cézanne ne fut pas le premier à entrer dans cette voie, il se plaît à reconnaître que c’est à Monet et à Pissarro, qu’il doit de s’être dégagé de l’influence trop prépondérante des musées, pour se ranger sous celle de la Nature. Malgré ces voisinages, son œuvre ne s’en ressent pas. Seulement, de gigantesques qu’elles auraient été avec plaisir, les toiles primitivement sombres et rudes de Cézanne, descendirent à des proportions restreintes ; exigence du travail sur nature. Le maître délaisse l’atelier, va matin et soir au motif, suit le travail de l’air sur les formes et les localités, analyse, cherche, trouve. Bientôt ce n’est plus Pissarro qui le conseille, c’est lui qui agit sur l’évolution picturale de ce dernier. Il n’adoptra donc pas la manière de travailler de Monet ou de Pissarro ; il resta ce qu’il était, c’est-à-dire un

peintre, avec un œil qui se clarifie, qui s’éduque, s’exalte devant le ciel et les
monts, devant les choses et les êtres. Il se refait, selon son expression, une
optique, car la sienne a été oblitérée, entraînée par une illimitée passion vers
trop d’images, de gravures, de tableaux. Il a voulu trop voir : son insatiable
désir de beauté lui a fait trop compulsory le multiforme tome de l’Art ;
désormais, il éprouve qu’il se faut restreindre, s’enfermer dans une conception
et un idéal esthétique ; aussi, s’il va au Louvre, s’il contemple longuement
devant Véronèse, c’est pour, cette fois, en décortiquer l’apparence, en scruter
les lois : il y apprend les contrastes, les oppositions tonales, y distille son goût,
l’annoblit, l’élève.628

Long as it is, the present text is essential to the issue of inter-subjectivity. Bernard, as
we saw in Section II, contributed in many ways to the modernist conception of
Cézanne’s role. In this text, however, Bernard does not omit to mention the
relationship between Pissarro and Cézanne (and Monet)—the text was unfortunately
published too late for Pissarro to feel the comfort of having his early frustration
assuaged: Pissarro died a year before this text was published. Bernard, furthermore, in
this text, situates the Pissarro/Cézanne relationship within the context of a broader set
of other relationships—those that link Cézanne to the art of the past. What is
interesting is that from one page to the next, Bernard’s account of the
Cézanne/Pissarro relationship varies slightly. He first says that Cézanne “owes” to

628 Ibid., 32-3.
Monet and Pissarro to have gotten rid of the overwhelming “influence” of the museums in order to find his place (“se ranger”) under Nature’s influence. He repeats the same point later with a slightly different inflection saying that Cézanne withdrew to Auvers to be next to Pissarro (who had been painting “under Courbet’s empire”) in order to get rid of all influences and be in front of Nature. Pissarro’s role is here described as that of a purifier, or as someone who facilitated a general catharsis. On the other hand, Bernard describes the working relationship quite differently when he says in the same sentence that Pissarro had been advising Cézanne before Cézanne “acted upon the pictorial evolution of the latter.” What should we believe? Did Pissarro provide “advice” to Cézanne, before being himself under the impact of his younger colleague’s? Or, did Pissarro simply act as a sort of doctor to cure Cézanne who had overdosed on art at the Louvre? In fact, I am tempted to answer that Bernard was right on both counts. Pissarro did, indeed, invite Cézanne to join him to go and work on the motif. (See the photograph of the two artists on their way to the motif. Ill. 1 and the Illustration Dossier A titled “Dialogues” with some of the results that these two artists brought back from their campaigns in front of nature.) This particular text by Bernard, oddly enough, constitutes a small exception within the modernist tradition of interpretation (or omission) of the Pissarro/Cézanne interchange. Through the slightly paradoxical way of depicting this interchange, Bernard in fact touches upon an essential aspect of this dialogue. First of all, it is noteworthy that Bernard does not use the word ‘influence’ when it comes to describe Pissarro toward Cézanne,
or vice versa—even though he comes close to this when he says that Cézanne “acted upon” Pissarro’s evolution. The point is that Bernard recognizes here that there has been a *reciprocal* process in which both artists had a part. I differ from Bernard’s account here only insofar as I do not conceive this reciprocal relationship as being diachronic, but synchronic. There is not a particular point at which Cézanne and Pissarro agreed to switch roles. Instead, I will argue that Pissarro looked at Cézanne’s earliest works and found there much food for thought, in the same way as it is arguable that Cézanne remained close to Pissarro and continued to reminisce the content of their intense inter-subjective adventure all his life. The last five years of their pictorial interchange (from 1880 to 1885) offers a moving example of the rich technical exchange that continued to take place between the two artists after twenty years of collaboration. One could thus simplify the tenor of this exchange: by the mid- to late 1870s, Pissarro begins to fracture his brushstroke, so that by the early 1880s his strokes appear to create a weft of criss-crossed, minute eyebrows endlessly knitting each other. Cézanne responds to this technical trick by introducing his own method of fracturing planes of color by juxtaposing parallels touches of color according to a single slanted axis. In turn, Pissarro picks up what he sees in his friend’s work, largely from a painting by Cézanne acquired by Signac [See Ill.33] and applies his own version of the same device to the point where the two techniques of application of the paint are co-extensive to each other. The small group of paintings executed around 1885 by both artists reveals their proximity to each other at a point
that is usually not mentioned among the accounts of their inter-relationships. [See Ills. Nos. 29-35] Likewise, the conclusions of the pictorial dialogue between Cézanne and Pissarro seem to ‘announce’ Pissarro’s short-lived adventure with neo-impressionism.\textsuperscript{629} A few months before entering in contact with Seurat, through Signac, Pissarro acquired four studies by Cézanne which he described as “très curieuses.”\textsuperscript{630} I have recently come to the conclusion that the four studies referred to by Pissarro in this letter are indubitably the small panel painting, titled by Rewald \textit{Femmes s’habillant}\textsuperscript{631}, [Ill. 4] together with its three preparatory drawings\textsuperscript{632}. Pissarro owned all four of these works which form a small group of “studies.” Besides, no other works by Cézanne in his collection fit this description so well. What is curious is, therefore not only the aesthetic merit of these works, but the fact that Pissarro decided to acquire these works towards the end of his relationship with Cézanne, and at a time when he already owned quite a few works by his younger colleague.

Clearly, Pissarro could not get enough of Cézanne—and of all periods. The “curious” quality remarked upon in his letter, did not displease Pissarro—quite the contrary. From the beginning onwards of his meeting with Cézanne, the weird virtues of Cézanne’s art had appealed to him. A form of art that had almost nothing to do with

\textsuperscript{629} The link between Cézanne’s so-called ‘constructive stroke’ and neo-impressionism has been remarked upon by Theodore Reff, “Cézanne’s Constructive Stroke,” \textit{Art Quarterly} 25 (Autumn 1962): 214. “The neo-impressionists although far more consistent than Cézanne in their rationalization of both color and touch, may have derived from him a heightened awareness of the canvas as a surface to be covered with tiny strokes.” For a discussion of the passage from his dialogue with Cézanne to a dialogue with Signac and Seurat, see Joachim Pissarro, \textit{Pissarro, op. cit.}, 217-220.

\textsuperscript{630} CP/JBH, I, 294.

\textsuperscript{631} Rewald no. 123.

\textsuperscript{632} Chappuis nos. 202-4.
what had been done before: this is what Pissarro was consistently looking for among his friends’ art, and among himself. Later on, as he was complimenting his second son, Georges’s work to his eldest son, Pissarro found his son’s work reminiscent of Cézanne’s work. Praising them, the father described his son’s work as “still-lives … daringly begun, a little like the old Cézannes, and quite divided.”633 This daringness—that both artists immediately recognized in each other’s work—was one of the key virtues of that ongoing dialogue between these two artists. Describing a work by Cézanne at the same time as he bought his four new studies by the same artist, Pissarro said that when sticking it under your nose, you cannot see it.634 Four more studies by Cézanne were thus added to what Pissarro called his group of friends. At approximately the same time as he acquired these Cézannes, Pissarro asked his eldest son in London to pass a message to his niece, Esther, who also lived in London. Pissarro wanted Esther, who was doing terra cotta sculpture, to send him a sample of her work. He concluded the letter by this touching expression:

Je serais flatté de pouvoir placer quelque chose d’elle dans ma salle à manger en compagnie de mes amis.635

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633 CP/JBH, III, 23. (My emphasis.)
634 CP/JBH, I, 293-4: “De même quand on est trop près, on ne voit rien, c’est comme un tableau de Cézanne que tu te fourrerais sous le nez.” This broken down surface covered with individual marks of paint tends to draw the observer closer to the surface, as the observer does this, he loses sight of the bigger picture. This very same process was duplicated by Johns himself, except that he would not use broken down marks of paint (at least to begin with) but a small key to be wound through the canvas: “you had to stand relatively close to the painting, too close to see the outside shape of the picture.” Crichton, op. cit., 32.
635 CP/JBH, I, 295. (My emphasis.)
These ‘friends’ were a metonymy for ‘works of art by his friends.’ Nothing illustrates more than this sentence how closely related Pissarro felt towards these works of art. They surrounded him in the same way as he would be sitting among his guests at a dinner-table. They were his “friends.” The friends in question were numerous and counted among them artists, some now famous, some who remained unknown. Among those who have reached the ‘chain of crests’ one could see works by Delacroix, Manet, Jongkind, Monet, Sisley, Cassatt, Monet, Degas, Signac, Seurat. Among the lesser known artists one could see works by his close friend Ludovic Piette, Amand Gautier, Edouard Dufeu, Louis Le Bail, Blanche Hoschedé (Monet’s step-daughter.) Cézanne clearly dominated the group, by the sheer number of works of art that Pissarro owned by him. One did not need to be famous, however, in order to count among Pissarro’s friends. This leads us back to the question of how old masters interact with ‘living friends.’

This question leads us to another question: how do we assess the value of the past towards the present? And from what point may we judge best this relationship? From the past, irretrievably lost? From a present, whose truth is elsewhere, and necessarily different from the past? This returns us briefly to the ‘chain of crests’ problem again. To put it differently, what would have been wrong in accepting that this selection is indeed the reflection of Castoriadis’s own cultural preferences? That would have been

636 See Catalogue des oeuvres importantes de Camille Pissarro..., op. cit.,
perfectly fine. Out of the millions of visitors to the Louvre, if one were to ask all of them to select their top fourteen favorite ‘mountain crests,’ it is infinitely doubtful that two would come with the exact same selection as Castoriadis proposes—even if there still would be a large consensus to recognize that all the artists named by Castoriadis count among ‘great artists.’ We all regard different cultural artefacts as our mountain crests, and we see each of these differently from one another—which does not mean that one may not speak about them, reach agreements or disagreements about these. Another more problematic set of questions that one would want to ask to the defenders of this position is: what exactly should replace the state of decline of our “comic epoch”? Is there a ‘model’ of a better path to follow? Should art be taught according to methods sanctified by the past? With what consequences? Pissarro and Cézanne both experienced what this meant at a point in modernity where it had become more than accepted to question the methods of the past. Pissarro and Cézanne, as well as Johns and Rauschenberg, as we saw, in fact, strongly engaged in the arts of the past—but in their own terms, and not according to a formula that was passed on through some ‘chain of crests’-like theory.

These two positions (the dogmatic/historicist one) and those of these four artists are at the antipodes of each other. The latter dialogues are made out of other dialogues with

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637 Castoriadis, just like Nietzsche, does not have much respect for the public, however, whom he blames for the present state-of-affairs: the avant-garde is apparently busy doing nothing but copies and bad pastiches “thanks also to the ignorance of a hypercivilized and neo-illiterate public.” (Ibid. and Ferry, 241.)
past and present figures. Each one of these four artists has experienced a consistent engagement with various artists of the past, without ever resorting to the ‘chain of crests’ theory. Rauschenberg’s interests in the arts of the past took, as one would expect, a multifarious shape. One finds innumerable reproductions of famous works of art juxtaposed in his work next to simulacra of the facts of life. He specifically has shown interest in the works by the impressionists and the post-impressionists in the early 1950s. Judith Bernstock, among other critics who focused on the relationship that Rauschenberg has nurtured with older art, has even suggested that his attachment to Renoir’s works may have had something to do with the nostalgic memories the artist kept of his childhood in Port Arthur, Texas, and the delicate floral material that surrounded him then. For instance, Rauschenberg interestingly seems almost to answer Nietzsche—and Rewald—in an artistic conversation he had with Calvin Tompkins over his illustrations of Dante’s Inferno after Ciardi’s translation. Here was precisely a counter-example of a genuine artistic dialogue between a contemporary artist and an early humanist author, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), who certainly can claim to hold his place among any ‘chain of crests.’ Having just discovered that he could transfer (in reverse) the images he would find in newspaper clippings or magazine photographs by applying a coat of solvent on them and placing them face down on a sheet of drawing, Rauschenberg soon began a series of drawings—each

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638 One finds a postcard reproduction of a painting of Etretat, which is at the Metropolitan by Monet in Should Love Come First?, for instance. [See Ill. 200].
drawing illustrating one of Dante’s thirty-four cantos. This project began in 1958-9. Weary, however, of ‘the great moments in the battles of individuals,’ Rauschenberg felt a degree of irritation with Dante’s self-aggrandizing tone. Rather than closing the book and discard it, Rauschenberg entered into an intense artistic dialogue (or an argument) with *Inferno*. He decided, for instance, to represent Dante as a man with a towel tied around his waist that came straight from an ad for golf clubs found in *Sports Illustrated*. One should not, however, rush to conclude that this was a mere iconoclastic gesture: following his total immersion in Dante’s text, Rauschenberg’s series of drawing’s follow precisely the structure of each Canto. The result is often astounding, but the interesting fact is that one reads Dante’s text certainly differently with the Rauschenberg drawings under one’s eyes.

One finds in the dialogue between Rauschenberg and Dante a perfect example of what Johns might have had in mind when he said that new works of art offer a tool to critique old works of art just as effective as the critique that older works of art produce for new works of art. Here, of course, we are very far from the Nietzschean position claimed by both modernists and anti-modernists that results in eliminating what is not worthy of history. Instead of casting away Dante’s work because he found Dante’s portrayal of himself too lofty—or out of sync with the present—

Rauschenberg entered instead into an extraordinary dialogue with his 14th century

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Italian counterpart. The text (itself structured as multiple dialogues), translated into English—before being translated again into Rauschenberg’s own hell. Rauschenberg’s explanation for his choice of the man with a towel around his waist to represent Dante, consisted in saying that this was “the most neutral popular image I could find in that scale.” Incidentally, it is striking to find how this sentiment resonates with the type of positions that were consistently voiced by Pissarro throughout his life, as he was staffing his landscapes with peasant figures that appeared as “neutral” as possible: Pissarro was always afraid of ‘effects’ that would pull a picture towards a sentimental result. He once said that: “le joli est un danger pire que le laid et le grotesque !…” Here again, a curious kinship brings Rauschenberg and Pissarro in an oddly close company. The difference is that, unlike Rauschenberg, he did not have to fetch them in the ad section of Sports Illustrated magazine. Even though Rauschenberg soon became totally immersed in this project, he was not uncritical of Dante. In fact, Tompkins explains that the conversation Rauschenberg carried out with Dante was turning into “a private quarrel.” Here was Rauschenberg’s position:

I was so irritated by his morality—the self-righteous, the self-appointed conscience imposing guilt on old friends. He was the hero and the author, the

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641 Tompkins, Off the Wall, op. cit., 158.
642 CP/JBH, III, 95. See also Pissarro taking Puvis de Chavannes’s defense because he (unlike Alma Tadema) donned antiquity with a drawing full of his own sensations, “without meekness, without prettiness: this terrible thing for art.” (CP/JBH, II, 325.) Here Pissarro seems to announce de Kooning’s aesthetic stance.
man who made the world he described. Everybody else had illustrated Dante
the writer, you see, but I wanted to show Dante the character in the story, and
that forced me into isolation. I was looking for an old fisherman’s shack in the
wilderness, something that doesn’t exist in this country any more. I went
down to Florida because I wanted warm weather, and on Treasure Island I
found a storage room, built out on the end of a wharf, that belonged to a motel
in a dilapidated part of town. The day I moved in the woman had to shut down
because her sister had fallen ill up north. I persuaded her that she would be
lucky to have me look after the place. So it actually turned out to be the
closest thing to what I was looking for. Both Jasper and Ileana\(^{643}\) came down
to visit me, and both left after two days. They found it sordid. But it was just
what I wanted. I stayed six months and never knew anyone. I did the last half
of the drawings there. The \textit{Inferno} builds up in intensity all along, and I really
needed that isolation.\(^{644}\)

It is safe to say that, on this level at least, neither Rauschenberg nor Pissarro were
Nietzscheans. I am not suggesting that Rauschenberg’s interpretation of Dante’s is the
right one, of course: no single interpretation can claim to be the right one.

Rauschenberg simply \textit{translated} Dante’s text into his own language and his own
medium, while inserting there his own concerns as well. Rauschenberg did more: he

\(^{643}\) Ileana was Castelli’s first wife.

\(^{644}\) Tompkins, \textit{op. cit.}, 159-60.
felt like entering himself the multiple dialogues that *Inferno* is made of, and he literally projected (or transferred) his own image next to Dante’s, while reinventing the successive steps of Dante’s drama in his own terms. Rauschenberg’s stance towards Dante’s text sheds a very interesting light on the Nietzschean concept of history. For here again, a contemporary artist produces a comment on a work of art of the past, and in this process, if we happen to be familiar with both works, it affects our own reading of the older work of art. In effect, both art and art history function on the same ground: yet, art history has often tended to distance itself as carefully as it could from its own object of study, as if it could be contaminated by it. Ultimately, however, it too establishes value judgments on works of art much in the same way as artists themselves produce value judgments on art. Todorov explains that there are two types of truths that compete with, and complete each other in any historical discipline and in all interpretative works: there is what he calls a “truth of adequacy” and a “truth of unveiling.”645 One establishes indisputable facts; the other draws meaning from them. The former direction is descriptive; the latter produces comments and evaluations out of these facts (it is evaluative). The two are most often subtly blended in any form of narrative, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other. What the positivists/historicists tend to do is to blur the dividing line between the two levels, so that facts and their importance, or value, appear to be one and the same thing: the importance of a particular fact is an inherent attribute in the fact being examined, and is thus not a subject of discussion. Thus, history has an

easy task to retain those facts that are important from those that are not—what Hegel used to call the dust of history is simply left out.

This question has obviously become of acute interest lately. Georges Didi-Huberman addresses it in the opening of his latest book. This is how he phrases it:

Devant une image—si ancienne soit-elle—, le présent ne cesse jamais de se reconfigurer, pour peu que la dépossession du regard n’ait pas complètement cédé la place à l’habitude infatuée du « spécialiste ». Devant une image—si récente, si contemporaine soit-elle—, le passé en même temps ne cesse jamais de se reconfigurer, puisque cette image ne devient pensable que dans une construction de la mémoire, si ce n’est de la hantise. Devant une image, enfin, nous avons humblement à reconnaître ceci : qu’elle nous survivra probablement, que nous sommes devant elle l’élément fragile, l’élément de passage, et qu’elle est devant nous l’élément du futur, l’élément de la durée. L’image a souvent plus de mémoire et plus d’avenir que l’étant qui la regarde.\(^\text{646}\)

These humbling remarks remind us that the present acquires a certain shape at the contact of images of the past and simultaneously the very past finds its own shape,

(its own status) through our present. Although this is an aspect that has tended to be overlooked, the fairly free exchange of viewpoints between old and new has considerably nurtured the artistic practice of all four of the artists studied here.

* The Strife Between Subjectivity and Objectivity

These four artists, needless to say, introduced (as most artists are prone to do) a fairly subjective vantage point on the history of art. This kind of vantage point (more subjective than objective) has found a certain echo even among certain art historians. Steinberg early on took a critical stance towards what he saw as art history’s need for a certain objectivism at a particular point. He claims that art history needed rigor and objective historical discipline where it had had none before:

The great immigrant European scholars who taught most of us what to teach could afford to lay every stress on objective historical discipline because their humanism was bred in the bone. What the field needed when they were entering it was the corrective of a more rigorous scientism than had ever before been applied to art. And it is because they succeeded that the correctives we need are no longer the same.
Steinberg then asked the telling question: “Can objectivity be made too much of?”

After describing what one of his teachers had told him to do (never to tell his readers or listeners how he came to the results he found), Steinberg comes up with this very sobering, and yet, even today, refreshing call:

I admire the art historian who lets the ground of his private involvement show. Though we all hope to reach objectively valid conclusions, this purpose is not served by disguising the subjectivity of interest, method, and personal history which in fact conditions our work.647

Every act of interpretation is, to some extent at least, conditioned by our subjectivity, by our mere position in history: therefore the very idea of reaching full objectivity, as Steinberg describes the research methods of his own teachers, is absurd as it would require a leap outside history in order to look at history from a vantage point outside history and time. We find here the same problem as for the representation of the thing in itself which would require, in order to be apprehended without the influence of subjectivity, a leap outside subjectivity—therefore outside oneself: another absurdity. Yet, this pursuit of the thing in itself was very much what oriented academic practice until impressionism came about. The question of how to represent the thing that one sees as one sees it (Pissarro/Cézanne), or as if it is not seen (Johns/Rauschenberg)

very much constitutes the delicate balance that has guided the artistic research of these two pairs of artists. Interestingly, Pissarro, however diffident he was of all academic practices, still felt that academies offered a good start for a beginning artist, as well as a sustained contact with the art of the past. Specifically referring to the artistic problem of the thing in itself, this is how he offered a few pieces of advice to his son who was beginning his career as an artist:

N’oublie pas les académies d’après nature, les copies au trait avec indications des Egyptiens, et des figures gothiques, les vraies, comme nous en avons vues à Rouen ; il faut te ferrer sur le dessin, pour le moment ne cherche que la chose-même. plus tard quand tu sauras plus, si tu as ce qu’il faut, tu trouveras ton style… [R]appelle-toi que les Primitifs sont nos maîtres, parce qu’ils sont naïfs et savants. 649

This oxymoronic juxtaposition (naïfs et savants) says a lot: it suggests that the great artists, whom in this sense, Cézanne and Pissarro are hoping to emulate, have blended knowledge and naivety; or objectivity and subjectivity. At the beginning, however, the pursuit of an objective representation must dominate the learning program of a developing artist—according to Pissarro. Soon, though, this is where the balance can

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648 Pissarro does not use the philosophical term ‘la chose en-soi’ but a close expression ‘la chose-même.’ He has in mind the problem of the ideal representation of the thing in itself.

649 CP/JBH, I, 259. Italics are the artist’s emphasis; underlined text is my emphasis.
become tricky, one must leave the academic formulas lest one fall in the trap of “the sad burden of photographic interpretation.”

Yet, subjective projections are always part and parcel of any act of interpretation, be it an academic drawing, [See Ill. 3] as Pissarro counter-warned his second son later on, saying: “Il n’y a pas de dessin juste!” Subjective projections also inform other acts of interpretation: the work of an art historian, for instance, or indeed of an artist commenting upon another artist’s work. The subjective drive behind a given work is always in tension with a more objective drive towards knowledge. But what is knowledge if it remains the knowledge of ‘uninteresting’ or ‘worthless’ facts? The objective thirst of facts is inevitably accompanied by a subjective evaluation of the importance of these facts. We therefore find ourselves in the unusual situation whereby we may learn about how to conduct our own discipline from looking at these four artists at work. Emile Bernard, for instance, describing Cézanne’s watercolors, wrote a sentence that precisely encapsulates the two aspects of this problem:

Un effort de logique lutte avec la sensibilité éveillée ; et la contradiction de la chose convenue avec soi-même et celle que la nature présente aux sens, forme un drame étrange en la page de ces aquarelles.

650 CP/JBH, I, 326. Letter to his niece, Esther, who was sculpting busts from photographic portraits.
651 CP/JBH, II, 323. Letter to Georges.
The drama of this strife between the subjective and objective forces at work in Cézanne’s work leads Bernard to another fascinating analysis—that of the status of the ‘abandoned’ works of art. The debate has recently been at the core of an exhibition that traveled from Vienna to Zurich. Bernard, however, interestingly did not use the term ‘finished’ or ‘unfinished’—terms which strongly allude to the working methods accepted by the Salons and the officials that regulated the academic art practice in the last half of the 19th century. Bernard prefers the term “abandon” which, rather than the lackadaisical term “unfinished” suggests a much more dramatic decision, as in ‘abandoning a ship.’ Bernard explains:

Une tentative de claire logique accompli par place, quelques morceaux savoureux; mais l’impossible repentir d’un tel procédé, produit, ailleurs, un abandon ou une tache. Point de grattage comme dans l’huile, de repeints; mais l’abandon de l’ouvrage quand la sévérité du peintre, toujours en éveil, aura cru trouver une de ces défectuosités que son opinion, toujours insatisfaite, se créait si facilement.

Bernard’s theory offers one of the best explanations of one of the most perplexing phenomena in Cézanne’s practice: the fact that so many of his late works appear, if

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653 See the exhibition catalogue: Cézanne: Finished—Unfinished, (Exh.), op. cit.
654 Bernard, op. cit., 239.
not always just with a few patches of color on his canvas, at least with blatant patches of unpainted canvas. The confrontation of the Cézannian logic (in which the artist’s subjectivity is constantly butting the wall of objectivity) leads to inevitable “défectuosités” (flaws) that appear unsolvable to the artist. There is no exit, therefore, and the painting has to be abandoned—it is neither ‘finished’ nor ‘unfinished’ but it has been led to the farthest point it could reach. The problem with the term ‘unfinished’ is that it inherently suggests that the prefix ‘un’ in ‘unfinished’ could easily be dropped, and that the painting left in that state, could then be led to its natural destiny and become finished. The problem with this position is that it judges Cézanne’s works at the light of criteria that define conventional art itself—which, as we know, Cézanne fervently rejected. There is an assumption there that Cézanne is at heart a classical artist who would not have left an unfinished painting if he had had more time, or had been less lazy—or perhaps, had he needed to sell his paintings more pressingly. However, these abandoned paintings, within Cézanne’s (il-)logic, could not have been pushed further than they were: they reached, however little paint there is on the canvas, a state of saturation. It is, partly, one of the reasons why Cézanne, in his pictorial language, speaks as readily to Pissarro, as he does to Johns and Rauschenberg.

Rauschenberg too, in his graphic approach to Dante’s work, carries on two separate activities consciously and with great determination. Here is an artist “commenting”
upon (and therefore “interpreting”) another artist’s work: his medium is not words, but his own art. What is unusual in this situation is that the comment is itself a work of art. Through this project, Rauschenberg both attempts to respect a certain “truth of adequacy” to the text he has chosen to illustrate. At the same time, as all artists who illustrate a literary text, he feels also a certain freedom to go about “interpreting” or unveiling the meaning of such or such canto in a way that seems to him more suitable to his reading of the Cantos. This is, therefore, very much Dante’s *Inferno* by Rauschenberg; and there is here a real dialogue going on between Rauschenberg and Dante—Dante who did not think it was below him to carry on a dialogue with Virgil, among other figures of the past. On the one hand, Rauschenberg went “out of his way” in every sense of the word in order to find the proper site that would facilitate his interpretation (truth of unveiling) of his close reading of Dante’s text (truth of adequacy.) On the other hand, he was openly critical of Dante’s grand air, of him being both the author and the hero—judge and party—of the story being told.

Todorov called “assertoric” texts in which the author, as a subject belonging to a particular time in history, and the author as the subject who writes the text, are one and the same person. Usually, these texts are historical, scientific, political or philosophical writings. (When I say “I,” I don’t claim to be some one else than the “I” that writes the present text, for instance.) The peculiar feature, that Rauschenberg criticizes, is that Dante is, in a sense, two “I”s at the same time: the one who writes, and the one who acts with his guide Virgil: he is a little like *The Man with Two Souls*.
to whom Rauschenberg dedicated one of his sculptures, with this very “curious” title. According to Rauschenberg, Dante gives himself too great a part; and so it follows that Rauschenberg rectifies—openly reinterpreting through a series of very beautiful drawings—what he sees as an excess in Dante’s *Inferno*. Of course, Rauschenberg is not an historian, and his liberty of interpretation and the choice of his medium cannot be compared with that incumbent to an historian. What, however, can be compared to the work of an historian is the fact that Rauschenberg carried out a series of comments on another artist’s work. Even though it is impossible to ‘translate’ into the linguistic form of a critical discourse what Rauschenberg is ‘saying’ in a visual language about Dante, there is at the heart of this project an artist commenting upon another artist’s work, and response to the sets of stimuli emitted by Dante.

*The Role of the ‘Masses’*

Another task of the modern art historian—especially relevant to the works and positions of our four artists—is to address the place of each artist vis-à-vis the public. A quote from Nietzsche, chosen by Rewald discussing Pissarro’s work, provides yet another insight as to some of the social and political implications of the type of positions embodied by modernism—of which, as I claimed earlier, the works by the four artists in this essay offer a strong criticism:
‘…if the custom of democratic suffrage and numerical majorities be transferred to the realm of art, and the artist put on his defense before the court of aesthetic dilettanti, you may take your oath on his condemnation, although—or rather because—his judges had proclaimed solemnly the canon of “monumental art” the art that has “had an effect on all ages”, according to the official definition.’

Nietzsche evokes with striking resemblance the situation faced by the impressionists when they were sending works to the Salon. Yet, the story is not so simple, and Rewald who had edited Cézanne’s and Pissarro’s correspondences, and published so much on both artists, knew well that both artists held ambivalent sentiments, at the least, about the advantages and drawbacks for them to turn to the public directly, by jumping over the heads of the Salon jury. Cézanne specifically appealed to the right of the “crowd” to decide about the quality of his own work, in a letter he wrote to the Emperor’s Minister of the Arts. Cézanne clearly had none of the scorn that Nietzsche nurtured for the masses. Cézanne, in his courageous letter to Nieuwerkerke, the Minister of the Arts, demanded the return of the Salon des Refusés in order to submit his works directly to the people. What Rewald lightly ignores here is that it was in fact the very crowd who eventually — after a long conflicted agony — sanctioned the validity of ‘the strong artistic spirits’ (Nietzsche’s expression) who made History — not just a few privileged cognoscenti. More numerous than ever, crowds (literally) of

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655 Rewald (quoting Nietzsche), op. cit., 11.
museum visitors continue to validate the so-called “mediatic” success of the impressionists, and produce a considerable economic impact as they go and see the, apparently endless, succession of impressionist shows that so many museums produce globally today. Of course, Rewald’s sentiments were largely nurtured by comprehensible and justified complaints of the impressionists who, year after year, found it so difficult to obtain more than a limited positive response from a few critics, audacious collectors, and dealers ready to gamble. This situation lasted for both Pissarro and Cézanne until the last decade of their lives. This led Pissarro to produce such statements that, indeed, can partly corroborate Nietzsche’s position—and illustrate Rewald’s statement:

Tu as rudement raison de dire que l’on n’a pas besoin d’art dans les masses, on s’en moque pas mal, mais je crois que c’est absolument la même chose en Angleterre et partout, l’argent est tout… il faut, mon bon, prendre l’époque comme elle est… sans cela ce sera plus terrible encore. Nous y avons passé, nous savons par quel dédain tous ces idiots nous recevaient quand nous tâchions de nous sortir de l’embarras, aussi quand on trouve par hasard un exploiteur, il faut s’estimer bougrement veinard !!656

656 CP/JBH, IV, 260. Letter written to Lucien, 28 Sept. 1896. (The high frequency of idioms in this passage calls for a translation: You are damn right to say that the masses have no need for art: they don’t give a hoot, but I think it is exactly the same thing in England and everywhere: money means everything…my dear, you have to take this period as it is, otherwise things will get even far worse. We went through this, we know in what contempt these idiots held us when we were striving to get out of hardship. Therefore, one must consider oneself damn lucky when one finds someone willing to exploit you!!)
This passage while casting a general judgment on “the masses,” takes on a tone of resignation unfamiliar to Pissarro, and leads Pissarro to this rather extraordinary statement—for an anarchist—that boils down to the verdict that the people have no taste, nor any need for art. This actually brings Pissarro oddly close to some of Cézanne’s most reactionary statements when the latter declares (here, in a vaguely Nietzschean tone) that “les musées sont des lieux odieux. Ils puent la démocratie.”

The statement by Pissarro opens a whole series of questions that one would want to ask Pissarro in return (even though these cannot be explored within the context of this essay) on how art and anarchy could possibly blend, if indeed, the people don’t care. Would the people need to be ‘educated’? By what means? By whom? This brings Pissarro in strangely close company with Nietzsche, Rewald, and Greenberg—although the latter two claim that the people has bad taste, rather than no taste. After all, anarchism, as we know, has often been associated with some of tenets of the Nietzschean ideology.

* Cézanne Condoned Pissarro’s Anarchist Views

Cézanne himself seems to be joining the band—as a most unexpected surprise guest, given Cézanne’s inclination to lean on “Rome” (as he was wont to call the pope and

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657 Conversations, 160. Cézanne never minded a certain amount of contradiction in his life: the fact that he probably visited and enjoyed the collections of more museums than most of his colleagues never stopped him from vituperating against the museum institutions.
his administration) for moral support towards the end of his life. This is another example of Cézanne’s inclination to contradict himself—an inclination that he incidentally also shared with his friend Pissarro. Cézanne wrote to Bernard in a Post Scriptum that remains difficult to understand when it is quoted (as it often is) without reference to the rest of the letter:

Vous me comprendrez mieux quand nous nous reverrons, l’étude modifie notre vision à un tel point, que l’humble et colossal Pissarro se trouve justifié de ses théories anarchistes.658

This most peculiar text is well-known and has seldom been commented, let alone explained. Why would Cézanne, late in life, turn to Bernard to confirm the validity of Pissarro’s radical political positions twenty years after having last worked with him—he, Cézanne, an anti-dreyfusard, and a practicing, if but whimsical, catholic? Leaving Pissarro aside for a moment, another question that does not receive an immediately clear answer is: what does this remark about a political movement (from which Cézanne felt very estranged) have to do within the context of a letter that entirely expands on Cézanne’s aesthetic and artistic program? A plausible answer to both questions can be found if we give the term ‘anarchist’ not its strict political sense (as a particular conception of the distribution of powers in society), but its general

658 Letter from Cézanne to Emile Bernard, 1905. Published in Conversations, 45, and in Paul Cézanne, Correspondance, op. cit., 314.
ideological underpinning. There is no doubt that Pissarro would have discussed ad libitum all aspects of anarchism with his younger friend when they were working together especially in the 1880s. The general Weltanschauung of anarchism places a central emphasis on the role of the individual. On the question of the respective rights of the individual vs. the state, anarchism simply inverts the conservative view that the state has rights over the individuals. As Robert Nozick explains, the premises of anarchism begin with this observation:

> Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights). So strong and far-reaching are these rights that they raise the question of what, if anything, the state and its officials may do. How much room do individual rights leave for the state?[^559]

Cézanne would certainly have had no qualms with such an emphasis on the rights of the individual against the state, or any official organization that would appropriate the power to decide on the professional fate of an artist by stamping a seal of approval or rejection on the back of the stretcher of his work. Incidentally, a possible (and perverse) explanation of Cézanne’s sympathy for the Vatican could be that it was a powerless institution: it could edict rules, but had no ‘executive’ power to impose them. Aesthetically, too, Cézanne was strongly in favor of developing an art that would allow the personality, as he called it (today, we might say the ‘individuality’)

to be asserted as powerfully as possible. In a letter to Bernard that followed the letter quoted above, Cézanne proposed another one of his ‘theses’ to Bernard:

…la thèse à développer est—quelque soit notre tempérament, ou forme de puissance en présence de la nature, de donner l’image de ce que nous voyons, en oubliant tout ce qui a paru avant nous. Ce qui, je crois, doit permettre à l’artiste de donner toute sa personnalité, grande ou petite.\textsuperscript{660}

This very late letter together with the most early letter written to the Minister of the Arts of the Second Empire\textsuperscript{661} both indicate that Cézanne all throughout his life held very high the conception of the rights of the individual in all respects: 1. in the political social context where he claims the right for an artist to show his work to “the crowd” regardless of the decision of a jury as to its worth,\textsuperscript{662} 2. in a creative context, when he faces nature which should “permit” him “to give all his personality.” It is in this general theory of the rights of the individual artist a) in society b) reflexively, towards himself as he is in the process of his creative action, that the Post Scriptum of the first letter of 1905 addressed to Bernard should be read and understood: indeed,

\textsuperscript{660} Letter from Cézanne to Emile Bernard, 23 October 1905: Conversations, 46, and Correspondance, 314-5. Note a difference of spelling, and of meaning, between the two editions: in Conversations, (P. M. Doran, ed.) one reads: “ce qui a paru” whereas in Correspondance (Rewald, ed.) one reads “ce qui apparut.” The Doran edition is more respectful of Cézanne’s odd spellings, sometimes to a fault. I, therefore, think that the Doran edition is more likely to be the correct one, in which case Cézanne intended to use the verb “paraître” in the composed past and should have said: ‘est paru’ instead of ‘a paru’—and not ‘apparut’ as Rewald proposes which is the past simple form of another verb: ‘apparaître.’

\textsuperscript{661} Correspondance, 114-5.

\textsuperscript{662} Ibid., 115.
Pissarro’s anarchistic views seem to be justified if one reads the above context of that letter. A) The political/social structure of the arts is, as ever, given a rough treatment by Cézanne: “Si les Salons officiels restent si inférieurs, la raison est qu’ils ne mettent en œuvre que des procédés plus ou moins étendus.” The solution that Cézanne sees against the political domination of the Salons is B) to encourage more reflexive, and individual forms of study and creation: “Il vaudrait mieux apporter plus d’émotion personnelle, d’observation et de caractère.”

When he thinks of some one who certainly committed all his “personality” and his artistic reflexion in front of nature, together with his personal efforts to defend the rights of the individuals in a strong political program, the name ‘Pissarro’ naturally comes to mind—thus he mentions his old friend to Bernard, realizing that in some ways, Cézanne has never been that far from Pissarro. Even if he would never openly adopt such a politically ‘revolutionary’ program in his views of society, he certainly adopted it when it came to his artistic and aesthetic agenda, and his vision of the necessary reforms of an ossified art world plagued by untouched rules and conventions. Finally, a letter that was unpublished until 1983 and has not elicited much attention since confirms that, to Pissarro and Cézanne, as well as their close friends at the Académies Suisse, Antoine Guillemet and Francisco Oller, the notion of “insurrection” was to be understood in both a political and an artistic sense. Guillemet wrote to Oller who had returned from Paris to his native Puerto Rico, giving a precious portrait of the situation of the context in Paris at the end of the Second Empire (the letter is dated 12 September 1866):

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663 Ibid., 313. (My emphasis.)
… l’éloignement de Paris est mauvais, les idées marchent joliment.664 Si tu savais comme Ribot est mauvais. Vollon aussi. Courbet devient classique. Il a fait des choses superbes ; à côté des Manet, c’est de la tradition et Manet à côté de Cézanne le deviendra à son tour. Tâche de revenir.665

After this brief historicizing review of the jolly march of ideas, whereby Courbet is ahead of Ribot and Vollon, but Manet is ahead of Courbet, and Cézanne is, of course, well ahead of Manet, Guillemet attempts to lure Oller back to Paris with the following, and mildly frightening, program:

… que diable veux-tu faire à Porto Rico, que ferait Pissarro à St. Thomas, que ferais-je en Chine ? Nous peignons sur un volcan ; le 93 de la peinture va tinter son glas funèbre : le Louvre brûlera, les musées, les antiques disparaitront et, comme l’a dit Proudhon, des cendres de la vieille civilisation peut seul sortir l’art nouveau. La fièvre nous brûle ; aujourd’hui est séparé d’un siècle de demain. Les dieux d’aujourd’hui ne seront pas ceux du

664 Clearly the historicist-inspired vocabulary of “ideas advancing, or marching forward” was very much part of the cultural context in which Pissarro and Cézanne were evolving.

The bawdy and facetious tone of this letter, written after lunch, tells us that Guillemet, attended in his writing task by both Pissarro and Cézanne, had probably not just drunk water during the meal. This letter is, however, important and adds the final touch to a clear understanding of what Cézanne had in mind in 1905 when he wrote this extraordinary sentence to Bernard: “l’humble et colossal Pissarro se trouve justifié de ses théories anarchistes.”668 It was not just Pissarro’s anarchistic theories, it was also those of the close group of four friends that he had joined, and who all had a

666 Note that in French (as in English), the same word ‘couteau’ may refer to a simple knife, or to a palette knife. The elliptical expression “le 93” refers back to 1793, i.e., to Robespierre and the Convention, the most ruthless episode of the French Revolution.
667 Ibid. 227.
668 Cézanne, Correspondance, 314.
shared goal: demolish in order to reconstruct—to demolish, that is, the political base upon which the second Empire, and his minister of the arts, Nieuwerkerque (misspelled by Guillemet) were seated and to replace the old order with their new aesthetic program: an idiosyncratic way of painting with a lot of ‘pâte’, i.e., with thick impasto. “To construct,” “to paint with a lot of impasto,” and “to jump on the stomachs of the bourgeois” seem to form a logical sequence under the nib of Guillemet, who, from the tone, of the letter, is also consulting his two buddies before writing any sentence. (This was, in fact, a frequent practice among Cézanne, Pissarro and their friends\(^669\)). This letter sent to Oller in Puerto Rico also proves that the letters sent to Nieuwerkerke to demand the “legitimate right” to exhibit his works to the public through a reestablished Salon des Refusés, were still fresh on the minds of this group of friends. In fact, one finds in Guillemet’s letter an echo of the reasoning put forward by Cézanne to the Minister of the Arts. The double threat (they slammed the damn door on us; we’ll slam the damn door on their nose) found a less abrasive version in the letter to the Minister where Cézanne endeavored his best to be more polite than he had ever been:

\(^{669}\) See Cézanne, *Correspondance*, 33: “C’est Cézanne qui écrit et c’est Baille qui dicte.” (Letter to Zola, 1858).
... je souhaite ardemment que la foule sache au moins que je ne tiens pas plus à être confondu avec ces messieurs du Jury qu’ils ne paraissent désirer être confondus avec moi.\textsuperscript{670}

The important Guillemet letter also confirms that Pissarro, Cézanne, and their close friends considered thick impasto as a form of rebellion, as a way to “assault” and “topple” the artistic system. For this common cause, they needed to keep very tight ranks between themselves. The technique that Pissarro and Cézanne developed to the furthest extent during the 1860s carried, at least to some extent, to their eyes, an offensive potential. It is this power to shock, and this dogged determination not to give up the struggle that Pissarro recognized in Cézanne. This potential to aggress or shock was also probably what Roger Fry had in mind when he referred to Cézanne’s “anarchic” impressionism.\textsuperscript{671}

\textit{* Nietzsche and Nieuwerkerke: Should Cézanne have been Entitled to Show His Work to the Crowd?}

The ideological position embodied by Pissarro/Cézanne is twofold: a. fight for the rights of all individual artists against the oppressing authority of the Salons; b.

\textsuperscript{670} Cézanne, Correspondance, 115. Cézanne’s letter was sent to Minister Nieuwerkerke on April 19, 1866; Guillemet’s letter to Oller was written five months later.
\textsuperscript{671} Quoted by Richard Shiff, \textit{op. cit.}, 149. Also see unpublished lecture by the same author, titled “Unfinished and Abstracted: Paul Cézanne, Twentieth-Century Painter in Spite of Himself,” Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, (February 2, 2001).
encourage them to go in front of nature to confront themselves and ‘realize’ themselves. The Nietzsche/Rewald/Greenberg historicist/individualist position is summarized in this quote: “The great moments in the battle of individuals form a chain of crests that links humanity through the ages.” In fact, the Nietzschean verdict cancels the premises of the Cézanne/Pissarro position: a claim for equal rights for all individuals to show their works to “the crowd.” Once this claim is dissolved, one is left with nothing but a battle of the mightiest individuals that has been unleashed in the arena of history with the inevitable ‘might is right’-principle leading to its results. These finally form the now famous chain of crests, and the many ‘great moments’ that form the contents of History—or at least a certain version of history. Here the point is that this position, in fact, invalidates the legalistic claim that Cézanne addressed to the Minister of the Arts. In fact, Nieuwerkerke could have replied to Cézanne and defended the official position of the French Imperial Government by invoking Nietzsche’s argument. Rather than choosing not to answer Cézanne, the Minister of the Arts would have had to invent the quote that Rewald used a hundred and ten years later, stating that only the individuals capable of producing some of “the great moments in the battle of individuals” should be allowed to show their works in the Salons; Cézanne was unquestionably not one of them in 1866, and would have therefore been rejected with a strong argument. What Rewald (and Greenberg) did not see is that the ultimate decision that defines ‘these great moments’ always rests on

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672 The letter sent by Cézanne to Count de Nieuwerkerke remains in the archives of the Louvre. What is interesting is that the letter, which never received a reply, nevertheless carries a handwritten mention in the margin by some official, to the effect that Cézanne’s request could not possibly be granted.
some form of value judgment and an act of decision: Nieuwerkerke, on the other hand, knew this very well. These decisions cannot but involve some degree of arbitrariness—even if these very decisions may eventually be sanctioned (or not) by institutional and popular tastes: Whether one likes it or not, who would doubt today that impressionism became a very successful art movement? Likewise with Abstract Expressionism. In this sense, Rewald and Greenberg were right; Nieuwerkerke was wrong. That vast success, however, simply demonstrates that there is a large consensus (among the “crowd”) to go and see the works by these artists. There is certainly no objective or verifiable criterion that permits to prove the universal validity of these art movements. Some arbitrariness is necessarily always part of the decision process that establishes which works of art are better than others. There is nothing wrong at all with this arbitrariness, since this is a common denominator that applies to all of us, irrespective of ethnic, gender, religious, cultural or historical identities. We all proceed somewhat arbitrarily when we opt for this work of art rather than that one. There is something wrong, however, with this arbitrary process only insofar as it conceals itself under the guise of some historical authority, or some institutional power. It is precisely this kind of arbitrariness that Cézanne and Pissarro had undertaken to fight when they stood up against the representatives of the Emperor’s government authority as far as taste-making decisions were concerned in the late 1860s. This certainly was enough to make them very close to each other: they
both recognized in each other a fighter for a cause with which they both strongly identified.

* Historicism, Arbitrary Taste and Condescension*

What precedes takes nothing away from the huge, and even monumental, contributions to the understanding of modern art that the formidable legacy of both Rewald and Greenberg have made feasible. This is not an indictment of their work but a simple observation: the position they chose offered the invaluable merit (for themselves) of establishing their historical decisions beyond the realm of debate or discussions. The reason for this is simple: one doesn’t quarrel with History. Unfortunately, this position tends to turn axiological decisions (evaluative judgments) into things or facts, not subjects of discussion or appreciation as they ought to remain. For instance, such propositions as “one was better off being on the side of Pissarro and Cézanne, than on Bouguereau’s (or Gérôme’s)” or as this: “one is better off looking at Picasso’s work than at Repin’s, as the uneducated Russian peasants do” could not be questioned since History eventually gave them full validation: Pissarro, Cézanne, and Picasso seemed to have won the battle against Bouguereau and Repin. But what battle? Fought by whom? Surely not just by the actors in question? Here we find another parallel—a historiographical one—between French impressionism and the New York school, and this may not be the fruit of serendipity. There is, deep
down, a positivist, and even a scientist trend at the heart of most of modernism. What this stance takes away is the possibility for a dialogue to exist—or, even worse, the possibility for a multiplicity of dialogues to take place: no room for dialogues between the heroes themselves; no room for discussions of the findings of historicism among the readers of these accounts, since they are presented as facts, not as value judgments, or aesthetic preferences (which they actually are.) I need to add one more precision: the fact that I largely agree (on the whole) with both John Rewald’s and Clement Greenberg’s aesthetic options, as far as their tastes were concerned, does not stop me from wishing to examine the ‘theoretical’ base upon which these options were established. The fact is that Picasso did not wake up every morning having decided that “he” too was better off being Picasso than being Repin: his prime motivation was not to “make History” even though he was very early on aware of the phenomenon of publicity generated around him, and enjoyed every bit of the early glory that came to him, with all its material and worldly advantages. But I doubt very much that he ever cared about the famous early Greenbergian axioma: avant-gardism is worthier than kitsch. History, in fact, doesn’t happen the way historicists claim it does: History is seldom planned as such, and even if it is, it doesn’t necessarily pan out as planned. Bouguereau and Meissonier definitely made history in their days: their works sold for huge sums compared to the works by the Pissarros and the Cézannes of the time; their works brought them high social distinction, official honors, prestige, fame. Wasn’t therefore History—of another kind, perhaps—at their
doorsteps, too? The main problem with historicism is to single out one type of events and pin those up as the single most dominant and significant events of the time. The premises of this essay are different: there is not one history, but several different and competing types of histories being made all the time. (This does not imply that anything goes and that one should not apply all due epistemological diligence in front of facts: simply, all does not end with the facts.) The idea of a universal History that would combine all of these histories into an all-encompassing and objective history is sheer utopia—it is a mere “Idea” in the Kantian sense, a dream that has its own use as offering a guiding horizon, but a dream nonetheless. Each of these histories—whether the history of official taste in France, or the history of the impressionists, and a multitude of other histories in between, whether they have been written or not—can be broken down into several other histories: until it reaches down to the history of Madame Brémond, Cézanne’s gouvernante, or the unknown, and untold history of la Mère Larchevêque, the sitter of a monumentally simple portrait by Pissarro, at the Metropolitan Museum—people seldom mentioned in the treatise of history of art on these artists, and yet, people who counted enormously for the artists in question. Johns by focusing as has been amply emphasized on everyday signs or objects, and Rauschenberg by allowing “life” to surface in his work, both artists, too, in their own idioms and times, looked at ways of exploring what Bakhtin called “the humble prose of living” and contributed to making different histories from the monolithic modernist version of history. None of these works were produced with an over-arching meta-
historical Project at hand, but they began with everyday life, with simple conversations, with facts and value judgments being shared with others—or meditations with oneself: the findings of these tended to orient each of these itineraries and add to the making of history. [ADDITION] In fact, dancer Paul Taylor a friend of both Johns’ and Rauschenberg’s exactly confirms that many of these works and ideas came about through simple and casual conversations. Having worked for Johns and Rauschenberg in their commercial window-display enterprise, he thus described both artists’ interests in the world around them. These words were written in the early days of the two artists’ careers and have not often been quoted:

When not dancing, I work for my painter pals, Bob Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. Their careers haven’t yet quite gotten off the ground, and so they’re bolstering their meager incomes by designing and making department-store window displays, paying me by the hour to help at their loft on Pearl Street. …

Bob and Jap’s loft is so small that in order to make room for the display work, Bob sometimes throws out a few of his old paintings. Once, when I find his last remaining dirt painting in the trash, I ask him for it and he signs the back “To Pete.” … While working on the displays, Bob and Jap often talk about art. As far as I can make out, their main intent is to glorify, or at least present in a new way, ordinary objects. These things—Coke bottles, coat
hangers, light bulbs, etc.—aren’t supposed to be symbols. The idea is to appreciate them for their own beauty. If there’s a message, it seems to be a recommendation for everybody to expand their vision, to get a kick out of stuff that’s usually considered homely, corny, or even unsightly.673

These common interests in the “homely” or the “unsightly” do not negate differences of emphasis, nor preferences that either artist had the privilege to exert:

Neither [artist] paints pictures of anything, exactly—they recycle the thing itself. [Taylor here unknowingly targets Rauschenberg’s work, rather than Johns’.] Both disapprove of likening things to other things. Both have a fondness for the same objects, but Jap can get more wrapped up in American flags than Bob can, judging by his large numbers of them. And Jap likes numbers better, large numbers of numbers done in wax. Bob sometimes slips into exoticism, such as a stuffed angora goat with a tire around its middle. Jap is a fine draughtsman. Bob can’t draw at all, even if he wanted to. Bob’s works, mirroring his own nature, have a high gloss of humor and are collages of enthusiastic charm and dark mayhem underlined by strong commitment. Jap’s works, in my inexpert opinion, are less charming, almost frighteningly

Spartan, and so strong that I find them hard to relate to. Bob’s I can laugh with; Jap’s, for all their virtue, laugh at me.\footnote{674}

This text, written by an “inexpert” though friendly hand, presents the advantage of drawing a simple and uncomplicated description of both artists’ different styles of approach to the small facts of life, and the treatment these receive through each of their art. The structure of this exchange does clearly resemble a conversation around a common theme between two “pals” who, yet, have different voices, and different views and emphases. They share, however, the same core interest—even though this core interest receives very different expressions through each individual.

[END OF ADDITION]

Insignificant as these small facts may sound in the scale of big History, these are in part the focus of this essay, as I believe they were largely—for different motivations and with different media—the foci of all four artists in this essay.

\begin{center}\textit{Opening Up Art to Others and Standing Up for Them}\end{center}

Oddly enough, the first premises of a modernist stance applied to French art (even though the term “modernism” was first popularized in its current acceptation in Britain (before knowing its glorious ascension in America) concept that did not exist

\footnote{674 Ibid.}
in 19th century France) could already be felt at the time of the impressionists. Even though Pissarro was not immune against the seduction of the shortcuts offered by a historicist version of artistic facts, as Greenberg was prompt to notice, Pissarro could also be very critical of the incipient logic of this highly selective process when he wrote, with a tone verging on insult, to Huysmans: “C’est fou de renfermer la peinture moderne entre 4 ou 5 noms.”—thus telling Huysmans in no uncertain terms that he was crazy to reduce the history of painting to four or five names only. It should be immediately said that Pissarro’s intent is definitely not self-serving because his name belongs to the four or five in question. Huysmans had praised Pissarro’s work in his most recent essay. One would, therefore, have expected Pissarro to send a polite and complimentary thank you note, at the very least, to the novelist-critic to express his thanks. Far from grateful, Pissarro expressed that he was upset even though he was taking the risk of offending one of his few unqualified supporters. The reason he was upset was because Huysmans was not more inclusive in his “history” of la peinture moderne: Cézanne, for instance, had been left out. This, among other things, infuriated the altruistic Pissarro. Even though he liked to think that he was

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676 Pissarro uses similar terms when he describes the way of truth (the impressionist way) and when he describes in the same breath the inevitable progress towards socialist ideals. For instance, recommending a couple of books on socialism to one of his English relatives, he tells his son that these books will give a “general idea of the movement that sweeps our modern society towards novel ideas,” (CP/JBH, I, 266) Further in the same letter, he carries on the same theme: “He [your cousin] will then get a good idea of the movement that takes over everything.” After a few words pestering against the bourgeois’ idiotic backward attitudes, he concludes his diatribe: “voilà Delacroix, voilà Berlioz, voilà Ingres, voilà Keene, etc. Et en littérature et en architecture et en science et en médecine, et en toute espèce de connaissances humaines c’est pareil.”
677 See Section II, note 59.
following the “way of truth,” Pissarro always remained keenly interested in entering discussions and exchanges, not just with the four or five heroes of modern art, but with countless people, irrespective of ranks, distinctions, or promises to reach one day the Pantheon of “la peinture moderne.” Most of the artists mentioned in Pissarro’s voluminous correspondence are barely represented on the major museum walls today. Pissarro surrounded himself with colleagues and friends with whom long and animated conversations took place. Even though his friendship with Cézanne was very significant to him, it is not certain, when one reads his letters, that Pissarro valued his close relationship with Cézanne more than he valued his relationship with Antoine Guillemet, or Guillaumin at least in the 1860s. His friendship with Ludovic Piette, whom he saw intermittently from the late 1860s until 1878 when Piette died, certainly occupied a vital position in Pissarro’s life. Ludovic Piette was an artist whose name was certainly not retained in the history of “la peinture moderne;” he nevertheless counted just as much as Cézanne did in Pissarro’s life. When reading his correspondence, one has the distinct impression that Pissarro held a far deeper esteem and admiration for Piette as a human being than he did for anyone else. But he also held a greater respect for Cézanne, as an artist, because he had the same highly developed attribute in art as he did in life: guts—or as Cézanne unstoppably repeats in

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Vollard’s account: “des couilles.” Cézanne was not afraid of adversity, either in art or in life.

The inter-subjective relationships under discussion here are therefore not at all exclusive of others: on the contrary, I would say that they almost call for more relationships. The same applies to Cézanne: even though he was far less extraverted than Pissarro, he too had other critical friendships that counted just as much as his friendship with Pissarro. His well-known friendship with Zola, but also his very important ties with another childhood friend, Baille, and with friends and colleagues such as Valabrège counted a great deal in Cézanne’s existence. In fact, this triangular relationship helps us better to understand the relationship that tied Cézanne and Pissarro later on. John Rewald explains that Cézanne, already as a young man was prone to throw himself in pangs of depression or rage. Cézanne was never an easy friend to keep. Zola once wrote to their common friend Baille in order to try to console him against one of Cézanne’s fits of anger:

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680 On this theme, see Jean-Claude Lebenzstejn, Les couilles de Cézanne, (Paris : Nouvelles Editions Séguijer, 1995). Lebenzstejn introduces his text with this sentence with which I fully concur : “Même à notre époque rompu aux assauts de la bad painting, et en ce lieu toujours à la page—Libération—qui naguère chanta le requiem de Jean-Michel Basquiat, le jeune Cézanne, après cent vingt ans, reste en travers de la gorge.” (p. 8). This observation leads to this other, even more pressing, question: what could Pissarro see in this sort of painting, whereas even Zola the artist’s childhood friend, found huge difficulties in accepting Cézanne’s early works?
Lorsqu’il vous chagrine, il ne faut pas s’en prendre à son cœur, mais au mauvais démon qui obscurcit sa pensée. C’est une âme d’or, un ami qui peut nous comprendre, aussi fou que nous, aussi rêveur.  

What bound these young people together as they were growing up, Zola wrote to the same friend, was a certain hope in the future, a shared dream:

Ce que nous cherchions, c’était la richesse du cœur et de l’esprit, c’était surtout cet avenir que notre jeunesse nous faisait entrevoir si brillant.

Yet, the same Cézanne who shared his childhood years with these two friends could also turn disconsolate and become unpleasant to his entourage. The same person who shared these dreams with his friends, could at times, not see things in the same color: “Il est bien noir pour foi, le ciel de l’avenir.” The same Cézanne could swing from moments of happiness and generosity, and, with no warning, withdraw and become the absolute opposite. The Cézanne whom Baille and Zola knew, and appreciated for who he was, was the same man, just older, and perhaps slightly more cantankerous, whom Emile Bernard, Maurice Denis, Joachim Gasquet knew. In between, it was the same Cézanne who spent intermittently twenty years of his life, toing and froing between Pontoise and Provence, between Pissarro and himself.

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681 Letter from Zola to Baille, 14 May 1860; quoted in Rewald, op. cit., 1936, 8.
682 Letter from Zola to Baille, 29 February 1860; quoted in Rewald, ibid.
683 Correspondance de Zola, op. cit., vol. 1, 289; quoted in Rewald, ibid.
Difficult as he was a person to get on with, he shared with Pissarro the capacity to become equally enraged as his older friend against what he saw as injustice. He too could be cruelly disappointed when later in life, he would observe the powerful historical effect of “renfermement”—or of exclusion—had left one of his close friends out. He often cursed or swore against the exclusive policies pursued by both the official salons, and the camp of the moderns. He was very upset with the fact that one of his friends, who was “bougrement plus peintre” (a hell more of a painter) than most successful artists had never been given any signs of recognition. In this sense, it is interesting again through this example of inter-subjectivity to revisit the modernist idea according to which the titans of modern art face one another: they don’t speak to one another, but they may gaze at each other in mutual respect of their greatness. The point is here that they did not just look at giants: they also saw, and respected, and fought for artists who have never known any form of recognition, and who have become totally unknown: Piette has received a little attention through an exhibition that took place at the Musée Pissarro, Pontoise, a few years ago, but Valabrège? Who today knows what his works look like? The very same analogy can be drawn with Rauschenberg and Johns. The point of this remark is to stress that one would be deeply misled to think of these relationships between artists who have been confirmed as giants by history as exclusive of other relationships. In fact, what is

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interesting to note here is that Pissarro felt about Cézanne very much the same way as Cézanne felt about Valabrègue, years later.

*Meeting Each Other: What did Each See in the Other?*

Rauschenberg met Johns when he was still far from being recognized as a star. What probably complicated their relationship later was the fact that each of them received so much public light, not always at the same time, nor to the same degree. Fame, in other words, got in the way of their relationships. This is how Rauschenberg described the time when he and Johns met:

Jasper was just beginning as an artist too. Even though our ideas were very far apart, the thing we had in common was that we were not in the Abstract Expressionist movement. Neither did we fit in the Tibor de Nagy group, with people like Fairfield Porter, Grace Hartigan, Helen Frankenthaler and Larry Rivers. So, we really didn’t have to fight to stay off by ourselves. In a way, it made us stronger than if we had had immediate acceptance. Our isolation was forced on us through our differences and attitudes. Also, it was the time of Kerouac and Ginsberg, and ‘The Sad Cup of Coffee,’ and I hated all that. I mean, people whining about their condition, and then glorifying it in extravagant language. I hated all that metaphoric suffering. And it was the
time of the Artist’s Club! Talk about suffering! Well, I couldn’t stand any of that. So, during that period, Jasper and I didn’t much get along with other artists—*not by choice, but by aesthetics*.685

Similarly to Pissarro and Cézanne, Johns and Rauschenberg became close friends in spite of their very different personalities. This is how Crichton sketches these differences:

Rauschenberg was voluble and outgoing where Johns was reserved;
Rauschenberg was explosively energetic where Johns was patient and deliberate; Rauschenberg was hectic where Johns was precise; Rauschenberg was shocking where Johns never desired to shock. At the same time, the two men shared certain characteristics: both Southern, both impoverished and struggling.686

This meeting offers several analogies with the way Pissarro and Cézanne met too at the Académie Suisse. In fact, from the double portrait given by Crichton, one could be tempted to draw a parallel between the personalities of Pissarro and Johns on one hand, and those of Cézanne and Rauschenberg, on the other. Pissarro and Cézanne too most certainly felt little aesthetic sympathy for the rest of their peers when in

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686 Crichton, *op. cit.*, 33.
Paris—and found an alter ego in the other first and foremost in their knowledge of what they did not want to do. One of the first things they were ready to do, however, was to portray each other. [See Dossier B, ills. 56-64] Just like Johns and Rauschenberg, a century later, [Ill. 68-74] they found a small group of friends who shared a common creed in their passionate distaste for pre-existing rules. In the case of Cézanne and Pissarro, this distaste targeted the French Institute and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; in the case of Johns and Rauschenberg, it targeted the dominating aesthetic of the 1950s New York art scene, as evoked above by Rauschenberg. Even Pissarro, who has always been known for his serene and gentle manners, could be downright insolent when it came to refer to official artists. They felt somewhat isolated from the rest of their class, and saw in each other a source of comfort and reinforcement in their budding rebellion. (Looking at Rauschenberg’s art, few works capture this feeling of distaste for institutional practice of art training than Rauschenberg’s **The Lily White** executed, a few years before he met Johns, during a life-drawing class with his back turned to the model. [See Ill. 38]) For sure, as will be seen later, Cézanne’s very strong Provençal accent, and Pissarro’s tropical origins were enough to set these two individuals apart. Undoubtedly, Pissarro saw immediately in the young Provençal the promise of a very distinctive character and artist—the only problem was that Pissarro was virtually alone in seeing this promise. The small, and very early painting on paper laid down on canvas that Pissarro bought in 1884 and kept all his life, and which, in fact even his widow kept until her death
tells a lot about the initial contact between these two artists.\textsuperscript{687} [Ill. 4] The fact that Pissarro bought this painting, and kept it together with its preparatory drawings, confers a particular importance to this work in the context of the study of their relationship. Contrary to Lawrence Gowing, I do not think that this painting should be dated to 1867 on the merit of its relationship with \textit{L’enlèvement}.\textsuperscript{688} First of all, the formal relationship with \textit{L’enlèvement} appears somewhat loose; secondly, \textit{L’enlèvement} is a much more ambitious painting, albeit as awkward and resistant to a transparent interpretation. This small painting, on the other hand, relates clearly through both its format and its theme to a couple of other paintings: all three paintings clearly form a small project, and revolve around some mythological themes: nereids, tritons, satyrs, and nymphs inhabit these three works. A possible theme for this small panel is a couple of maids attending Psyche—although nothing in the painting gives us any clue as to what the scene is about with certainty. From a formal point of view, there is a very peculiar aspect to this very small painting. As a tiny format, and furthermore, as an oil on paper laid on panel, this work offers all the traditional distinctive qualities of an oil sketch, a first step towards a larger and grander realization. But where is that larger realization? The fact is that this small painting is itself the culmination of already quite a process: there are three drawings ‘behind’ this painting that suggest that Cézanne had thought somehow about this tiny

\textsuperscript{688} Rewald no. 121.
\textsuperscript{689} Rewald nos. 122, and 124.
format as a “point d’aboutissement.” The three drawings prevent us from addressing this oil painting on paper as some ‘premier jet,’ or as a spontaneous expression of Cézanne returning from the Louvre, having been immersed in all types of mythological scenes. The very least one can say about this small and puzzling (“curieuse”) painting is that it stems from a definite thought process and chain of intentions. Pissarro kept every link of that chain for himself. This latter fact is important for us to appreciate the obvious significance that this work kept for Pissarro. If this painting had stopped to matter to him after he stopped seeing Cézanne, he could very well have let it go. He could also have sold it in his later years when Cézanne’s works suddenly became very marketable. Not only he did not, but the fact that the artist’s widow, Julie also kept this little painting is, to me, one more clue of Pissarro’s strong attachment for this painting. This painting by Cézanne—insignificant by all modernist criteria—mattered to Pissarro. This is all the more surprising as there is very little there: it is, despite its subject matter, a painting that displays restraint, sobriety. It is modest, despite the immodesty of its subject. The subject itself has raised questions. The title of the painting itself, supposedly indicating what the artist depicted and what one sees, has changed several times. [Ill. 4] In the auction catalogue of Julie Pissarro’s estate, the painting was titled “Trois Baigneuses.” \[690\] It subsequently became “les femmes au bain” \[691\] before being

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\[690\] Catalogue des œuvres importantes de Camille Pissarro et de tableaux, pastels, aquarelles, dessins, gouaches composant la collection Camille Pissarro, (auction catalogue), Paris : Galerie Georges Petit, 3 December 1928, lot no. 74.

\[691\] Georges Rivière, Le maître Paul Cézanne, (Paris : Henri Floury, 1923), 197.
christened again more recently by John Rewald “Femmes s’habillant.” I am more prone to accept the first title at face value simply because the auction of Julie Pissarro’s estate was organized with the help and participation of the sons who, having grown and worked with their father, were most likely used to calling a painting by the name it had received in the Pissarro household; it was most likely called by what Cézanne called it. This small painting was thus probably known as “les trois baigneuses de Cézanne.” The latter title certainly makes slightly more sense than Rewald’s title. The latter drew his clue about women dressing up from looking at the close up drawing that focuses on the foreground figure (Chappuis 203) that looks like a life-drawing study. This drawing, however, provides information about one of the figures: not the other two who do not appear at all to be dressing up. The woman to the right is busy with her hair, and the one in the background (a servant?) seems to be bringing a tray from where some substance seems to be dropping (water perhaps). Altogether, these elements certainly do not cohere into any form of coherent narrative, and definitely do not imply that these women, as a group, are in the process of dressing up. A simple fact needs be stressed: nobody can decide with certainty what this group of figures is about. The plot, or the narrative, of this small painting is elusive. It surely was elusive to Pissarro as well, and probably to Cézanne as well. If the subject of this painting subsides behind the frame, as it were, what is left to enjoy in these four curious studies? Or what could have appealed to Pissarro in this small painting? Precisely: its insignificance, and yet, its undeniable presence for such a
small painting. This is a painting that takes a fairly traditional theme: be it a mythological scene, or a couple of nudes, possibly in front of a mirror, being seemingly attended by a third standing woman. Such themes traditionally receive their meaning and their identity from the information clues provided by the context. Such a theme, if properly contextualized, receives its proper identity: it is no longer a group of nudes; it is Diana at her bath, for instance. Such contextualization did not occur with this small painting by Cézanne. One might object that this was an act of laziness on the part of the painter. Why, then, would he have gone through the trouble of drawing as many as three preparatory drawings for this small panel painting? One might also object that there was a more ample project lying ahead of this painting: a full size painting with the same subject that would have finally brought full light on what is going on. The fact is that one is never sure of quite what is going on in Cézanne’s paintings of the 1860s, and, I would argue, that, in fact, this tends to be a much overlooked defining characteristic of much of Cézanne’s oeuvre. One might also argue that this is simply not worth the trouble of asking oneself what this little thing is about, because it is a failure, a “croûte” as Cézanne and Pissarro would have called it. This, to me, would sound like a more convincing argument, at least because I too have felt that this painting was a croûte. I certainly do not consider it as a masterpiece now, but I am less uncharitable towards it—or rather, it is here the inter-subjective experience within which this painting has been caught that has made me look at it differently. Even though I would be prepared to agree with most that there is
not much aesthetic appeal to this painting—this is ironic, given the very subject which is traditionally used by 19th century artists to draw a lot of appeal—again, what anchors me back to this painting is that Pissarro went so far as to buy it at a particular time in his life that was financially very precarious. One can just about imagine what Julie his wife (who reached a point in the mid-1880s when she thought about suicide) would have said when seeing Pissarro coming back from Paris with these “four curious studies” by Cézanne. We unfortunately do not know how much he paid for them, but we do know that he paid something for them. One can choose, of course, to dismiss this little painting by questioning Pissarro’s taste, or suggest that Pissarro had a fairly good taste except when it came to collect Cézanne’s works. This, of course, says nothing about what Pissarro saw (or could have seen) in this little work.

Having dismissed this last objection, I now have no choice but to look at this small painting and ask myself, even if I do not think it is a great painting, what merits it must have held to Pissarro’s eye. This is indeed essential, if as I surmise, this painting was executed shortly after the Salon des Refusés, or shortly after Manet’s Olympia, and was probably by Pissarro as a reminder of a pivotal epoch in both artists’ lives. Given that the plot or the subject matter have been, if not de-emphasized, at least twisted, and made almost indecipherable, the virtues of this small painting must be in its making, in the process that led Cézanne to this final product. When one begins to look at this strange little object, one notices two things: 1. The palette of colors is
extremely reduced; this is almost an exercise in chromatic sobriety: a very dark blue/green background, with a red blanket and yellow hair. Every chromatic nuance is obtained by a subtle blending of the two or three intense hues that form the harmonic base for this painting. 2. It is also an exercise in agility, and rapidity in applying paint on to the canvas. The way the stocking left lying on the blanket is depicted with a few quick light brush strokes of beige that let the red of the blanket through reveal an artist who takes pleasure in small challenges like this—even while these would have left any member of the official jury totally indifferent. There was certainly enough there to please Pissarro—who, himself, later on, would cultivate this sort of devices: depicting a woman knitting, for instance, with nothing but a few quick twists of the brush on the canvas letting the paint almost ‘drip’ in an (apparently) unguided manner. [See Ills. 194, 195] The way the other stocking is depicted around the leg of the foreground figure is also impressive, and in its quick and nervous handling, reveals quite some kinship with Pissarro’s own procedures. Rapidity of handling the paint, agility and control as to where each mark of paint goes, blatant lack of any effort to please or seduce the observer: these three qualities were enough to win over Pissarro—or, more precisely, to confirm again to him that what his friend had to say was always very close to his own message.

In brief, this small painting—the earliest work by Cézanne that Pissarro owned, and the last work by the artist that he acquired—tells us more than we could have thought.
This painting, already in the mid-1860s, grapples with all the main principles of academic painting, and it does so, slightly perversely, on the very battle-ground of academic painting. This is not just an ‘ebauche,’ but a ‘debauch’ (to use a pun often addressed sarcastically against the impressionists) of color and paint on top of a subject matter that should be clearly recognizable, but is not. To make a formalist exercise out of this painting would be wrong: it is far more complex and subtle than that. It is a proposal to redress the balance between subject matter and pictoriality: what this painting seems to be proposing (one could even dare talk of a promise) is to keep a straight balance between subject matter and the artifice of the making of the painting (or objectivity and subjectivity). This small painting, in its tight and compact accomplishment, seems to ward off the viewer against the danger of a subject matter that would be too easily recognizable. Why? Because the recognizability of the subject matter might blind us as to the fact that this painting was actually painted (its pictoriality.) It is, in this sense, a very modern painting, but it is not a modernist painting. What is also fascinating about this particular work is that it tells us as much about Pissarro as it does about Cézanne. This is after all a painting that depicts a scene of inter-subjectivity, and there seems to be a mirror in it. One may just wonder to what extent Pissarro did not already recognize himself (or his art) in this particular

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692 I mean by ‘pictoriality’ the very fact that this painting was painted; this term emphasizes not only the formal qualities of a particular work but also the fact that there is necessarily also a painter who carries on this work in front of the canvas. In ‘pictoriality’ one finds two words: pictorial and pictor. Suffice it to say that this approach is not a formalist approach, although I see no reason why one should not be able to carry a formalist analysis when the context calls for it provided it does not exclude to ask questions about the larger meaning of things.
painting. Richness within restraint, bare recognizability of figures whose features are not pushed to the point of being identifiable, a slap in the face of all academic art practices: all these features are entailed within this 8 ¾ x 13 in. area of paint. All these features eventually also were consistent features of Pissarro’s art. It shows us how much the two artists held in common. It, therefore, leads us naturally to discuss the character of Cézanne further, on the assumption that what Pissarro found in this little painting, he found to a much larger extent in Cézanne’s art in general. One last point about this painting seems pertinent to Cézanne himself: the strategy at work within this painting—striking a balance between representation and pictoriality—was still very much at the heart of Cézanne’s practice in front of his Grandes Baigneuses. In a sense, Pissarro was not wrong to “see so much” into this tiny composition. In effect, there is, indeed, a definite link between Cézanne’s early Baigneuses, his Modern Olympia, of 1872-73, (Musée d’Orsay), and a painting such as The Temptation of Saint Anthony, 1873-77, (Musée d’Orsay), which introduces Cézanne’s oeuvre to the great nudes of the 1880s onwards. Yet, during discussions of Cézanne’s ‘high’ nude paintings, references are not often made to these earlier steps.

*The Unity of Cézanne Through Pissarro’s Eyes*

Whatever Pissarro saw in this small format painting of three (probably mythological) female figures leads us to two more observations. Pissarro felt so proud—and
frustrated in his pride—as we saw in Section II, when Bernard would not give him credit for having seen earlier than almost any one what others discovered twenty or thirty years later. Pissarro thus suggests a link—at least through his eye—between Cézanne I, II and III. How pertinent is it, may we ask, to find links and connections between these various phases of Cézanne’s work? If we look at two early drawings by Cézanne (Chappuis 128 and 129), one represents Moses and the other Frenhofer—the main character of Balzac’s *Chef d’œuvre inconnu*. As pointed out by Lebensztejn, the same themes appear much later in the artist’s life—and not in indifferent contexts. Once he wonders whether he will, “like the great chief of the Hebrews” be able to see the Promised Land or not—the Promised Land is a metaphor for what he calls the ‘truth in painting’ or the “realization.” The other has to do with an anecdote told by Bernard. Once the latter mentioned Frenhofer, Cézanne in a very dramatic, and almost theatrical gesture, stood up abruptly and pointed his finger toward himself repeatedly, in silence, while tears rolled down his eyes! The point is simple: Cézanne, like all of us, did not entirely metamorphosed himself from his youth to his old age. Cézanne III retained more than a few features from Cézanne I. Genius was not suddenly bestowed upon him, as an act of grace. He did not suddenly reach a degree of objectivation in painting that allowed him to get cured from his earlier fantasies. He worked; he changed himself while retaining facets of his own personality that were probably the same when he was fifteen years old and when he sixty-six years old. The two are not exclusive of each other: in fact, change and constancy

693 Lebensztejn, *op.cit.*, 50
complement each other in life. So was it with Cézanne. Pissarro’s eye points us in the
direction of constancy in Cézanne’s life, as in his art. Retrospectively, when
success seemed to be waiting on Cézanne’s doorstep, it is with unconcealed pride that
Pissarro could boast to his son for having been “right” about Cézanne at a time when
virtually no one, except perhaps another friend of Pissarro’s, and Cézanne’s early
teacher, Puerto Rican artist Francisco Oller, paid much attention to Cézanne. In 1895,
at the time of the first major public exposure of Cézanne’s work, at Vollard’s gallery,
Pissarro continued to show the same untainted support for Cézanne. He also
continued to be frustrated by the fact that people would refuse to see the relationship
between his work and Cézanne’s. A collector called Heymann had the gall of saying
that Cézanne had always been under the influence of Guillaumin. “This tops it all!”
said Pissarro. Yet, even if the Vollard show was a break point in Cézanne’s career
(only eleven years before his death), public recognition did not immediately follow,
and Pissarro, still passionately enthusiastic about Cézanne’s work, found it difficult to
convince certain collectors, even friends of the impressionists, of “all the great and
rare qualities that one can find in Cézanne.” Pissarro then concluded: “I think it will
take centuries before one can realize it.” There were a few exceptions, however:
Degas and Renoir, for instance. Fiercely enthusiastic about Cézanne’s works, they

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694 The question of the constancy of Cézanne’s oeuvre has been relatively seldom addressed.
Lebenzstejn in the book quoted above does. Another author deserves to be mentioned in raising
questions about Cézanne as one artist: Robert Simon, “Cézanne and the Subject of Violence,” Art in
America, May 1991, 120-135 and 185-86.
696 Ibid, 128.
both fought over a drawing depicting some fruits at Vollard’s. They then had to toss a coin to decide who of the two could purchase it. Degas has always provided Pissarro with an aesthetic yardstick. Pissarro always turned to Degas as an unflagging supplier of aesthetic validity. While he was searching and experimenting with Cézanne, he would turn to Degas for confirmation that he was ‘on the right path.’ Degas’ enthusiasm for Cézanne during the 1895 show at Vollard’s was, therefore, to Pissarro the ultimate proof of legitimacy that he had always been right about Cézanne:

Degas si passionné des croquis de Cézanne, qu’en dis-tu ?… voyais-je assez juste en 1861 quand moi et Oller nous avons été voir ce curieux provençal dans l’atelier Suisse où Cézanne faisait des académies à la risée de tous les impuissants de l’école, entre autres ce fameux Jacquet effondré dans le joli depuis longtemps et dont les œuvres se payaient à prix d’or !! amusant comme tout, ce réveil des anciens combats.  

*Portraits of Cézanne in Words*

697 Ibid. The well-known Suisse academy was just about the most liberal teaching course that any one could find—by ‘liberal’ one should not understand that it offered programs comparable to Black Mountain College a century or so later. It simply was more liberal than most schools as far as its recruitment policies were concerned, it also imposed fewer requirements, and afforded students a greater liberty as far as their creative work was concerned. It also took students who were aspiring to become official artists: Gustave Jacquet (1846-1909), a well-known student of Bouguereau’s at the time, was one of them. He first exhibited at the Salon in 1865 and specialized in punctiliously accurate genre scenes, and historical anecdotes.
In this context, as I am focusing on the constancy of Cézanne’s character, it will be useful to read a portrait of Cézanne given by the much younger painter Emile Bernard, specifically with reference to Cézanne’s openness, or generosity even, towards others. This, I believe, will help us clear a few myths that stand in the way of comprehending more fully the surely complex and at times very difficult, yet genuine interchange that took place, off and on, for twenty years between Pissarro and Cézanne. Clearly, Bernard was completely in awe of Cézanne when he met him: he explained how difficult it had been for him to get in contact with the artist, so well known in Paris, and whom apparently nobody knew in his own town, Aix-en-Provence. Having finally found his address, Bernard finally met Cézanne at his doorstep. Probably taking many detours and describing his life to Cézanne, before asking to visit him, Cézanne with his caustic pragmatism, cut Bernard short with the question: “Alors vous êtes un confrère?” Then, Bernard, embarrassed to be compared to the genius that was standing in front of him, declined the title of “confrère.” He was interrupted again: “Pas de tout cela, vous êtes peintre, n’est-ce pas, donc vous êtes un confrère.”

This downright simplicity, this straightforward, slightly brutish directness and conviviality are all characteristic of Cézanne’s complex personality: both open to others, and generously welcoming, though he could also suddenly and

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698 Emile Bernard, “Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites,” in Mercure de France, October 1907, vol. 69-70, 390. The sense of awe and deference that Bernard felt towards the Maître d’Aix diminished with time. When later on Bernard wrote an introduction to his correspondence with Cézanne, the cause for his embarrassed surprise for being referred to as a “confrère” by Cézanne is put to the mere account of the difference of age between them… Cézanne, Bernard wrote, “daigna me considérer de suite comme un «confrère», malgré la grande différence d’âge qui existait entre nous.” Bernard, Propos sur l’art, op. cit., vol. 1, 256.
unexpectedly close up on himself faster than he had welcome you. Cézanne could shift from the most open, and kindhearted soul to that of a recluse who utterly withdrew from the world. These contradictions, that are also present throughout Cézanne’s statements on art, and embodied in his art, could be summarized by the few words Cézanne uttered when he introduced Bernard to his studio:

Voilà mon atelier, me dit-il mystérieusement, là, personne n’entre, que moi ; mais puisque vous êtes un ami, nous irons ensemble.

It must first be pointed out that this aspect of Cézanne, not sharing his studio, or not showing it to any one, had already been remarked on by Zola himself when they were young. To Théodore Duret who had manifested the desire to see Cézanne’s studio (whom he referred to as “a painter from Aix totally eccentric”), Zola answered:

Je ne puis vous donner l’adresse du peintre dont vous me parlez. Il se renferme beaucoup ; il est dans une période de tâtonnements. Et, selon moi,

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699 On the subject of Cézanne contradicting himself, see Richard Shiff’s recently published introduction to the first English translation of Conversations (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001). Shiff has also rehearsed this theme, which I have not seen in print anywhere so far, in lectures given recently at the Kimbell Museum of Art, Fort Worth, and at the C.A.A., 2001. This is, in my opinion, one of the most fruitful avenues of research on Cézanne that may also help in bridging the traditional division between Cézanne I, II and III.

700 Emile Bernard, op. cit., 391.

701 Note another usage, here by Zola, of the verb “renfermer” which here means ‘to be cut off’ or ‘withdrawn.’
il a raison de ne vouloir laisser pénétrer personne dans son atelier. Attendez qu’il se soit trouvé lui-même.\textsuperscript{702}

The first part of the sentence sounds positively forbidding, but what follows is highly promising. Surely, Cézanne had other friends than Bernard: had these friends not seen his studio? What about Solari, for instance, who sculpted a bust of Cézanne made from observations taken while the painter was at work? The most surprising part of the statement is the fact that Cézanne accepts Bernard so soon as “a friend.” If it took Cézanne an hour or so to make a friend, then, could not many people qualify as well, and aspire to the same title? In effect, this is what happened and gradually Cézanne opened the door of his studio to many visitors from the North who came and pay their respects to the Maître d’Aix. This remark about allowing access to his studio is completed by another remark by Cézanne—which, in retrospect, also tells us something about his interaction with Pissarro. Cézanne once put a white canvas on his easel, prepared his equipment, displayed his colors on his palette, and then stopped doing anything. Bernard, probably embarrassed, asked if he was disturbing the older artist. To which, Cézanne replied: “Je n’ai jamais souffert que l’on me regarde travailler, je ne veux rien faire devant quelqu’un.”\textsuperscript{703} It is impossible to think that Cézanne never worked “in the presence” of any one else. There are numerous

\textsuperscript{703} Ibid., 397.
photographic documents, and testimonies that attest to the fact that Cézanne and Pissarro did work together, some thirty years before he met Bernard. [See Ill. 1] On this point, a letter written by Lucien Pissarro (Camille’s eldest son) to his youngest brother in 1912 sheds interesting light on Pissarro and Cézanne actually working together, and sharing nature as their studio:

A ce propos une anecdote assez amusante: Cézanne était assis sur l’herbe, sans doute attendant l’heure de son effet et papa peignait un peu plus loin, un paysan qui passait s’approche de papa et lui : « Il s’la foule pas vot’ouvrier ».\(^{704}\)

I suppose the fact that Lucien imitated the peasant dialect voice is probably a reason why this anecdote is not better known. The peasant’s slang expression about Cézanne means: “He doesn’t do much, your apprentice.” (Literally, ‘il ne se la foule pas’ means: ‘he is not spraining his wrist out of overwork’). The remark, however, echoes later testimonies about Cézanne focusing on his motif and remaining transfixed for quite a while before laying his brush on his canvas. Cézanne was already accustomed to painting this way with Pissarro. However, a growing need for autonomy led him eventually to take his distance from Pissarro, from impressionism, and from Paris.

\(^{704}\) Pissarro Archives, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford : Letter from Lucien Pissarro to Paul Pissarro, 1912.
Finally, two more brief anecdotes will suffice to sketch a portrait of the truly complex and versatile character of Cézanne.

Madame Brémond, Cézanne’s maid, once told Bernard that she was woken up one night by neighbors telling her that a criminal had broken into Cézanne’s studio and was about to slit his throat. She rushed to Cézanne’s house, and, as she arrived, she recognized the screaming voices not only of M. Cézanne, but also of M. Solari, a sculptor and very old friend of Cézanne. She immediately came to the conclusion that it was a matter of a debate on painting—and not a murder. She reassured the crowd outside Cézanne’s house and returned to bed. This anecdote illustrates well the strong opinions that Cézanne held and how enflamed he could get: in this sense, he was not different from Solari who probably enjoyed resisting Cézanne’s pig-headed character. Pissarro was no Solari, of course, and, even though he too was at times very opinionated, he probably did not have the sanguine disposition necessary to face such a screaming row. Besides, there were always children in bed in the Pissarros household: it was not so easy to scream.

The second anecdote seems to contradict the above, but appears nevertheless most probable too. Feeling especially good about himself after going to mass on Sunday, Cézanne would sometimes abstain from work—a fact extremely rare given that

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Cézanne was, as Bernard called him, “la peinture vivante.” In a bout of generosity, he would then invite a group of friends to come home and be his guests at Sunday lunch. Madame Brémont would then be asked by the Master to do a very good lunch that day. Bernard then came to this conclusion:

On peut dire sans hyperbole que si Cézanne pensait aux autres en des accès de générosité peu commune, il s’oubliait lui-même. Il était si distrait qu’il se promenait son gilet ouvert ; le dimanche il allait à la messe vêtu de sa chemise avec une ficelle, en ayant perdu le bouton. Son chapeau, malgré un coup de brosse rapide, avait des bosses romantiques et sur son paletot s’égaraient quelques taches de peinture. A table il était fort gai, d’une gaieté que je ne lui soupçonnais pas, une gaieté pleine de cœur et presque ancienne par sa bonhommie franche et son abandon. En ces instants on pouvait reconnaître l’homme, indépendamment du peintre, et on en voyait toute la bonté.  

*An Enraged Taste for Work*

It is also in such rare moments that Cézanne would occasionally think back about his youth, and his past in Paris. It is at this point, for instance, that Cézanne brings up

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706 Ibid. 402.
Pissarro’s name in a famous quote, which, however, is never given within its actual context:

Cela me rappelle mon jeune temps, ma vie à Paris… Jusqu’à quarante ans j’ai vécu en bohème, j’ai perdu ma vie. Ce n’est que plus tard, quand j’ai connu Pissarro, qui était infatigable, que le goût du travail m’est venu.  

Cézanne seems to have held a great debt towards Pissarro for revealing to him what it felt like to develop an inveterate taste for work—which Pissarro did throughout his life. Before he met Pissarro, Cézanne, tells us, he was a little bit a dilettante, not a “serious worker” yet. It is upon his meeting with Pissarro that a taste for the “travail acharné” got hold of him.

And Bernard ironically adds the following comment: that taste for work “lui était venu si fort qu’il avait comme tout à coup creusé un gouffre en lequel il s’était englouti.”  

Thus the end of Cézanne’s life appears to be highly relevant to the beginning of the artist’s career because, as the artist regularly reminds his reader or his protagonist in a conversation, many occasions in his every day life remind the older artist of his début in Paris. The other point to bear in mind is that Cézanne still carries the reputation of having become virtually asocial in his old days: any

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707 Ibid.  
708 Ibid.
propensity to inter-subjectivity would have abandoned him and he would have turned into a lonesome bear. While certain elements of his life confirm this legend, there are many details, such as the above anecdotes that firmly contradict this reputation. It would be closer to the truth to say that Cézanne had always allied in his persona a deeply humane and generous aspect to a grumbling, frustrated, angry, and, at times, deeply provocative side of his personality. It took an open-minded and tolerant character like Pissarro’s to see Cézanne’s good sides, and work with these, and be more oblivious to Cézanne’s less than “sympathiques” peculiarities.

* Against Simplicity

The situation was also exactly similar for Johns and Rauschenberg—perhaps even more so, because they were also mixing up with different professional circles, such as those of contemporary dance and music. This “renfermement,” therefore, (or this closing up or enclosing, or this trapping) of painting within a few names, was felt as just as reductive as another form of enclosing that consists in seeing in the history of painting the sum of various influences.

Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg both produced forms of art that precisely went directly against these simplifications. Johns literally laughed at the concept of influence with a sense of wry humor:
The problem with influences is that the thing or person you say is an influence has to accept some of the blame for what you’ve done.\(^{709}\)

Commenting later on this remark by Johns, Ruth Fine asked Johns:

In terms of new art and old art, you said in an earlier interview that the problem with influence is that the thing or person you say is an influence has to accept some of the blame for what you’ve done. Is there a better word than “influence” to describe the effects of another artist’s work on one’s own?

Johns: I suppose it’s as good a word as any. I was thinking of a situation like this: one artist said to another, a friend of mine, “You are my hero!” Later my friend said to me, “It certainly doesn’t show in her work!” When do we think there is an influence?\(^{710}\)

\* \textit{Inside or Outside the Question of Representation} \*

Both of these artists considerably contributed to opening up the definitions of their own artistic practices to exterior practices: Rauschenberg with his early and

\(^{709}\) Vivien Raynor, \textit{op. cit.}, in \textit{Writings}, 142.

continuous interest in photography and performance; Johns with his ongoing
“transcendental” approach to the practice of painting that seems to be based on the
following question: what is the condition of possibility for this object to be
represented? These are precisely the type of questions that Johns has been raising
throughout his work since the beginning of his career:

What is meant by “the representation of space”?  
What distinguishes one representation from another?  
Does this mean “how does one see that one thing is not another thing”?  
What constitutes a change of focus?  
(We speak of “another way of seeing things.”)  
(“Another way of looking at things.”)  
What about “another way of establishing (?) ‘thingness’”?  
“Something” can be either one thing or another
(without turning the rabbit on its side).  

I mean ‘transcendental’ not in the sense used among psychic readers, but in the
Kantian sense: a method of investigation that focuses on the conditions of possibility
and of validity of representation. This leads me to refocus on the problem of
representation around subjectivity—by eliminating the problem of the faithfulness of

711 Johns, *Sketchbook 33*, Book B, (c. 1967). *Writings*, 62. Even though this text was written around
1967, it is a marvelously concise expression of the core of Johns’s aesthetic conception.
the representation to the object represented, and questioning instead the inner mechanisms of artistic representation.

*Sign and Object: Representation or Presentation?*

One could say *in nuce* that Rauschenberg opened up the parameters of pictorial practice by questioning it from the outside, and by grafting onto it all types of extraneous elements. “The point of it all,” wrote John Gruen, “is to find new means of expanding the sensibilities of everyone concerned—the artist, the engineer and the audience.” On the other hand, Johns opened up the practice of painting by

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712 John Gruen, “Art Meets Technology,” New York: World Journal Tribune, October 2, 1966, p. 28. Gruen is referring to Rauschenberg’s complex multi-disciplinary experiment titled: *Nine Evenings: Theater and Engineering* whose programs were described as “an attempt to fuse music, painting, dance, film, television and advanced technology into an organic, visually and aesthetically stimulating whole.” (22) Billy Kluver, the engineer who contributed to this experiment, defined the role of the artist, as he saw it, in ways that reinforce the argument of artists searching for rules as he proceeds through his work: “functional rules simply don’t exist for the artist. He discovers the rules and how to use the materials as he goes along. His work is essentially instantaneous and he will rarely commit himself to future restrictions.” (Ibid.) Rauschenberg confirms this point, from the artist’s perspective, thus sketching the definition for another type of ‘artistic interaction:’ “Working with engineers is inspiring. I could not do what I want to do without them. It is no longer possible to by-pass the whole area of technology. We no assurance, for example, that buildings will have walls for much longer. Artists should be the first to sense this sort of climate. We can’t afford to wait. We must force a relationship with technology in order to continue, and we must move quickly. The most positive thing I can say is that technology does not lead us back into history— but advances us into the unknown.” (Ibid., 28) This statement certainly carries certain historicist intonations that seem to suggest that this is the course of history, and if one is not careful, one might miss it. If one follows this historical course, however, we are in the right direction. This is very reminiscent of the tone of some of Pissarro’s letters who predicts a future history that will be atheistic, and as far as possible from the sentimentality produced by much symbolist art. Pissarro wrote to his son: “Tu verras que les savants prévoient bien la marche very une voie nouvelle mais qui ne sera ni néo-chrétienne ni Juive non plus…” (CP/JBH, IV, 264) When he is describing two counter-movements, Pissarro, referring to the group of artists and writers of *La Revue blanche*, said: “Il faut espérer que ce mouvement sentimental et en accord avec ce que nous avons de pire en réaction ne durera pas, n'étant pas du tout dans la logique du mouvement des idées modernes, il y aura donc autre chose qui sera plus dans notre sentiment, et c'est peut-être alors que le succès...
questioning it from the inside. Naturally, both artists, opposed as they were to neat boundaries, were able to navigate between these two strategies: Rauschenberg, at times, shows to be deeply concerned too about the rules of practice of a single gesture, or of a single brushwork, as in *Factum I* and *Factum II*, for instance, [Ills. 40 and 41] where Rauschenberg questions the limits of the reiterability of a single brush mark, with a meticulous attention that owes a lot, I think, to Johns’s approach to his own practice. Johns, especially in his sculptures, was also able to reach out to Rauschenberg’s position by letting life—and its daily objects—swamp his own works, as in *Souvenir* or *Fool’s House*, for instance. [Ills. 42 and 53] The latter work displays a broom that brings to mind Rauschenberg’s broom in *The Tower* [Ill. 52]

But it is in the case of his own sculptures that Johns comes closest to looking at objects with Rauschenberg’s eyes: yet, as ever, while their two works often present formal kinships with each other, these should not blind us as to the complementary directions from which these two artists are facing their works. The juxtaposition of the two artists’ cans of paint offers a telling example of the proximity of their practices, as well as the respectful distances they each kept from one another’s work: *Paint Cans*, 1954 [Ill. 92] by Robert Rauschenberg is a sculpture that belongs to Johns. *Painted Bronze*, 1960, by Jasper Johns, [Ill. 91] is a sculpture that belongs also

viendra.” (CP/JBH, IV, 303). The idea of a movement, that is almost self-propelled, is at the heart of any historicist vision of history, and is very present in both Rauschenberg’s and Pissarro’s accounts of the forces at stake in the creation of their times—one must not miss the boat (of history). Both artists, however, run into the same paradox: while both are praising, the force of a new creative movement (that propels art towards atheism, and a rebuttal of sentimentalism for Pissarro, towards an alliance with the promising new technologies for Rauschenberg), they also both are insistent on the fact that this alliance with the force of the movement can only be done if the artist remains in charge of establishing his own rules and programs.
to Johns (on loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art). The idea of using “paint” as a subject-matter for a painting was not entirely new: Cézanne had, for instance, inserted a tube of paint in a still-life titled *Sept pommes et tube de couleur* and Pissarro, in a gesture that does evoke these two works by Johns and Rauschenberg, turned his palette of paint into the support for a landscape without removing the blobs of paint squeezed on the edge of the palette. At first sight, these two objects appear to be dealing very much with the same themes (a single can of paint, in the case of Johns, several cans of paint, in the case of Rauschenberg), and in a very similar fashion (the cans of paint appear, in both cases, to depict tautologically what they are). The two sculptures are roughly the same height: the Rauschenberg (38.7 cm) is a few centimeters taller than the Johns (34.3 cm). One can holds upright brushes here; four empty cans are stacked on top of each other there; drips are visible here and there. These are indexical marks that these cans have been used, brushes being dipped in and out and letting over-loaded drops of fresh wet paint fall off the rim as the brush is taken out of the can. One was executed in 1954, two years before Pollock’s death; the other, in 1960, four years after Pollock’s death. Both works, however, seem like a somewhat humorous homage to Pollock: the ‘drip,’ as these two objects seem to point out, does not begin to fall on the canvas, it first ‘drips’ on the rim of a paint can, as the gesture of the painter (more or less carefully) tries to leave the excess of paint in

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713 Rewald no. 332.
714 This odd work was not included in the catalogue raisonné compiled by Ludovic-Rodo Pissarro, but will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné presently in preparation. This work belongs to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. For a reproduction, see Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*, 207.
the brush back into the can. Yet, there is something else these two objects share that accentuates this wink towards Pollock.\footnote{On this point, see Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” \textit{ArtNews} 57 (Oct. 1958), 56-57. Today’s artists, Kaprow announced, are “preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life: either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if needed, the vastness of Forty-Second Street… He will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness.” Quoted by Thomas Crow, \textit{Artforum}, (September 1997), 100. This quote illustrates well what can be called, after Bakhtin, “the humble prose of living.”}
The drips, in both cases, are not accidental: in the case of the Johns sculpture, everything one sees, far from being an accident, is a very deliberate, craftsman-like (and crafty) fabrication. In the case of the Rauschenberg, this is less obviously the case: as often, between the two artists, more is left to chance, not deliberate and slightly out of control moves with Rauschenberg than with Johns. There too, however, in \textit{Paint Cans}, the drips are not entirely the result of the mechanical gesture of the artist dipping his brush in and out of the cans displayed in this sculpture: the drips have also been (at least partly) deliberate. The difference between the Johns and the Rauschenberg sculptures is, therefore, now, one of degrees, but it becomes more complex. The situation with Johns is that what we see is not what we believe to see: this is not an empty and dirty can of coffee used to hold brushes; this is a bronze sculpture, that was painted after it was cast in metal. This is deceit, of a highly playful, witty, and remarkably skilful type, but deceit nonetheless. When looking at this piece “in the flesh” it is hard to resist looking at it in search of clues that will betray its real nature. Fred Orton, in his beautiful book on the artist, has used this object and \textit{The Critic Smiles} to illustrate the allegorical force at work in Johns’s oeuvre: “to speak otherwise or to signify other than which is
said.” In one of his sketchbooks dated a few years later than *Painted Bronze*, this is how the artist reflects on the function of language at work within his art:

language which operates in such a way as to force the language to change. (I’m believing painting to be a language, or wishing language to be any sort of recognition). If one takes delight in that kind of changing process one moves toward new recognitions (?), names, images.  

What is a “language which operates in such a way as to force the language to change”? A language that performs an action on itself, and takes the risk of reaching what the logicians call a ‘performative contradiction’? In another very revealing text

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several years later, Johns developed again the same idea, although with two concrete examples: those of Duchamp and Freud:

Anything could perhaps be something else. (Design). Marcel Cemented a spoon to the handle of his door latch. (Used to open, never to shut, the door). There may be the question of resemblance or substitution (Freud)—one term & another.  

\[^{718}\text{Johns, Sketchbook 59, Book C, c. 1970-71. Writings, 73.}\]
Johns’s art has visibly been consistently indebted to linguistic researches. What he describes in his sketchbook is a process close to that of the metaphor: with Painted Bronze, however, we are facing a different case. The sculpture does not just ‘resemble’ what it represents: it is (virtually) identical to—and could almost stand for—what it represents, to the point that one is almost tempted to pick up a brush out of the can and see what happens. What would happen is that the whole block of bronze would come in your hand together with the brush: it is a one-piece solid object. Very differently, Rauschenberg in Paint Cans has actually made use of “real” paint cans: whereas he covered them with a coat of drips and splattered them with much more marks of paint than Johns did in Painted Bronze, we are in effect dealing with two very different situations. Oddly enough, the titles tell us what we are seeing in both cases. Rauschenberg said it: he is displaying paint cans, splattered paint on to them, arranged them in a near-square format, and inserted them in one of his rough wood frame, and they became Paint Cans. Johns pushed the game of representation to the ultimate point where the representation of the object represented is so well done that one believes to be in presence of an object, not represented, but simply presented to us by the artist. The representation is so good that it annihilates its own effects: here is, indeed, a perfect example of a “performative contradiction” just as Johns was hinting at in his 1960-61 sketchbook. Language seems to be used in such a way that it does seem to force language to change. This position towards signs (representing), things (presented) and things (represented) that are not what they appear to be has
long held Johns’s fascination—much more so than it has been of interest to
Rauschenberg. Johns shares this particular interest—source of deliberate
confusions—with two older figures who have had considerable impact on both
younger artists: Duchamp and Cage. There has not been an in depth study to my
knowledge on the striking parallels between Johns’s compositional style in writing
and that of John Cage. When the composer and writer quotes this particular passage
from one of Johns’s sketchbooks:

We say one thing is not another thing.
Or sometimes we say it is.
Or we say “they are the same”  

he acknowledges one of many textual kinships between the two artists: this text could
have been signed by Cage. At any rate, this short text quoted by Cage exemplifies a
core aesthetic attitude that the younger artist shared with both Duchamp and Cage—
the three, together with Rauschenberg, having remained very close friends.

One way to describe the respective positions of both Johns and Rauschenberg would
be to plot it within the question of representation: one could say that Rauschenberg

 presents objects that, by the simple fact that they are presented by an artist who also

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719 John Cage, *Musicage: Cage Muses on Words, Art and Music*, ed. Joan Retallack, (Hanover and
London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 5. This text by Johns comes from *Sketchbook 31*, Book B,
(c. 1967); in *Writings*, 62.
acts upon them (e.g., throws paint on the hair of the goat’s face) lose their mere status of things being presented, and necessarily become, beyond the act of presentation, represented: Monogram [Ill. 206] offers a rich example of this sort of stance. A goat is presented standing on an oil and collage on canvas. A tire whose surface has been painted in white surrounds the body of the goat. The goat, with its long hair, and its threatening long horns, looks acutely alive. Yet, it too is an object that, in its presentation, becomes pure representation. I can see the presented goat function in a representational function on at least three levels: 1. it (just like the Paint Cans) has been smeared with paint. It, like many things that enter Rauschenberg’s world, has become a support for painting, a support of representation therefore. 2. It carries around its body this tire, painted in white on the surface. Left aside all the considerations that one may have for this “poor goat” and the emotions of sympathy for the stuffed animal, or the feeling that one is facing a combination of objects whose very combination is utterly absurd (one can imagine such questions from the audience: “where has one ever seen a goat inside a tire?” or “how on earth did this goat fit inside this tire?”), the tire carries a particularly strong resonance within Rauschenberg’s oeuvre: I am referring to Automobile Tire Print, 1951, [Ills. 66 and 106] a monoprint with ink on paper that was applied on a 264”-long roll of paper as John Cage drove his Model A Ford onto this immense roll of paper, after having driven his tire in a pool of ink. The tire was thus turned into a kind of rolling rubber stamp. This was among the first works that Rauschenberg produced in a form of
collaboration—alongside the works he produced with his wife Susan Weil. The question of who did what in this interaction was actually raised by Rauschenberg and Cage in a comical exchange:

“He did a beautiful job, but I consider it my print, said Rauschenberg. “But which one of us drove the car?” asked Cage.”

It is difficult, knowing the impact that Automobile Tire Print had within Rauschenberg’s oeuvre, not to see at the very least an allusion to this work in Monogram especially since the surface of the tire that normally adheres to the road was painted—not in black ink, which would have been invisible—but in white paint, thus suggesting that the tire too could be or had been used as a marker, or a representing device. 3. The goat stands across a plank of wood that runs diagonally through the canvas that forms the base support for this combine. The plank carries a few truncated letters painted in white on black that barely read: DA DA, each syllable being readable on either side of the goat. 4. The title itself says it all: monogram. This piece carries, or stands for the initials of the artist: it is the mark of the artist. As Nan Rosenthal put it, this is the signature piece of the artist, in more ways than one. Therefore, the piece itself stands for representation itself.

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Incidentally, the question of what the taxidermic goat with a tire around it symbolizes is another question, that I prefer to leave open. Naturally, there are as many interpretations as to its possible meaning as there are viewers, and this is precisely what Rauschenberg wants: when a full consensus can be reached about the exact meaning of a work of art, death arises, for Rauschenberg. If this is true, there is a risk that Rauschenberg might become immortal. Likewise, and in reverse, one could say that Johns presents objects by representing them—representing them to a point where one cannot but wonder at first whether they exist by themselves or as a simulacrum: again the case of most of his sculptures is absolutely emblematic of this position. We are very far from a situation where one could influence the other, but, one where a real dialogue may take place between two distinct and complementary positions. This is perhaps the greatest thing that these two pairs of artists hold in common: in both cases, each artist holds his turf while both learning from the other and giving him back something he also needs.

*Wheels, Tires, Circles, Discs, Umbrellas, Targets: Various Uses of the Same Geometric Figure*

Imagine

a circle

722 Quoted in Nan Rosenthal’s unpublished essay.
723 See Illustration Folio: Rounded Themes.
or an oval
a sort of
spectrum
Twist it
Render this
in paint⁷²⁴

The “renfermement” hinted at by Pissarro could be against people, or against things. All four artists here shared a common policy in their art that is the extreme opposite of this: they were open, though not indiscriminately and each not in the same way, to both people and things. Johns was heard saying: “I don’t think there is any great influence from a place, but to a certain extent, one is influenced by the space one works in, the kind of light… and the noise, I imagine everything has its role.”⁷²⁵ Likewise, when Rauschenberg declared: “there is no reason not to consider the world as a gigantic painting.”⁷²⁶ Rauschenberg went out of his way to avoid “looking for something” to paint and let it almost “happen” (or fall) on his canvas:

⁷²⁴ Johns, Sketchbook 12, Book A, p. 33 (c.1963-64). Writings, 53.
⁷²⁵ Writings, 232. Conversation with Ann Hindry.
⁷²⁶ Quoted by Nan Rosenthal in an unpublished manuscript.
I never wanted to go out looking for something. If you live in New York, or any urban place, you make a \textit{presentation} of something, taking it out of its natural concept or attitude. Then you have some poetry.\textsuperscript{727}

“Presentation” is here the key word—as opposed to representation—even though this term leads to a mildly deceitful conclusion as well—a deceit that is exactly inverted in terms to the deceit superbly crafted by Johns in \textit{Painted Bronze} for instance. Indeed, Rauschenberg by “presenting” objects, suggests that there is obviously no need to “re-present” them: his role as an artist/re-presentator (or as a representational artist) is therefore almost nil. The objects, so it would seem to be Rauschenberg’s claim, can take care of themselves: let them be, and that’s (almost) enough. Here again, Johns’s position, certainly in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s was very close in theory to this problematic, but not at all in practice: Johns showed great interest in objects that displayed as little interest as possible—objects that one takes for granted. However, in practice, on the whole, he went out of his way to re-present those in innumerable possible ways.

\textit{\textasteriskcentered For an Aesthetic of Trash

\textsuperscript{727}Rauschenberg, \textit{An Interview with Robert Rauschenberg by Barbara Rose}, (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 83. (My emphasis.)
Both Johns and Rauschenberg meet anyway around the concern of being self-effaced in this selection of objects: they either chose the most inconspicuous objects or signs or let the flow of trash from the outside world pour onto the canvas. In an interview with David Byrne in 1983 on the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, for which Rauschenberg had volunteered a poster, Byrne thus defined ‘garbage:’

When is garbage not garbage? I can tell you my definition: “Garbage is only garbage when it’s in the wrong place.”728 When it’s in an okay place, it’s not garbage anymore.

Rauschenberg: In this case it’s probably in my studio [laughs]. New York City never looked so great as when I was living here permanently. There was no garbage in my street. I used it all in my art. It’s only garbage when it’s misused.729

Garbage has consistently been a factor of devaluation, and a topic of discussion among artistic circles in 19th century France. Both camps threw it at each other: from the academic standpoint, it was used to deride what looked like “dirty painting” (with all the moral connotations attached to it). It could also be thrown back against the

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academic artists, not so much because of the ‘look’ of their painting surfaces but for their lack of moral courage and uprightness. They were accused of lacking “clean” standards and of upholding dirty customs and morals. Attacking an artist like Gerôme even, an arch-enemy of the impressionists, Raffaëlli found nothing more damning than to describe the scurrilous atmosphere within Gerôme’s studio—one that reeled of garbage:

les malheureux jeunes gens, pour le plus grand nombre grossiers et vulgaires, s’y livrent [chez Gérôme] à des plaisanteries écoeurantes. On y chante des obscénités stupides. On y invente des mascarades honteuses… Et jamais, jamais, dans cette réunion d’hommes appelés à être des artistes, une discussion d’art, jamais un mot généreux, jamais une idée élevée. Toujours et toujours, cette blague immonde, toujours l’ordure.730

The different twist that Cézanne and Pissarro introduced in their art is that they began to reclaim the epithet “dirty” that the academics, and even Manet, had used against their painting. This is not only visible, and almost palpable in the way both artists used thick brown (muddy-looking) impastos in their works throughout the 1860s, but it is demonstrable through their choices of motifs, and through the very selection of the fruit and objects, for instance, that they chose to depict, as in Pissarro’s still-life in

the Toledo Museum, [Ill. 138] for instance, or in a still-life by Cézanne executed a few years later, [Ill. 139] that gives the impression that the fruit have begun to rot.

“The truth is not always pretty,” these paintings seem to assert; it can be banal, if not downright ugly. It took a conscious (anti-)aesthetic effort to decide to depict the banal and the ugly as such. This position draws largely upon the principles of realism, and find in Courbet one of their chief representatives. The difference between Pissarro and Cézanne (who both, incidentally, felt a far greater sympathy towards Courbet than towards Corot with whom the early Pissarro is almost systematically associated) and Courbet, however, is that there is a certain matter-of-factness in their painting that there was not with Courbet. With the two younger artists, the matter—and it is indeed more an issue of matter than one of ‘form’—is thickly plastered on the canvas, or the panel, in order to sustain the thick and rough slice of truth that they are depicting. Pissarro’s lesson to Cézanne, in this sense, could have been that painting an apple could be as revolutionary (or shocking) as depicting a rape, a murder, or an autopsy. This is why these “painters of truth” could be referred to as “énergumenes” or as “révolutionnaires.”

There is in the works of Pissarro and Cézanne of the 1860s what linguists would describe as a “motivation link.” A motivated sign is one that resembles what it signifies. A perfect example is an onomatopoeia, i.e. a word whose very sound conjures up what it designates. A motivated sign is therefore very close to what it designates. Lessing was one of the first theoreticians of language to develop this definition and apply it to poetry and painting. He suggested that an

assured method to maximize the relations between the painting and its original is to make sure that a portrait has the same dimensions as its sitter for instance:

Thus the painter who would use only entirely natural signs must paint in lifelike proportions, or at least in dimensions that do not deviate markedly from nature.\footnote{Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, \textit{Laocoön}, (Berlin: Blümner, 1880), 428; quoted by Tzvetan Todorov, \textit{Theories of the Symbol}, trans. Catherine Porter, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 145.}

This theory of the closeness of the sign and the signified enjoyed a long life throughout a large part of the Romantic artistic production, and established a logic that unfolded its course in Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s early works. This logic was alive through Pissarro’s largest painting to date in 1866: \textit{Bords de la Marne en hiver},\footnote{PV 47.} [Ill. 137] as the artist used large applications of bitumen-like pigments to suggest the dirt-road to the left of the painting, and broad flat layers of acid green to evoke the wide expanse of green that covers half of the surface of the painting. Pissarro was indeed emulating his subject matter with his pigments. One can thus say that \textit{Bords de la Marne en hiver} is a motivated ‘landscape’ to the very extent that the pigments are made to look like the piece of land that one is seeing. The paint is made to look like land, mud, or dirt. Manet was not far wrong when he referred to Cézanne’s (and probably Pissarro’s) paintings as dirty. This logic, however, did not find its end with Pissarro and Cézanne. In fact one of the ultimate developments of this logic of the
motivated landscape finds its concrete materialization in Robert Rauschenberg’s so-called “dirtscapes.” Unfortunately, due to their extreme fragility, very few of these have actually survived. Dirt Painting (for John Cage) did. [Ill. 142] Technically speaking, this is what this ‘dirt painting’ consists of:

Compacted earth, organic matter, and water glass (a binding medium) in a shallow box support. A pattern of lichen or mold grew on its surface and this blue and gray presence remains.  

This work, dedicated to John Cage—whose aesthetics in music consisted by analogy in picking up the sound-garbage he could find in the street, or in his natural acoustic surrounding and turn these into a piece of music—presents a definite aesthetic appeal. Hopps compares its effect to an Abstract Expressionist painting. Thus the logic of trash fails in this sense. Trash, when made into art, acquires, somehow, a certain beauty, even if certain observers remained (or remain) resistant to the appeal of such a work. Michel Leiris facetiously pointed to this dichotomy intrinsic to large segments of modern art: “At present, there is no means of making something pass as ugly or repulsive. Even shit is pretty.” Another extraordinary example of the same

practice is a work titled Growing Painting (only known from a photograph) that consisted in a vertical frame holding earth, together with seeds and a few tufts of grass, all of which was kept together with water glass. The artist would come every day to the exhibition in order to water his Growing Painting and tend to it.

The fact that repulsive materials turn out to be pretty when encased and presented as a work of art does not make them enjoyable by every one. An art critic at the time of Rauschenberg’s and Twombly’s concurrent show at the Stable Gallery in 1953 saw in one of Rauschenberg’s black paintings “a city-dump mural out of handmade debris.” If some of the critics of the first impressionist exhibition could find something to say against the “raw,” “greasy” and “rough” treatment of the earth in some of Pissarro’s landscapes shown in 1874, Fitzsimmons expresses his scorn for the Black paintings [Ill. 144] by being technically, more or less accurate in his description of the work. These works conform to the intentions of the artist in that, as he put it himself thirty years later, they tend to consist of trash or dirt picked up from the street outside Rauschenberg’s studio. “A dirty painting” is no longer a

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736 See Hopps, op. cit., pl. 140.
737 Hopps, op. cit., 162.
738 James Fitzsimmons, “Art,” Arts and Architecture 70 (October 1953): 9; also quoted by Hopps, op. cit., 159.
739 Marc de Montifaud, “Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines,” in L’artiste, 1er mai 1874, 307-313: “Les Châtaigniers à Osny de Camille Pissarro, [sont] assez crus, mais les terrains grassement peints accusent des intentions sérieuses sous une enveloppe encore brute.” (311) The terms kept to describe Cézanne’s contributions to the first impressionist exhibition were much worse: “M. Cézanne n’apparaît plus que comme une espèce de fou, agité en peignant du delirium tremens. L’on a refusé de voir, dans cette création inspirée de Baudelaire, un rêve, une impression causée par les vapeurs orientales et qu’il fallait rendre sous la bizarre ébauche de l’imagination. L’incohérence n’est-elle pas la nature, le caractère particulier du sommeil laudatif?” (310).
metaphorical expression of scorn to designates painting that “looks like” dirt; it is the
description of an actual fact: the paint has gone; it has been replaced by dirt—which
ironically has turned colorful, as with the bluish colorations given to that surface by
the mould. The full circle of the motivation link suggested by Lessing is closed even
though Lessing himself could have probably never imagined that the motivation of a
poetic sign could go that far as to become fully what it signifies.

* Selflessness

This is perhaps one of the biggest conceptual contrasts between the two French 19th
artists and the two New York artists: the former could not have conceived even the
possibility of relinquishing one’s self, although Rauschenberg and Johns almost took
this for granted. Art was about self-effacement. As Steinberg mentioned, what Johns
seemed to enjoy most about his subject matters in his earliest paintings was the fact
that they did not need him to be there.

What we see when we face a Johns commonplace is the possibility of a
changed attitude; better still, the possibility of an object’s lone self-existence
without any human attitude whatsoever surrounding it. What Johns loves in
his objects is that they are nobody’s preference; not even his own. By a
strange paradox, these hand-made, uniquely made commonplace things, are relieved of man’s shadow.\textsuperscript{740}

It is true, nonetheless, that the objects selected by Johns, unlike some of Rauschenberg’s objects, are all man-made, but they are not Johns’s invention. In this sense, it is possible to see in these works by Johns a sign of the absence of man; an indication of the end of humanism—anti-humanism and postmodernism having often been attached together.\textsuperscript{741} One might see in these early works by Johns a tacit endorsement of a view, described by Derrida, that “is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who… has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play.”\textsuperscript{742} One could then construct a reading of Johns’s early works, following Steinberg’s lead, and picking up Derrida’s echo on the way, in which mere objects float through their representations, deprived of even the slightest shadow—or of any indexical clue that would point to the presence of man. Taking act of the death of man, Johns’s works would be a sure sign that art now had gotten rid of the last vestiges of humanism, and that an authentic ‘trans-humanist’ or

\textsuperscript{740} Leo Steinberg, \textit{Jasper Johns}, (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1963), 12. (My emphasis.)
\textsuperscript{741} See *Richard Schechner, \textit{The End of Humanism, Writings on Performance}, (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982) in which humanism is characteristically attacked for its arrogance and its ensuing faith in the powers of reason. (p. 96.) To engage in a critique of humanism is surely a perfectly justifiable undertaking, but to conclude that everything about humanism has to be given up boils down to throwing up the baby with the bath water. Furthermore, it leads to totally unsolvable aporias.
‘post-humanist’ language was born. It must be said that it is tempting to read Johns’s works through this vein of thinking, especially given that Johns himself often seemed, at the incipient stage of his career, to endorse such a position. Nevertheless, Steinberg understood this himself very well: there is here the beginning of a performative contradiction. To put it bluntly, if there is no man left, who on earth can pronounce the death of man? Therefore, asserting the death of man is a sign of life. Ultimately, considerations of “human interest” are inherent in any approach of modern art, “not because we are incurably sentimental about humanity, but because it is art we are talking about.”

Art, even if it no longer “invents” its objects, even if all it has left to do is to stage these objects—although both Rauschenberg and Johns tended to minimize their degree of involvement at the beginning of their careers—art still conjures up a certain idea of humanity by summoning observers to respond.

Besides, in the case of Rauschenberg and Johns, the garbage or these signs still had to be picked up by someone with eyes and a mind. A selection process that necessarily somehow involved their subjectivity was put in process. Despite his claim that the streets were clean when he lived there permanently, not everything Rauschenberg picked up from the street went directly onto one of his canvases: there was still a minimum work to be conducted in which, inevitably, his ‘self’ reoccupied the first rank. The same applies to Johns. The discussion Johns had with Leo Steinberg led him to confront the aporetic fact that, without him, objects themselves would not be

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743 Steinberg, Other Criteria, 81.
there either. This brings us back to the Kantian question of the representation of the thing in itself, as we saw in Section I.

*Reflective Surfaces: Passivity to the Surroundings*

Anyway, it is Rauschenberg’s claim—and it is largely the effect of many of his works—that he “presents” things, as they come, as they are around him, and lets them be, lets them fall, just like the particles of dust on his White Canvases. [Ill. 143] on the surfaces of his works. The term “falling” was precisely the term used by John Cage in order to describe his experience in front of the White Canvases:

(The white paintings caught whatever fell on them; why did I not look at them with a magnifying glass? Only because I didn’t yet have one? Do you agree with the statement: After all, nature is better than art?)^744

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^744 Cage, *Silence*, 108. I have to say that the White Canvases continue to retain all the mystery of their completely bland neutrality: they have indeed nothing to do with ‘hard edge’ abstract paintings: they simply are surfaces of linen painted in a dull, neutral white. One could imagine that had Ellsworth Kelly done a work of this kind (even though he would not have done), the white of his surfaces would be intensely dazzling. His white would push us back, away from the canvas. Rauschenberg’s white, on the contrary, lets us get as close as we may possibly want to the canvas, to the point, indeed Cage was right, of noticing specks of dust or tiny details that happened to have fallen there, drawn by static electricity. When I was recently looking at Four White Canvases, exhibited at the Guggenheim right now, I noticed a small hair had lain on the left panel. This hair got its moment of fame. In fact, one could say that what brings all four artists together is a central interest in what Hegel used to call “the dust of history”—all those phenomena, people, things, events, to which History never pays much attention. There is some anti-monumental force at work within the works of all four artists: Pissarro, Cézanne, Rauschenberg, and Johns. Even though it might be objected that both Johns and Rauschenberg have been tempted by monumental scale (Johns with Map (Based on Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion Air Ocean World), 1967-71, and Rauschenberg with his still going Quarter-Mile or
Rauschenberg explained how this process begins:

My attitude is that if I am in a working situation, I just look around and see what’s around me. If I’ve picked up something, touched something or moved somewhere, then something is happening.\footnote{Rauschenberg, \textit{An Interview}, 82.}

The cross-road where Cézanne, Pissarro, Johns and Rauschenberg (among other modern artists) meet is in this, apparently simple, acceptance of the commonplace. The commonplace as a meeting place could be the sub-title of the present study. Sartre described very aptly the role that the commonplace took among this generation of artists:

This fine world—the commonplace—has several meanings; it refers without doubt to the most hackneyed of thoughts, but the fact is that these thoughts have become a meeting place for the community. Everyone recognizes both themselves and others in them. The commonplace is everyone’s and mine; it is the presence of everyone in me. It is, in essence, the generality; to appropriate it for myself, I must perform an act, an act by which I divest myself of my particularity in order to attach myself to what is general, to

\footnote{Two-Furlong Piece), neither artist has ever departed from a deep attachment to the aesthetics of the common place, or, of the aesthetics of the “infra-mince” as Duchamp put it.}
become the generality. Not simply to resemble everyone, but to be precisely the incarnation of everyone. By this eminently social act of association, I identify myself with all other beings in the indistinctness of the universal.\textsuperscript{746}

This text by Sartre admirably describes the huge interest that brings together Johns and Rauschenberg, as well as Pissarro and Cézanne, but it also permits to understand better one of the fundamental underlying assumptions on the parts of all four artists, who thus continue to meet and “recognize both themselves and others” in this culture of the commonplace. Leo Steinberg was one of the first critics in the early 1960s who not only emphasized the key role that the commonplace holds in Johns’s art, but who also tied this preoccupation with other artists such as Caravaggio, Courbet, or the American Ashcan School:

[Johns’s] subjects are commonplaces of our environment. So worded, Johns’s preference would place him with Caravaggio, Courbet, or the American Ashcan School painters, all artists who chose lowly themes. But Johns doesn’t give us the commonplace in a painting (transfigured by light, composition and style), but the commonplace as a painting. This is different.\textsuperscript{747}


\textsuperscript{747} Leo Steinberg, op. cit., 12.
If we resume Steinberg’s precious distinction between ‘the commonplace in a painting’ and ‘the commonplace as a painting’ we reach to the distinction between all four artists: Pissarro and Cézanne did treat the commonplace in their paintings: their still-lives (as opposed to those by Fantin-Latour) offer no glamour, no elegance, nothing recherché. The apples come straight from the trees, or from the ground, and they have been neither washed nor polished for a better effect—and they may even, in Cézanne’s case, eventually begin to rot as time passes. The commonplace is represented in their paintings—although I will argue that Pissarro’s Portrait of Cézanne constitutes at least one exception in which one sees commonplace representations (posters, paper clips) as paintings, namely on the wall behind Cézanne’s shoulders. [Ill. 64] Johns’s invention is to introduce an almost literal equation between the object represented and the support of representation (the canvas): thus, there appears to be no “difference” between the object represented and the representation itself, as in Flag. [See Ill. Dossier F] At first, no background, no margins, no volume (unless three flags are depicted on top of each other), no depth were visible: the representation and its object seem to have fused in one. This situation changed with Flag above White with Collage [Ill. 143] where a background appeared: it was the same width as the flag, although of higher dimensions. The famous dilemma, once pronounced by Alan Solomon: “Is it a flag? Is it a painting?” points exactly to this unique (at the time) procedure in painting. The dividing line
between the painting and the painted object seems blurred, *almost* non-existent—I place a strong emphasis on the almost, and I think that Jasper Johns does too, so that the whole tension then becomes for the observer to figure out what exactly he/she is looking at.

John Cage summarized this aesthetic trend with great pithy when he said: “There is no poor subject.” He could have been paraphrasing Flaubert, who held for Cézanne and Pissarro, the position Cage occupied for Rauschenberg and Johns. John Cage actually describes in terms of an encounter the experience of Robert Rauschenberg “picking up” his object:

There is in Rauschenberg, between him and what he picks up to use, the quality of an encounter. For the first time. If, as happens, there is a series of paintings containing such and such a material, it is as though the encounter was extended into a visit on the part of the stranger (who is divine). (In this way societies uninformed by artists coagulate their experiences into modes of communication in order to make mistakes.) Shortly the stranger leaves, leaving the door open.

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2 Ibid., 103. In an analogous sense, Charles Stuckey speaks of a collaborative link between Rauschenberg and his materials: see Charles Stuckey, *Retrospective*, 36.
The situation is very comparable with Johns’s works whereby a veritable encounter seems to be taking place between the artist and the objects he “directs” almost like a stage-manager. The big difference between the two artists is that there is, as Cage noted, a definite feeling that things are in Rauschenberg’s works the way they are just because they were found that way. Whether a speck of dust on a white canvas surface, or a goat with a tire around its body, these things just *almost* seem to have come that way—although here again I need to introduce an *almost* to qualify this process. There is a definite ease in the way Rauschenberg applies things into his works, or provokes juxtapositions that may shock us, or make us laugh, but that are relatively facile: the goat does not appear unhappy with its tire around the neck. However, the tire did not come around its body just like that. Johns uses chance to a degree too, but he too resorts to twisting chance when he has to. The insertion of a ball between two canvases seems to have led to a real tour de force: bending, forcing, plying wood around this wooden ball, cannot have been a light physical exercise. To Rauschenberg’s relative passivity—even though this passivity is also calculated, and is the subject of much reflection on the part of the artist—corresponds Johns’s active role in front of his canvases, or works on paper when he fabricates his representations. To one artist’s light-hearted ‘laissez-faire’ type of approach corresponds the other’s boundless zeal, and deep physical engagement with his work. Yet, both of them began from the same premises: they met on the same platform—the world of the common place.
Implications of Compilation Technique Beyond Painting

While both Johns and Rauschenberg looked at every technique, and continue to do so, that can fuel their ceaselessly active search for new ways of doing and making art, their works opened up boundaries to such a degree that other forms of expression such as film making, for instance, not just to mention music and dance, found a certain resonance within their works. Emile de Antonio is a prime example of someone who transformed the technique of documentary film to an unprecedented level of complexity.

To achieve this level of complexity de Antonio developed an uncommon method of filmmaking, based in part on his understanding of collage, which he picked up from his friends Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. The result was a technique known as “compilation documentary,” a blend of archival footage and contemporary interviews that set the past and the present into a dialectical tension only the audience could resolve.\textsuperscript{750}

Johns and Rauschenberg may very well be the first painters who can claim to have had an impact on filmmaking techniques—having thus reversed not only the old

Baudelairian prophecy that painting was doomed in the age of photography, but having added to this problem, the challenge laid for painting by the Frères Lumière. Filmmaker de Antonio (known among his friends as “de” pronounced ‘dee’) was using the technique of collages that he observed in Johns and Rauschenberg in order to direct a film about them and the New York avant-garde. There again, de Antonio did not just borrow without giving back. A regular long-night visitor of the Cedar Room and the San Remo, he became intimately close in the 1950s with a group he had called the “homintern” and gained considerable esteem from colleagues of all different art professions by organizing a concert for John Cage in 1955 at Clarkstown High School in Rockland County. De Antonio had moved to Rockland County with his third wife and met and befriended there his neighbor John Cage. As he was going one day to check the scene of Clarkstown High School in preparation for the concert he was organizing, he met two young men “nail in mouth and hammers in hand, working on the set:” these were Rauschenberg and Johns. He subsequently made numerous friends and became a kind of business consultant and adviser to several artists among whom Johns and Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Andy Warhol. It was de Antonio who arranged, for instance, for “Matson Jones” (the pseudonym that Johns and Rauschenberg took for their commercial work) to be hired by Tiffany’s to dress

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751 The term had first been coined by Cyril Connolly to refer to a group of gay writers at Oxford in the thirties. The pun is obviously based on the Russian abbreviation ‘Comintern’ (for Communist International.) See Lewis, op. cit., 19.

their display windows. A few years later, “Jap” (as Jasper was known among friends),
Bob and De formed a small partnership and called themselves “Impresarios, Inc.”
They each put up $1,000 in order to produce an upstage version of the Cage
performance they had put up at Clarkstown High School. On May 15, (Jasper’s
birthday)—1958, opened “The 25-Year Retrospective Concert of the Music of John
Cage,” a musical and artistic event of major significance. The 25-year retrospective
included a broad range of Cage’s works from his early percussion pieces, mostly
played during the first half of the concert, and largely praised by the audience, to his
famous Concert for Piano and Orchestra which closed the program—in more ways
than one. Tompkins thus describes what followed:

A group in the balcony stood up and tried to stop the performance with a
sustained burst of derisive clapping and yelling, and the concert limped to its
close in a cacophony of cheers, boos, whistles, shouts, and other sounds not
intended by the composer.

And Virgil Thomson describes what brought this near riot in Town Hall.

What with the same man playing two tubas at once, a trombone player using
only his instrument’s mouthpiece, a violinist sawing away across his knees,

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753 Virgil Thomson compared this event, described as riotous, to the legendary scandal of the premiere
of Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring, 1913: Saturday Review of Literature, June 1960.
754 Tompkins, ibid., 148.
and the soloist David Tudor crawling around on the floor and thumping the piano from below, for all the world like a 1905 motorist, the Town Hall spectacle, as you can imagine, was one of cartoon comedy… And if the general effect is that of an orchestra just having fun, it is doubtful whether any orchestra ever before had so much fun or gave such joyful hilarity to its listeners. 755

Even though Thomson seemed to have fun and saw there “a jolly good row and a good show,” Cage himself was less pleased. He had just begun to experiment with his new “indeterminate” methods of composition—using, incidentally, virtually the same term as Fichte used, to point out to an analogous phenomenon: musicians were given a certain leeway and could be free to take decisions as to what sounds they wanted to produce, and for how long. Thus, as Tompkins points out, the performers in the orchestra were entitled and encouraged by the composer himself, to become co-artists, and collaborators, rather than simply performers. However, as Cage pointed out this comprised some risk—besides the unpredictable reaction of the audience, Cage was concerned about the fact that “you never can tell in rehearsals who’s going to act like an idiot.” 756 Tompkins concludes with the apt observation: “The real problem in his work (a problem that many of his admirers and imitators have never

756 Quoted by Tompkins, 149.
solved) was how to be free without being foolish.”757 This paradoxical challenge applied word for word to Cézanne’s case as well. For Cézanne, the problem was how to paint freely without painting crazily. Much of Cézanne’s painting appeared, even to his closest friends and colleagues—with the exception of Pissarro—crazy.

* Cézanne’s and Pissarro’s ‘Recording Devices’ (Appareils enregistreurs)

It can easily be argued that Cézanne, and Pissarro, did very much the same thing, in their own time, in their own terms, just without resorting to other ‘media’ than pictorial media. A goat could be a referential for Rauschenberg as it was, on more than one occasion, for Pissarro [Ill. Dossier M]; but it could never be a means of representation, or a support for painting as was the case with Rauschenberg. In other words, a goat for Pissarro could only be re-presented; it could never be presented. Besides these obvious differences, it is again striking to note the parallels that exist between certain texts produced by or with the participation of Cézanne, and those written or produced by Johns and Rauschenberg. Cézanne, in the famous conversation with Gasquet, thus describes his methods of procedures in terms that strikingly remind us of Rauschenberg’s mildly ambitious plan—“to consider the world as a painting:”

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757 Ibid.
…le cerveau, libre, de l’artiste doit être comme une plaque sensible, un appareil enregistreur simplement, au moment où il œuvre.\footnote{Cézanne, \textit{Conversations}, 111.}

This arch-principle of Cézannian creation finds its source in the collaboration the artist struck with Pissarro in the ‘60s. It is at that point that Pissarro—if one compares the works by both artists, this becomes amply clear—encouraged, or gave Cézanne the cue for considering painting from nature as a way to develop one’s sensations, and let the flow of the world leave its imprint on the artist’s sensation. Naturally, this concept of ‘sensation’ is more complex than a mere photographic plate on which the real would come and leave its mark. If one follows a photographic metaphor (as Cézanne does), one then has to wonder about the mind that has selected the slice of real that would leave its mark on the retina, and about the process of ‘rendering’ this effect into a picture.\footnote{On the densely complex problems related to the notion of “sensation,” see Richard Shiff, \textit{Cézanne and the end…}, \textit{op. cit.}, 14-20.}

The point is repeated several times through different formulations. In another passage of the same conversation, Cézanne, this time anticipating John Cage’s theories, speaks with a voice that seems to announce some of the most radical creations of the New York school of the post-WWII period:
Toute [la] volonté [du peintre] doit être de silence. Il doit faire taire en lui toutes les voix des préjugés, oublier, oublier, faire silence, être un écho parfait.\textsuperscript{760}

This idea of creating a picture while shutting down all “prejudices” (or preconceived notions) was also an idea dear to Pissarro. Can we think of more apt terms to describe, not just Cézanne’s and Pissarro’s landscape paintings in and around Auvers, but also Rauschenberg’s \textit{White Canvases}? This, somewhat peculiar, decision to reduce the \textit{self} to a neutral recipient that acts almost unconsciously did not only characterize the positions of Rauschenberg and Johns as they began working together.

Rauschenberg continues to refer to this process of emptying oneself by using terms very similar to those used by Pissarro and Cézanne:

You just—what’s that thing you do in the Catholic Church? Throwing yourself on the ground? You just belly down. You make yourself as vulnerable as possible, so that you empty yourself of as many preconceptions as you can possibly manage.\textsuperscript{761}

\textsuperscript{760} Ibid., 109
\textsuperscript{761} Rauschenberg quoted by Kotz, \textit{op. cit}, 266.
This definitely goes back to some of the ideological tenets of German romanticism that informed Cézanne’s and Pissarro’s discourse: both artists held a high regard for the idea of humble resignation in front of nature.

To Emile Bernard who was intimating to Cézanne that it is impossible to paint without ideas, Cézanne with his characteristic coarseness replied that ideas are worth ‘shit’ (which Bernard politely transliterated into the elegant periphrasis: “tout cela ne vaut pas le mot de Cambronne; ce sont des rêveries d’universitaires.”) Cézanne opened his coarse reply, though, with a reference to some one who indeed had a great impact on both Pissarro and him: Courbet. Cézanne said that the mere suggestion that one needs ideas in order to paint would have made Courbet laugh. It is interesting to note this point in relation to the Portrait de Cézanne by Pissarro [Ill. 64]. In this astonishing painting, about which much has been said and written, the background tells us a lot about what values Cézanne and Pissarro held in common in the 1870s. Even though it appears that things are on the wall just by some happenstance, again, the decision to set the portrait scene in front of this segment of the wall is not without meaning. Precisely, one sees behind Cézanne’s right shoulder (in the picture), a caricature of Courbet laughing and holding a full pint of beer that seemingly threatens to spill onto Cézanne’s jacket. Courbet, who laughed at a lot of things, including the official circles of the art world, is a likely common source for the concept of an art

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stripped of ideas, or a retina used as an empty, and virtually unconscious vessel of perceptions. Cézanne goes as far as he can to state his point. To Bernard who insisted and asked the question:

- Toute pensée vous semble donc inutile quand il s’agit de peindre ?
- [Cézanne replied :] Oui ! Voici un spectacle parfait ; je veux le traduire.
  Pour y arriver, je m’anéantis en lui, je m’y soumets, j’attends qu’il en sorte ma vérité personnelle. Pourquoi me souviendrais-je des philosophes devant ce grand livre, et des peintres devant ce vaste tableau, le plus beau de tous ? Croyez-moi, avec la nature, il faut redevenir un enfant.
- [Bernard :] C’est donc à l’inconscience que vous demanderez votre science ?
- [Cézanne:] Ni plus ni moins. Il faut se plier à ce parfait ouvrage. De lui, tout nous vient, par lui, nous existons. Oublions le reste.  

*Withdrawal*

Through a withdrawal into one’s unconscious (even though Cézanne had no idea what a posterity this concept would enjoy in the 20th century), one gains back oneself, one’s own vision. It is precisely also this oscillation that one finds constantly

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763 Ibid.
in Pissarro’s letters, who puts the paradox of reaching one’s unconscious self through
a conscious effort upon oneself in these words:

Mais ne pas oublier que l’on [ne] doit être que soi-même ! Mais on ne l’est
pas sans efforts !\textsuperscript{764}

This position is precisely echoed three quarters of a century later by Johns in one of
his very first published interviews, shortly after his first solo exhibition at the Leo
Castelli Gallery in New York. The 28-year old artist was thus described:

Johns studied art for two years at the University of South Carolina, then did
his Army stint and has, since 1952, worked painstakingly in a loft just below
Rauschenberg’s.\textsuperscript{765}

Johns’s statement echoes Cézanne’s:

I have no ideas about what the paintings imply about the world. I don’t think
that’s a painter’s business. He just paints paintings without conscious reason. I
intuitively like to paint flags.”\textsuperscript{766}

\textsuperscript{764} CP/JBH, I, 264.
\textsuperscript{765} The dates are incorrect: see comparative chronology of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in
Appendix 2.
Many have felt great difficulty to comprehend how a given artist could go from producing a group of works such as *White Canvases* to a piece such as *Monogram*: this artistic jump precisely embodies what could be called an anti-modernist spirit of testing all possibilities—or all determinabilities (as Fichte would say). I would like, however, to introduce here a brief remark to qualify this statement. While the sense of departure and the creative itinerary that led from *White Canvases* in the early 1950s to *Monogram* are spectacular, there is, in fact, a link, and that link is, typically, the world within which Rauschenberg functions: that famous gap between life and art within which he lives and works. It is that very world—the world not only of all the facts that Rauschenberg decides are worthy of preservation (here *representation* takes over pure and simple *presentation* by an act of conscious decision as to what should be preserved, and what should be left in the pile of garbage). All the combinations of objects that he agglutinates into *combines* thus become parts in major artefacts. *Monogram* is, therefore, the other side of the mirror displayed by *White Canvases*: while the latter is pure silence (the will of the painter has become mere silence, as Cézanne would say), the former is rambunctious, noisy, funny, scary, obnoxious, ugly, touching, sublime, fragile, hilarious—according to each viewer (given that a single viewer may attach several of these attributes, and more, to *Monogram*.) Finally, I would like to add a few words about a linguistic association that could not have

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escaped Rauschenberg’s mind, always ready to enjoy a good pun. The obvious association of Monogram is with “scapegoating.” There were a number of clinical specialized studies in the field of social and psychological studies that focused on the phenomenon of “scapegoating” in the ‘50s and ‘60s. With the loud caveat that I am not remotely suggesting here that Monogram’s “meaning” can be exhausted in a representation of the phenomenon of scapegoating, I feel that a definition of what is understood by scapegoating in the field of sociological and psychological studies may help to shed some light on the general context of Monogram and, at the very least, offer one, among others, plausible source of associations. Scapegoating, we are told, “is a consequence of the existence of tensions within the family system which have not been adequately resolved in other ways.” Scapegoating appears as a useful defense mechanism when all others have failed to resolve the apparent conflict-oriented tensions. Some families, for instance, are partly successful in fencing off this tension by resorting to various forms of skewed communication: “evasion, noncommunication, denial, displacement, turning against the self, externalization, and altered rules in subconstellations of the family.” When the stress becomes overwhelmingly enduring, then, there is little resort left but for the family to use the subconscious technique of ‘scapegoating.’ If Monogram shares the slightest

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768 Bergmann, op. cit., 160.
769 Ibid.
associations with the very theme of scapegoating, one is, then, induced to think that Monogram stages a powerful, monumental even, response to the other side of White Canvases: as opposed to the Zen-like silence of these canvases, one would see the overwhelming agglutination of noises that come up to no sense. Monogram could then be read as a hymn to non-communication: it makes us both laugh and cry. Yet, inevitably the presence of the stuffed goat also evokes a feeling of compassion in the viewer. Compassion opens the gate to communication. All is not lost then. Such a dissonance from one group of works to the other cannot be observed in Jasper Johns’s art. His art, at first sight, presents a greater degree of consistency than Rauschenberg’s who seems to cultivate the heteroclite. However, Johns and Rauschenberg are in communion around the fact that their art does not communicate any particular message—even though it summons its viewers into participation, and thus, depends on a web of communication.

*Logic of Inclusion*

I am prepared to go some way alongside the modernist argument in that there is a certain logic at work within the works by Pissarro and Cézanne, as well as in the works by Johns and Rauschenberg. But the logic I see there is almost diametrically opposed to the modernist logic: the modernist is one of exclusion—the logic of the “four or five” best and mightiest who have complied with the diktat of the medium,
and heeded to the flatness of the surfaces upon which they were working. The logic I am talking about has nothing to do with this: it is a logic of inclusion. It is a logic of acceptance, tolerance. It is a logic of listening and opening, rather than one of preaching.

Be it four or five names, forty or fifty, or even four hundred or five hundred names who make up the sum total of modernism, there is not much room for dialogue there. In the same way, there was no room for tergiversations, hesitations, mistakes, going back, or thinking twice, for trying things out, and discussing the pros and cons of various options at hand. Modernism is essentially a narrative in which individuals perform a role assigned to them by history and embody a particular moment in the tacit logic of history. Discussions between the players have no place in such a narrative. Discussions necessitate more than one voice. One must have something to tell, and/or something to listen to. This give-and-take process, essential to the process of a discussion, is not very fitting when it comes to exposing the voice of history, unfolding the smooth and logical succession of its prime moments. The heralds of each of these key historical moments have no need to enter into any form of discussion: they are simply supposed to assert their voice and impose—even if they are not listened to at first—their own singular contributions. No need for them to seek agreement, or recognition: history is there to take care of this, later, even if it sometimes has to wait after the death of the heroes. Within discussions, on the
contrary, agreement between participants is generally sought, but there is always the possibility or the risk that an agreement will not happen, and one is then left with disagreeing voices. Whether an agreement is reached or not, a discussion may not be based on the presumption that an agreement already exists. Strong expectations that it may happen: yes; definite certainty that it will happen: no. A conversation always leaves room for a gap that is never quite bridgeable between the various participants. The final outcome of any conversation can never be guessed: one is never certain of the end as one enters into a conversation. History—especially the history of the historicists—is never uncertain of the course it is following. It pitches, one against the other, high-performing individuals who know in advance the way they are supposed to follow. They may, of course, as titans do exert some influence upon one another: this is an indicator of who the stronger is, or who has passively given in to the visual stimuli of the other. Influences, however, do not deviate the course of history: if an artist is strong enough, he can absorb as many influences as his artistic persona can sustain. Influences can only be toxic for weaker artists.

*Influence vs. Conversation*

Conversations offers a very different model to rethink the notion of ‘influences.’ We now understand better why there is little room for real conversations within the history of modernism: its course seems to have unfolded on a monolithic track. There
was only one way to go for the road to flatness. Conversations, on the other hand, by
definition, open up possibilities that had not been thought of: it is impossible to guess
in advance, word for word, what one’s protagonist is going to say. Whatever he/she is
going to say will orientate what I, in turn, will say next, and so on. To admit
conversations within the context of the history of modernism would have boiled down
to the fact that there could have been more than one directions or cross-sections on
the road to flatness. At this point, I propose to leave the high road of modernism in
order to explore in further detail the points of interaction that structured the
exchanges between Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one hand, and Johns and
Rauschenberg, on the other. The principal rules of procedure that structured these
exchanges are practically the same as those that regulate any argumentations. As
Habermas explains,

> Anyone who seriously engages in argumentation must presuppose that the
context of discussion guarantees in principle freedom of access, equal rights to
participate, truthfulness on the part of the participants, absence of coercion in
adopting positions…\(^{770}\)

These rules are pretty basic; yet, their inobservance is enough to ruin an ongoing
dialogue. Freedom of access is, of course, the sine qua non condition for any dialogue

to happen: each participant must be free to enter and leave the discussion, and to contribute to it out of his/her own will. Equal rights to participate constitute another basic condition: it implies that nobody is allowed to monopolize the discussion, turn it into a monologue, or bar access to the exchange, nor claim a right to dominate the conversation. These equal rights of each participant to a dialogue also run counter to the notion of influence. An influential participant remains in a dominating position, and thus ruins the chances of a dialogue to reach its outcome. As long as these conditions were all respected, these dialogues between Pissarro and Cézanne, Rauschenberg and Johns kept going. These conditions always repose on the unspoken agreement of both (or all) participants to subscribe to them. This requires, therefore, a mutual action on the part of the participants. This is why I have made a conscious choice to run this study on these two pairs of artistic interchanges without referring to the notion of influence—which goes exactly against the notion of an active participatory role. When Cézanne, for instance, concedes that “Pissarro a eu une énorme influence sur moi,” for instance, he quickly needs to qualify this statement by saying that he turned this influence into his own enterprise: “J’ai voulu faire de l’impressionnisme quelque chose de solide et de durable.”\footnote{Conversations, 121.} In other words, Cézanne acknowledges the influence he received from Pissarro, and impressionism, while he also claims that he ‘influenced’ impressionism in return. This did not stop Cézanne, under different circumstances, and in a different context to say almost the exact
opposite: “Je n’ai pas plus imité Pissarro et Monet que les grands du Louvre.” This short quotation, however, could be misleading out of its context. Cézanne in a fairly long conversation with Bernard explains his theory of art, and of the beautiful.

*Altruism*

Interestingly enough, Cézanne, here again, holds a position that is somewhat different from those of the three other participants. Just like Pissarro, Rauschenberg and Johns appear as very altruistic, genuinely interested in others, and serving very generously causes that support the needs of others, especially artists. In a recent statement, Johns summarized how his and Bob Rauschenberg’s early combined efforts led to the creation of The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc. 773.

In 1954 I had helped Bob Rauschenberg a bit with his Minutiae set, [Ill. 174] his first for Merce Cunningham, and I continued to assist him with most of his stage work through 1960. We were friends with Merce and John Cage and saw them frequently. In 1955 there was an evening of Cunningham/Cage

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772 This text, seldom quoted, comes from Emile Bernard “Une conversation avec Cézanne,” Mercure de France, June 1, 1921, reprinted in Bernard, Propos sur l’art, op. cit., vol. 1, 227. This text was also quoted, without reference, in Cézanne: Loan Exhibition, (New York: Wildenstein & Co. Inc., 1959), no author, no pagination; foreword by Meyer Schapiro.

773 This foundation thus defines its intentions: The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc. was established in 1963 through the efforts of Jasper Johns and John Cage in the belief that painters and sculptors were sufficiently concerned about the state of the performance arts to donate their work in support of performing artists. Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Marcel Duchamp, Ellsworth Kelly, Wilfredo Lam, Marisol, Frank Stella, Saul Steinberg, Jean Tinguely, and Andy Warhol were among the many artists who contributed to the first benefit exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery in February 1963.
performances at Clarkstown High School in Rockland County where we met Emile de Antonio. In 1958 de, as he was known, Bob and I formed Impresarios Inc. which financed and produced the 25-year retrospective concert of John Cage’s music at Town Hall in New York. I think it was the excitement of that event that led us in 1960 to produce an evening of the Cunningham Company at the Phoenix Theater on Second Avenue. Artists were a major part of the audiences for those performances.

When Merce began to plan a week of dance in a Broadway theater in 1963, we quickly realized that it would cost more money than we were used to having. Several artists offered works which might be sold to help cover the anticipated loss.

The sale of that group of works promised to fetch an amount somewhat larger than was needed and that led us to expand the idea. We would try to help others who were “in the same boat,” as Merce put it.\footnote{Jasper Johns in a conversation with Mary A. Judge, Executive Director of the Foundation, \textit{Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc.}, (New York, 2000), 6.}

It is not excessive to say that the concept of communication, as well as solidarity, was at the heart of Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s early concerns as artists. They did not conceive of their profession as artists without offering consideration and solidarity to others. The legalistic and ethical gesture that prompted the creation of the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc. bears a remarkable analogy with the
organizational structure and intentions that led to the formation of the impressionist movement—the legal chart of which was written up by Pissarro.

Pissarro too, as we all know, was an altruist, and a great extravert. Always ready to listen to those who turned to him, he had an almost boundless capacity to be there for others, to offer help, advice, support, even when he was himself facing dire adversity. A great example of Pissarro’s generosity towards others, especially when he felt they had been unjustly treated, can be found in the ‘thank you’ letter written by the artist to the novelist and critic Joris-Karl Huysmans to acknowledge the reception of the latter’s book: L’art moderne in which he expressed anger over the fact that Huysmans had “omitted” to mention Cézanne:

D’où vient que vous ne dites pas un mot de Cézanne, que pas un de nous n’admette [pas] comme un des tempéraments les plus étonnants et le plus curieux de notre époque et qui a eu une influence très grande sur l’art moderne ?…

Follow a few words of interjection about the fact that Huysmans does not seem to get Monet’s “astonishing vision.” Otherwise, not a word is written by Pissarro to thank the author for his nice and kind words. Pissarro’s care for others takes over here any pragmatic sense of defense of his own interests.

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775 Ibid., 208. It is interesting to note here that Pissarro uses a style of formulation close to the way things are articulated in modernism: “influence,” “epoch,” “modern art” are stock phrases of the modernist idiom.
If perhaps less overtly concerned with others than the other three artists, Cézanne too appears, nonetheless, to be a sharp critic of some the implications inherent in the modernist ideology. In a very beautiful text that can be found in Gasquet’s recollection of the conversation between Cézanne and his own father, Cézanne offers something like a critique of modernism that is informative about his own practice. The point of Cézanne’s text is to suggest two aspects of modern art that modernism, in its systematic impulse to impose a particular sense on modern art, could only ignore: 1. it suggests that there is a deep, almost co-extensive link between the act of “seeing in common” and the act of painting; 2. it also suggests that it is impossible to do justice to the infinite complexity of seeing inter-subjectively through a monolithic system of rationalization. Cézanne obviously targets—not so much the modernist enterprise that has barely begun—but the academic (pre-modern) system that is equally made of monolithic rules and conventions and leads artists, in Cézanne’s words, not to be able to see anything anymore. The relevance of his remarks when applied to the results of the modernist enterprise suggests indeed a strong parallel between the pre-modernist system of rules and conventions, and the modernist need to set up certain parameters, and draw certain mechanisms of progress. In this dialogue, Cézanne addresses Henri Gasquet while painting his portrait. These conversations took place, as we have seen, during the last decade of

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776 I will not reiterate the warnings about the doubts expressed as to the authenticity of this transcription. On this point, see Section I, note 67.
the artist’s life at a time when he had hardly any contact with Pissarro any more. What this text points out, however, is that Cézanne had not quite become the lonesome wolf that he is often described to be. He begins by addressing the program of what his art must be; this program is what he sees in common with his friend Henri (Cézanne does not use the expression “in Gemeinschaft” but he might have done.) “Between you and me, Henri, I mean, between what makes your personality and mine, there is the world, the sun… what goes on… what we see in common.” This, tells Cézanne, offers the prime material of where he should be “digging.” This also offers the yardstick by which all his efforts to paint will be judged successfully or not. It is not the adequacy of his brushwork to a system of pre-established conventions that will dictate the efficiency of Cézanne’s work: not only must he be digging in that material available inter-subjectively—“what we see in common”—but “this is where the slightest brushstroke that is not right might put the whole thing askew.” For, Cézanne explains, if he can only be moved over there (one imagines him pointing to his head), he stands to ruin the eye. There follows this extraordinary text that describes precisely what one might call the conditions of possibility of an inter-subjective experience in painting:

Si je tisse autour de ton regard tout l’infini réseau des petits bleus, des marrons qui y sont, qui s’y conjuguent, je te ferai regarder comme tu regardes, sur ma toile… Une touche après l’autre, une touche après l’autre… Et si je

777 See the Cézanne epigraph of the present section: Conversations, 153.
suis froid, si je dessine, si je peins comme à l’école… je ne verrai plus rien.
Une bouche, un nez, de convention, toujours les mêmes… sans âme, sans mystère, sans passion…

It will be easy for incurable skeptics to doubt the authenticity of this particular text, as one may doubt the authenticity of any particular quote, or sentence that does not readily fit with one’s image, or expectations of what Cézanne should have been like. The trouble here is that Gasquet does not just devote one or two sentences to this experience of inter-subjectivity but over a page. Gasquet would have had to be quite imaginative to have Cézanne speak about inter-subjectivity with such emphasis. The logic of Cézanne’s argument, however, fits in very convincingly within his otherwise complex views. One of the premises of his reasoning is that the master-piece of nature is its “infinite diversity.” This infinite diversity is compounded by the fact that every second brings in its flow of new infinitesimal sensations, and that my sensations are compounded with your sensations, and with anybody with whom I see in common “the world, the sun, what goes on…” Addressing Joachim Gasquet, the author of the transcription of this conversation, Cézanne refers to Gasquet’s father who is sitting while smoking his pipe and half-listening to the conversation:

Ibid.

“Mais la diversité infinie, c’est le chef-d’œuvre de la nature…” Ibíd.
Tenez, Gasquet, votre père… Il est assis, n’est-ce pas ? Il fume sa pipe… Il n’écoute que d’une oreille… Il pense, à quoi ? Une bouffée de sensations lui vient, d’ailleurs… Son œil n’est pas le même… Une infinitésimale proportion, un atome de lumière a changé, du dedans, et s’est rencontrée avec la napppe toujours la même, ou presque toujours la même, qui tombe du vitrage.

Alors vous voyez, ce petit, petit ton, ce minuscule ton qui ombre, sous la paupière, s’est déplacé… Bon… Je corrige. Mais alors mon vert léger, à côté, je le vois, il sort trop. J’assourdis… Et je suis dans un de mes bons jours aujourd’hui. Je me raidis. J’ai ma volonté en main… Je continue, par touches insensibles, tout autour. L’œil regarde mieux… Mais l’autre, alors. Pour moi, il louche. Il regarde, il me regarde, moi. Tandis que celui-ci regarde sa vie, son passé, vous, je ne sais pas, quelque chose qui n’est pas moi, qui n’est pas nous…

This remarkable text not only offers a very precious testimony of the type of reflections Cézanne would have entertained, second after second, as he was painting during, as he concedes, “one of his good days.” It also casts a rich and poetic light on the importance of others for Cézanne—and again, one may look at the portraits he did of Pissarro for instance—possibly at the same moment as Pissarro was reciprocally executing a portrait of his friend and co-artist—(which have come to us, sadly, with no such comments from the artist) [ills. 56-64] with these thoughts and words in

780 Ibid.
mind. The artist’s acute attention, not only to what he sees, but to what the other sees is remarkable: Cézanne does not seem to be satisfied only with guessing what one of the eyes of his sitter is seeing, but he must understand what each of the two eyes is doing distinctly—a fascinating idea that tells us so much also about the slightly skewed level of the eyes that one notices in so many of Cézanne’s portraits. Hence the impression, often felt in front of a Cézanne portrait, that the two eyes of the sitter appear to look in different directions. The merit of this text is that it also provides a very persuasive reason why rules and conventions—all the products of schools—appear to be so aberrant and destructive for Cézanne. Not only is it technically impossible for a set of established rules to catch the ongoing infinite diversity of nature that Cézanne is evoking, but, on top of this, every second brings its new flow of sensations, and one’s eye changes, and, as Cézanne noted, each eye may change differently. In other words, therefore, dealing with the experience of seeing in common with others would have required to be in great form: the artist has, then, to deal not just with what happens to each of his eyes, but to each of the four eyes that are in presence of each other. The problem soon becomes frightfully complex, and one can thus understand better—although we do not have to condone it—Cézanne’s tendency to misanthropy towards the end. He really needed to be alone in front of the motif, for, in effect, Cézanne was never alone: inter-subjectivity was his lot. It began the second he opened each of his eyes. The problem is that it may not quite stop the minute he closed his eyes: Cézanne never spent a minute alone, even in his dreams.\footnote{See Lebenzstejn, \textit{op. cit.}}
He says it too: “Chaque fois que je me mets devant mon chevalet, je suis un autre homme, moi, et toujours Cézanne…”

Greenberg was, in his own words, not so much interested in people as he was in art. The main contention of the present essay is that one doesn’t go without the other. Art is made by people and for people. Art, especially modern art, is, therefore, founded on sets of relationships that entail, at least an author and a viewer, both subjects of their own doings who, through the contact with the work of art, enter in communication with one another. Take out the people, you take out the art with them as well. The verdict of the champion of the American avant-garde of the ’40s and ’50s were far less optimistic in the ’60s: in fact, they sounded outright bitter and nostalgic. His mild and cautious imprecations against what he dubbed “Novelty Art” barely hid a certain nostalgia for the high promises of the earlier phases of modernism, and a more or less clearly avowed wish for a collapse of the present art scene. The tone following text by Greenberg written for Vogue in June 1967 speaks by itself:

When and if Novelty art collapses in the public’s esteem, as second-generation Abstract Expressionism did so suddenly in 1962, the situation may change again. The larger art public might then become disillusioned with contemporary avant-garde in general and stop breathing down its neck. I know

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782 Conversations, 153.
that this sounds terribly snobbish. It also sounds callous. If the public, and the market, should turn away from the market, should turn away from contemporary advanced art, the sum of unhappiness would increase for many artists. Alas, the interests of art do not always coincide with those of human beings. Had I to choose, I would most certainly give priority to the latter. But I am writing here about the welfare of art, not about the welfare of people…

Even if Greenberg’s construction doesn’t leave much room for thinking about others nor about communication, it would be wrong to think that Greenberg had been entirely blind about this. As early as 1941, in his first famous text “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” Greenberg hinted at the fact that “other preoccupations” than merely formal ones are present within the dynamics of works of art. He referred specifically to poetic works (one of his favorite fields of comparison to discuss pictorial art) and wrote:

The attention of poets like Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Valéry, Eluard, Pound, Hart Crane, Stevens, even Rilke and Yeats, appears to be centered on the effort to create poetry and on the “moments” themselves of poetic conversion, rather than on experience to be converted into poetry. Of course, this cannot exclude

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other preoccupations in their work, for poetry must deal with words, and words must communicate.\textsuperscript{784}

This was the closest Greenberg ever came to engage in a theory of communication. The task that will now concern me is to engage in an analysis of how the works of art by Pissarro, Cézanne, Rauschenberg and Johns resorted to means of expression that “must communicate” and thus forged, two by two, as even Mallarmé conceded, inter-subjective links.

\textit{The Dialectic of the Self and the Other}

It is again partly by turning to Kant that one finds some extraordinary intuitions as to what the other may mean to the self without over-determining the self in return.

“Taste, says Kant, lays claim simply to autonomy. To make the judgements of others the determining ground of one’s own would be heteronomy.”\textsuperscript{785}

This noble principle that lies at the root of all modern aesthetics—be faithful to your own self, express yourself authentically—seems, however, to be contradicted by

\textsuperscript{784} Clement Greenberg, \textit{Collected Essays}, I, 9.
\textsuperscript{785} \textit{Critique of Judgement}, § 32, trans. Meredith, 137.
another principle which tends to recommend that one should look at other sources in order to form oneself:

The fact that we recommend the works of the ancients as models, and rightly too, and call their authors classical, as constituting a sort of nobility among writers that leads the way and thereby gives laws to the people, seems to indicate a posteriori sources of taste, and to contradict the autonomy of taste in each individual.\textsuperscript{786}

Finally, Kant produces the example of the ancient mathematicians whose “perfect thoroughness and elegance in synthetic methods” are always upheld even by modern mathematicians, to prove that reason too is, at least partly, imitative.

There is no employment of our powers, no matter how free, not even of reason itself, (which must create all its judgements from the common a priori source,) which, if each individual had always to start afresh with the crude equipment of his natural state, would not get itself involved in blundering attempts, did not those of other lie before it as a warning.\textsuperscript{787}

\textsuperscript{786} Ibid., 137-138.
\textsuperscript{787} Ibid.
The case of Pissarro, not only throughout his association with Cézanne, but also before and after, illustrates this point admirably.

* Pissarro: A Chameleon that Others would Emulate

Born in 1830, (a hundred years before Jasper Johns) Pissarro had certainly left his “mark” in more ways than one on the art world, when he died in 1903. The Jewish-born, gone anarchist, white-bearded artist, hailed by most of his colleagues as a dean of the impressionist movement, always appeared fiercely attached to the freedom of his sensations, while simultaneously always remaining open to dialogue, and keen to enter into a good, feisty discussion if the occasion called for it.

Much of his role as an individual artist was summarized—not without a pique of irony—by Paul Gauguin, once a student of Pissarro’s—and arguably his closest and most talented student—, who died the same year as Pissarro. Gauguin had met Cézanne at Pissarro’s in 1881 while Cézanne spent six months living in Pontoise and working closely with Pissarro. Cézanne was impressed by Gauguin’s works—and vice versa, even though the two artists ended up not speaking with each other due to fundamental differences of character. Again, it is significant here that Pissarro appeared to be able to get on with two such strong and uncompromising personalities as Cézanne and Gauguin. Gauguin, much younger than Cézanne, and therefore
Pissarro, held a very different position towards Pissarro: he was, at the beginning, a disciple, whereas Cézanne never “studied” under Pissarro: he studied with Pissarro. Gauguin had spent a lot of time with Pissarro as a result. Echoing Renoir who once wrote that “Pissarro est un homme qui a essayé de tout,” Gauguin thus portrayed Pissarro’s artistic production:

If you survey the whole of Pissarro’s output, its variations notwithstanding—Vautrin is always Vautrin, despite his many incarnations—you will find not only a consistently high degree of artistic control, but an essentially noble, intuitive art. However far away that haystack on yonder hillside may be, Pissarro knows how to take the trouble to look it over, to scrutinize it. He’s observed everybody, you say? And why not! Everybody’s observed him, too, but disowned him. He was one of my teachers, and I for one do not disown him.789

This short text precisely summarizes the terms of the dynamic relationship of the interchange between an artistic self and others: the self observes others, and others observe him, in turn. If, however, this exchange could be summarized so pithily, the

788 Vollard, *En écoutant..., op. cit.*, 205.
789 Paul Gauguin, *Raccontars de Rapin*, 1892-1902 ; ed. Mme. Joly-Segalen, (Paris : Grasset, 1951). This most interesting text is often quoted, though seldom within its context, and not always with the right source. Quoted by Françoise Cachin, in *Gauguin The Quest for Paradise*, (New York: Abrams, 1992), 183 this critical text is given a wrong source and is ascribed to *Avant et Après*. The same text was also partially quoted in “Looking at Pissarro,” in *Pissarro, Exh. Cat.*, London and Boston: Arts Council of Great Britain and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1980, p. 53 by Françoise Cachin, with a different translation, although the right source.
history of such interchanges would be a simple one to write. The problem begins, as Gauguin mentions, with the fact that observing others is sometimes difficult to acknowledge: “Everybody’s observed him, too, but disowned him.” Observing someone else in art is almost like abandoning or losing part of oneself, acknowledging a certain weakness, accepting that one may find some gain in looking ‘elsewhere.’ Worse even, within the ideological framework of modernity where the individual is expected to remain equal to itself and original—therefore, different from others—, the idea of looking at or observing others appears as a sure sign of failure. Influences, as Steven Levine put it, in the context of the impressionist ideology, have to be purged.790 Levine has in mind Monet when he points this out, but the same phenomenon was true of all the impressionists—and certainly of Cézanne too, with his growing fear that his “compatriots” would clamp him and steal his secrets away from him. Mirbeau, analyzing Monet’s style in the traditional ‘who-influenced-who?’ method, detected traces of influences from Courbet, Manet, and Pissarro in Monet’s work.791

The problem was, according to Mirbeau, that Monet was aware of this flaw and, as a result,

il mit toute son énergie, par une communication encore plus intime et plus abstraite avec la nature, à se défaire de ces quelques souvenirs extérieurs qui nuisaient au développement complet de sa personnalité.

Il divisa son travail sur un plan méthodique, rationnel, d’une inflexible rigueur, en quelque sorte mathématique. En quelques années il arriva à se débarrasser des conventions, des réminiscences, à n’avoir plus qu’un parti pris, celui de la sincérité, qu’une passion, celle de la vie.792

This is a most interesting text that establishes a parallel between one type of communication and another: communication with others through the phenomenon of influence—a phenomenon that has to be “purged”—and a positive type of communication, even more “intimate and abstract,” that binds the artist to nature. Through nature—or through his intimate contact with nature—the impressionist artist eventually reaches himself, or rediscovers himself.

The self only must be one—or, as Gauguin put it, have one “incarnation” despite the fact that it may present several different faces to society, or “variations.” Gauguin draws an analogy between Pissarro and Balzac’s ominous hero, Vautrin, in Le Père Goriot, published in 1834-35. Despite the warm tone of the comment drawn by Gauguin on his ex-teacher, this particular comparison is less than flattering for

792 Ibid.
Pissarro: Vautrin, a sinister character described successively by Balzac as a “démon” or a “tentateur” presents an essentially deceiving appearance. In the novel, the name ‘Vautrin’ is not the real name of the character who systematically conceals his real identity, that of a convict on the run. His real name is Jacques Collin, but his real name is as seldom used as his real identity is little known. Another name used for Vautrin/Jacques Collin is the ominous catch-phrase “Trompe-la-mort” (which means Death-Cheater). This lugubrious creature, therefore, has the reputation of not only being capable of cheating most of his living peers, but Death itself! It is surprising that in the abundant literature devoted to both Gauguin and Pissarro not a word has been mentioned about this rather odd analogy—that has to do with changes of identity and duplicity, in the context of a praiseful text on Pissarro. More significant even is the fact that the parallel drawn by Gauguin between his old teacher and Balzac’s hero echoes another literary comparison drawn by Gauguin between another convict and novel hero: Jean Valjean. This time, however, Gauguin draws the comparison between the hero and himself. Gauguin couched his own image, in a powerful and daunting self-portrait, under the features of Jean Valjean. The picture was entitled Les misérables, and dedicated: “à l’ami Vincent.” This painting was executed in 1888, and was sent to Vincent van Gogh who had asked Gauguin to execute a self-portrait and swap it against one from Van Gogh. Van Gogh had made the same request from Emile Bernard. After a fairly long period of gestation, Gauguin finally delivered the picture, but felt like sending a letter of explanation about this
self-portrait, as the intentions that propelled the creation of this picture were less than self-explanatory:

I feel a need to explain what I meant to do—not that you are unable to surmise it on your own, but rather because I don’t think I managed to reach my goal in my work—The disguise of a bandit badly dressed and as powerful as Jean Valjean with his innermost nobility and soft-heartedness. The face is flushed with hot blood that is aroused, and the eyes are enveloped in the colors of a furnace fire. These colors indicate the volcanic blaze that has set our artistic soul alight.

The contours of the nose and the eyes evoke flowers in a Persian rug and conjure up an art that is removed and symbolic. The girlish background with its childlike flowers is there to bear witness of our artistic virginity—And this Jean Valjean who is oppressed by society, and cast, as an outlaw, despite his love and strength, isn’t he the perfect image of an impressionist today! And by portraying him with my own features, you have not only an image of myself but also a portrait of all of us, wretched victims of society, us who get even by doing well.793

793 Correspondance de Paul Gauguin, Documents, témoignages, ed. Victor Merlhès, (Paris : Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), vol. 1, 234-5. (My translation). Je me sens le besoin d’expliquer ce que j’ai voulu faire non pas que vous ne soyez pas apte à le deviner tout seul mais parce que je ne crois pas y être parvenu dans mon œuvre—Le masque de bandit mal vêtu et puissant comme Jean Valjean qui a sa noblesse et sa douceur intérieure. Le sang en nuit inonde le visage et les tons en feu de forge qui enveloppent les yeux indiquent la lave de feu qui embrase notre âme de peintre.
Jean Valjean is the foremost protean hero in Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, published in 1862. He reinvents himself from the role of a compulsive thief to that of some one who sacrifices for those he loves. Jean Valjean is as likable as Vautrin is detestable, and belongs to the literary family of the good-hearted criminals, such as Robin Hood. In terms of their places in society, the two convict-heroes, referred to by Gauguin, basically present similar formal characteristics: they are featured as downs-and-outs, criminals, victims of society, and misfits. Both control their own images *in relation* to others. They both are endowed with a phenomenal talent for disguising themselves, transforming their identities as they please, and therefore never presenting the same selves. Vautrin uses this multifarious talent towards evil ends, while Valjean does it towards good ends, but both of these literary characters are endowed with the same plastic flexibility as far as modifying their personae is concerned. Working in relation with others may prove to be a cause for flexibility: one cannot be as tolerant towards oneself when one is in the company of some one else. Disguises per se, however, may not be the only necessary resource in order to deal with others. This is largely what the two collaborative relations demonstrate: each individual is prepared to leave room to the presence of the other, but never to the extent of losing his own identity. For

Le dessin des yeux et du nez semblables aux fleurs dans les tapis persans résume un art abstrait et symbolique—Le petit fond de jeune fille avec des fleurs enfantines est là pour attester notre virginité artistique—Et ce Jean Valjean que la société opprime mis hors la loi, avec son amour, sa force, n’est-il pas l’image aussi d’un impressionniste aujourd’hui. Et en le faisant sous mes traits vous avez mon image personnelle ainsi que notre portrait à tous pauvres victimes de la société nous en vengeant en faisant le bien.
Gauguin, it seems, being with others implied, to some extent, changing one’s identity, modifying one’s personality that could be donned on and off, like a mask.

Acknowledging the role that another artist has exerted on one’s own development is not always easy—or more accurately put, it is sometimes extremely difficult—and Gauguin, himself prone to dichotomous statements, had not always been that kind to Pissarro, no more actually than Pissarro had been to his ex-student once the latter proved to be interested in pursuing goals that, according to the atheist Pissarro, reeled of religion, symbolism, or mysticism. In a letter to his wife Mette written in March 1892 shortly after his first arrival in Tahiti, Gauguin, feeling the need for encouragement, attempted to justify his choices with such words: “For I am an artist and you are right, you are not mad, I am a great artist and I know it. It is because I am such that I have endured such sufferings.” In the same process of affirming his own choices, and confirming how great he is, he also felt the need to bring down the one who had led him to his career as an artist, and retrospectively, contradicted directly the praising homage that he would later on pay to his old teacher. Again, a critique of his old teacher is accompanied with a indirect praise addressed to himself; Gauguin now compares himself with Beethoven, still on the theme of the relationship between one’s self and others:
Beethoven was blind and deaf, he was isolated from everything, and so his works are redolent of the artist living in a world of his own. You see what has happened to Pissarro, owing to his always wanting to be in the vanguard, abreast of everything; he has lost every atom of personality, and his whole work lacks unity. He has always followed the movement from Courbet and Millet up to these petty chemical persons who pile up little dots.\textsuperscript{794}

Likewise, the criticisms, rather harsh at times, addressed by the older impressionist against his pupil, reverse the accusations against his student. Gauguin finds that Pissarro has been prone to losing himself by following everyone, whereas, he has found himself, just like Beethoven, “in a world of his own.” Pissarro denies Gauguin this very claim and tells Gauguin that this far-away world of the South Pacific is anything but a world of his own. Pissarro, using unusually harsh words, accuses Gauguin of “pillag[ing] the savages of Oceania,” or of “poaching on the estate of others.”\textsuperscript{795} The implication is clear: Gauguin should have stayed on his own estate.

\textsuperscript{795} \textit{Correspondance de Camille Pissarro}, ed., Janine Bailly-Herzberg, Paris : PUF and Editions du Valhermeil, 1980-91, vol. 3/1891-94, p. 400. [Henceforth referred to as CP/JBH, followed by the volume no. in Roman letter, and the page number.] The full response of Pissarro to the first major show of Gauguin’s works at Durand-Ruel on November 10, 1893, is interesting: “Gauguin is currently doing a show that has won the admiration of the literati. They are enraptured, or so it appears. The collectors, they tell me, unanimously consider this exotic art too caught up in South Sea islanders. Only Degas thinks highly of it. Monet and Renoir find it simply bad. I saw Gauguin. He expounded on his theories about art and assured me that the young would find salvation by replenishing themselves at faraway, savage sources. I told him that this art did not belong to him, that he was a civilized man and as such, was expected to show us harmonious things. We parted both unconvinced.” (Gauguin a une exposition en ce moment qui fait l’admiration des hommes de lettres, ils sont parait-il enthousiasmés, les amateurs sont déroutés et perplexes. Quelques peintres me dit-on sont unanimes à trouver cet art trop...
(the French rural countryside) where he learnt to paint with his teacher, and there, establish a proper “world of his own.”

∗ From One World to the Other

Two radically opposed Weltanschaaungen, literally “visions of the world” were butting against each other. Gauguin could understand Pissarro’s self-enclosed creation of his own world, no more than Pissarro could understand Gauguin’s exotism, which he saw as derivative. The usurper and the recluse seemed to have little in common, if only for the fact that Gauguin had begun his career under the aegis of Pissarro. The irony, however, that Pissarro seemingly ignores is that what he called a “world of his own” was not exactly “his own” either. Born on an island in the West Indies, the semi-rural regions west of Paris, known as the Vexin français and its capital, Pontoise, where he came to live in the 1860s could hardly qualify as “his own world.” It “belonged to him” (to use his own words) no more than the world of the South Sea islanders “belonged” to Gauguin. Both were ironically “expats” in a world that they had borrowed, and turned into their own. Interestingly, however, Pissarro and Cézanne established their artistic “roots” in the same region, the Pontoise/Auvers area about two hours West of Paris, by train (at the train speed of the 19th century).

piqué aux canaques, il n’y a que Degas qui admire ; Monet, Renoir, trouvent cela tout bonnement mauvais… J’ai vu Gauguin qui m’a fait des théories sur l’art et m’a assuré que là était le salut pour les jeunes : se retremper dans ces sources lointaines et sauvages ! Je lui ai dit que cet art ne lui appartenait pas, qu’il était un civilisé et à ce titre était tenu de nous montrer des choses harmoniques, nous nous sommes quittés sans nous convaincre. )

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This region was not Cézanne’s either. Both, as I pointed out, came from foreign worlds—Cézanne from Provence, and Pissarro from the Caribbeans. The difference, however, was considerable: both had arrived more or less at the same time: they found each other as two exiles meet each other in their discovery of a foreign territory. To different degrees, each of them chose to belong to that world and to incorporate in their own works in much the same way as Gauguin was to do with Brittany, the Martinique, and the South Sea islands. They both, in a way, conflated their two individual worlds and formed a “world of their own” out of this. Gauguin, on the other hand, only borrowed temporarily his teacher’s world only in order to “take off” more effectively once he decided to leave Pissarro’s realm of influence. There is, here, an interesting parallel to be drawn between Cézanne and Pissarro, and Johns and Rauschenberg: the latter two also came from elsewhere—from the South—one from South Carolina, the other from Texas. Neither artist ever decided to relinquish their roots, or their place of belonging, but both, just like Cézanne and Pissarro, established fresh common roots in a place that was not theirs at all to start with.

In our times of ‘global harmonization’ it is sometimes difficult to perceive the numerous nuances attached to local identities in France. Cézanne always retained a strong attachment to Provence—the southern-most province of France, closer in many ways to Italy than to northern France. In his recollections of Cézanne, Vollard
judiciously emphasized the fact that in the 19th century, the regionalist feelings addressed against France were still very strong. Vollard illustrates this sentiment with the anecdote of discovering a statue of King René in Aix stained with black ink as a sign of protest against the last sovereign of Provence, upon whose death Provence became attached to France. Vollard also emphasizes that an “étranger” in Provence is any one born north of Avignon.\footnote{Vollard, op. cit., 55.} Likewise, a Frenchman would have been seen as a foreigner in Provence. Rewald explains that Zola, who had been brought up with a Parisian accent was made fun of at school in Aix, and was the recipient of the worst possible insult: that of being called a ‘Françiot’ (Provençal for a Frenchman). Cézanne, stronger and taller than most kids, apparently came to the defense of the young Zola, and this is how their friendship grew.\footnote{Rewald, 1936, op. cit., 27.} Both Cézanne and Pissarro very much remained ‘foreigners’ in northern France. Ironical as it may sound, Cézanne felt perhaps even more like an alien in the North of France than Pissarro did—despite the vast distance of his point of native origin. Pissarro had been sent to a school in Paris as a ten year-old, whereas Paris retained all its mystery to the young Cézanne until he managed to convince his father to let him undertake the journey to the capital in 1861. Another reason for the fact that Cézanne must have felt somewhat more alienated is that Pissarro as a child in Paris must have gradually come to lose his accent, whereas it is frequent to read among authors who transcribed conversations with Cézanne, a strong emphasis placed on the artist’s very strong ‘marseillais’ accent. In an
unpublished sketchbook, Lucien Pissarro, Camille’s eldest son, couched in the form of telegraphic notes the brief, characteristically coarse, exchange that took place between Cézanne and an artist unnamed by Lucien. Cézanne would have asked the artist what color he should paint a barge passing on a river. The artist would have told Cézanne to paint it pink, or pure vermilion. Cézanne would then have burst out with one of his favored curses: “Va te faire foutre!” The point, however, is that Lucien in his sketchbook, with the same care as that of a stage director, made sure to indicate to the reader how this strong scene should be reenacted: “Le tout doit être dit avec un fort accent marseillais.”

*Being or Becoming a Genius*

Cézanne whose critical role for generations of modern artists needs not be further emphasized, was not born a genius. Even though he showed inclinations for the arts very early on, his beginnings as an artist were in fact as complicated as those of Pissarro, and in some ways, through the obstacles put in place by his own father against his own choice, resemble what the West-Indies-born artist went through a few years before what Cézanne experienced. It is at first difficult to imagine that this giant force in modernism, had been humble enough to enter into a critical, and open-ended

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798 Lucien Pissarro, Unpublished sketchbook, no. 52, 1912, Pissarro Family Archives, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The same anecdote is told by Vollard who, therefore, must have heard it from Lucien, or one of his brothers. Vollard twists the context of the story and displaces it to Provence. See Vollard, op. cit., 60. On Cézanne’s very strong marseillais accent, also see Duranty, Le Pays des Arts, (Paris : Charpentier, 1880), 316.
dialogue with another artist, nearly ten years older than him. Furthermore, before Cézanne met Pissarro, the young man had to put up with substantial resistance on the part of his close context before he could finally obtain, as Pissarro did, a kind of half-hearted permission on the part of his father to stop becoming an artist in order to be an artist, as Johns would put it a century later. As Judith Wechsler in her study on The Interpretation of Cézanne put it:

Since the consensus of critical opinion began to take Cézanne seriously, in the 1890s, it has not wavered in assigning him a major role in the development of painting. It was only after the Cubists had taken the next substantial step in pictorial abstraction that the double aspect of his achievement could be understood. Through almost a century of accelerated change, Cézanne has remained in the avant-garde: he has continued to nourish revolution, and at the same time to command respect for his classical discipline.799

In utter contrast with the above statement, Zola in a letter to Baptistin Baille of 1861, wrote a severe and damning prediction about Cézanne’s future as an artist that condemns him to being nothing but an unfulfilled genius. The terms Zola uses (almost a century before Johns’s statement about giving up “becoming” an artist in order “to be” one, instead) are the exact inversion of the Johnsian equation, even

though the verbs opposed by Zola are not ‘to become’ and ‘to be’ but ‘to become’ and ‘to have.’ Zola also introduces a notion that is absent in Johns’s text: that of ‘genius.’ Here is the Cézannian paradox, according to Zola: Cézanne has the genius of a great painter, but he doesn’t have the genius to become one:

Paul peut avoir le génie d’un grand peintre, il n’aura jamais le génie de le devenir.\textsuperscript{800} 

Even though the terms used by Zola and Johns sound rigorously opposite, their positions are not that far from each other. What Zola means when he opposes “becoming” a genius, and “having the genius of a great painter” is that contenting oneself to “have” some genius, without “doing” anything about it, will lead an artist nowhere. In other words, what Zola suggests is that one has “to become what one is.” One has to develop one’s assets or qualities, to act upon one’s own virtual promises. Genius is a process, not an asset. In effect what Johns is saying a hundred years later is not that different, except that Johns was putting a different spin on words, emphasizing the temporal aspect of the process of making decisions about oneself. By becoming something, one is not it (yet). In order to be an artist, one has to make a firm decision that this is it: this is the status that one has opted for. The exact terms used by Johns are that he was no longer “going to be” an artist; instead, he would be an artist. The difference in Johns’s terms is, therefore, more one between heading

towards a goal, and having finally reached the goal. There is no doubt, however, that Zola’s and Johns’s conceptions of what being an artist involves were not that removed from each other: both certainly knew that “being” an artist is hard work, and, therefore, requires constant expanding of oneself, “becoming” a better artist by working constantly on oneself. Ultimately, it was perhaps Zola’s biggest mistake in his involvement with Cézanne, not to have understood how close their conceptions of work as an artist were. Cézanne found in Pissarro what he could not find in Zola: someone who did not only ‘believe’ in him but who gave him, as Cézanne put it later, the taste for furiously obsessive work (travail acharné)—just as ninety years later, Johns was to find in Rauschenberg “the first real artist” he had met. These two words (travail acharné) were incidentally assigned to Pissarro himself by a journalist who drew a written portrait of Pissarro during one of his visits to the Durand-Ruel galleries in Paris. “Pissarro est un chercheur d’un travail acharné” are the words, written by that Paris journalist, that echo Cézanne’s expression.\(^{801}\)

It was such considerations about his own future that Cézanne had to face when he would declare to his father that he wanted to become an artist. Originally from modest Italian origins, Cézanne’s father eventually became a self-made man, having first been very successful in the hat trade before reaching his ultimate goal by establishing a local bank: la banque Cézanne et Cabassol. The type of responses the young Cézanne would get from his father when expressing his desire to explore an

artistic career is well summed up by this other sentence that Emile Zola, the future realist novelist and a close childhood friend of Cézanne’s, had obviously heard from Cézanne’s father: “Enfant, songe à l’avenir! On crève de faim avec du génie, et l’on mange avec de l’argent.” What Zola did not see is that he had as little faith as Cézanne’s father about the chances for Cézanne to “make it.” Both arguments are based on the deceptions attached to ‘genius:’ according to Cézanne’s father, genius, never recognized by society, is a useless, almost monstrous, talent out of which one can only starve; Zola, younger than Cézanne’s father, and an artist himself, did not share these doubts about the capacity for society to appreciate the genius of an artist, but he cast doubts about his own friend’s capacity to work hard enough in order to reach a point of recognition of his genius. This is where the impact that Pissarro’s role had on his friend and colleague may perhaps be better understood: Pissarro recognized in Cézanne his determination “to become what he was” or “to be one day what he intended to become.”

*Early Departures*

Their early lives may not have held sound promises of genius in either case, but they certainly held a number of striking parallels. In the light of these, there is little wonder that the two artists seem to have bonded so fast with each other as soon as

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they met one another in Paris, shortly after Cézanne finally obtained permission from his own father to go to Paris with a consent to support him financially in his obstinate determination to pursue an artistic career. For a detailed comparative chronology of Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s lives and careers, see Appendix One.\textsuperscript{803} Besides the fact, not terribly original in itself, that both artists had to go against paternal resistance before establishing themselves as artists, another interesting feature is that they both turned towards their mother in order to obtain encouragement in their early determinations. A point that has seldom, if ever, been noticed regarding both Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s mothers, is that they both claimed ‘creole’ origins.\textsuperscript{804} Pissarro’s mother was born in Santo Domingo (today’s Dominican Republic) while Cézanne’s mother was described to have distant Creole origins. This fact alone would have sufficed to lead the two artists to recognize a certain closeness of life background with each other. It was indeed Paul’s mother who encouraged the young artist when he had to face his father’s argument. With some rather touching naivety, she could only oppose her husband’s well-grounded pragmatic advise about money and materialistic

\textsuperscript{803} I am grateful to Alain Mothe for his crucial help in establishing this comparative chronology. Not an art historian, but a building engineer by profession, Mothe certainly has the soul of an art historian and has spent much time studying the lives and movement of both artists while living in the Pontoise area. A resident in the Pontoise/Auvers region where Pissarro and Cézanne lived for several years together, Mothe has dedicated years of his life to a detailed study of these two artists paths in the region, and has thus usefully complemented the work on Pissarro by scholar Richard Brettell. While yet unpublished, his research has benefited my work, and I am grateful for his time spent in conversations about these two artists, and for never hesitating to share the findings of his research. Naturally, I take the responsibility for all possible inaccuracies or lacunae that are left in this document.

\textsuperscript{804} See, for instance, Shikes and Harper, Pissarro : His Life and Work, (New York : Horizon, 1979), 18-19, and see Vollard, \textit{op. cit.}, 11: “Elisabeth Aubert, la mère de Cézanne, née à Aix d’une famille qui avait de lointaines origines créoles, était vive et romanesque, avec un esprit primesautier mais en même temps d’une humeur inquiète, ombrageuse, emportée. C’est d’elle que « Paul » tenait son imagination et sa vision de la vie.”
concerns, the remark that “Paul” seemed pre-destined to engage in an artistic career through the very name that he had been given: “Éh ! quoi ! Il s’appelle Paul, comme Véronèse et Rubens !”805 What could the young man’s father answer to such an argument! After all, who had chosen the child’s name—and, in thus doing, who had conjured up his own destiny!

It is the same Cézanne who, before nurturing one revolution over another—posthumously—decided, while still young and alive, to move with his companion Hortense Fiquet, and their six-month old baby, Paul, to the Pontoise area in order to join Pissarro in 1872, and enter into an intense period of collaboration with Pissarro that was to mark the first half of the impressionist era with a strong, and very distinct cachet.806

* Rauschenberg and Johns: Two Exiles

Interestingly, the latter two artists, Rauschenberg and Johns, did not belong either to the world that became for a while “a world of their own,” and the context of their common research. Just like Pissarro and Cézanne, Rauschenberg and Johns came from elsewhere: as John Cage was often heard saying “We called Bob and Jasper ‘the

805 Vollard, op. cit., 11.
Southern Renaissance.” Despite this shared origin, the differences of character between the two artists were as noticeable as those between Pissarro and Cézanne. Cage again noted that:

Bob was outgoing and ebullient, whereas Jasper was quiet and reflective. Each seemed to pick up where the other left off. The four-way exchanges were quite marvelous. It was the *climate* of being together that would suggest to be done for each of us.  

Rauschenberg was born and raised in an area where very little visual art could be seen. Born in Port Arthur, Texas, an oil-refinery town on the eastern coast of Texas, Rauschenberg was not exposed to any works of art as a child until he was stationed in San Diego at the end of WWII, and discovered Gainsborough’s *Blue Boy* and Thomas Lawrence’s *Pinkie*, in the flesh. Here is another parallel between Rauschenberg and Pissarro in that Pissarro during the Franco-Prussian War went to London and visited the National Gallery of London: both artists shared an exposure to British art at the incipient stage of their career.

This experience had a radical impact on the young GI who decided at that point that he would become an artist. It was in 1951—almost a hundred years after Pissarro

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807 Cage, quoted by Kotz, Abrams 1990, 89.
808 Ibid.
arrived in Paris having made a definite choice that he would an artist—that Betty Parsons gave Rauschenberg his first one-person show. The same year, Castelli invited Rauschenberg among sixty other artists in the seminal show revealingly titled _Today’s Self-Styled School of New York_. He met that same year John Cage, whose friendship was to become of great significance to both him and Johns.

Rauschenberg’s son, Christopher was born in 1951, and his relationship with his wife and co-artist, Susan, came to an end that summer. That summer, Rauschenberg was in Black Mountain College—a moment that was to be of seminal importance for the rest of his career. All of the major components of his work, and of his artistic world, appeared to take form and consistence during his time at Black Mountain College—that year: his great interests in photography, in dance, and performance all congealed at that time. By the time he met Jasper Johns three years later, Bob Rauschenberg had gained substantial experience: not only his sojourn at Black Mountain College solidified his links with dancers, performers and musicians around the Merce Cunningham Company, but he had already acquired a clear notion of some of the key principles of his art—not to mention the fact that Rauschenberg had entered into another major collaborative friendship with Cy Twombly, with whom he traveled to Rome and produced some extraordinary photographs of markets, fragments of

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810 An example of this manifold interest can be found in Rauschenberg’s design for Joel Oppenheimer’s poem “The Dancer” (1951), Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries. This work illustrated a poem, which itself was commemorating a performance by a dance instructor, Katherine Liz. One of Liz’s students was incidentally Viola Farber who not only became one of Rauschenberg’s close collaborators, but was also to be the “subject” of one of Jasper Johns’s paintings: _Portrait—Viola Farber_.

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sculptures, objects scattered around that seem to augur very well of what was to come out of Rauschenberg’s studio. [Ills. 98, 102, 104]

The way Johns met Rauschenberg in 1954 is not without analogies with the way the two “French” artists met, as we have seen; but there are also, of course, considerable differences. Cézanne and Pissarro were born in a pre-modern (or early modern) world whereas Rauschenberg and Johns were born in the modern world, between the two world wars. The difference, for aspiring artists, was immense. Cézanne was obliged to study law at the Law School in Aix-en-Provence from 1858 to 1860, and was given no choice in the matter. The same applies to Pissarro—who didn’t study law, but did what his father told him.

At the same time as he was studying law, the young Cézanne also took drawing lessons from his first art teacher, Joseph Gibert, who was the director of the École Gratuite de Dessin of Aix. There, Gibert, an authoritarian type, taught live modeling, and drawing after plaster casts, and original marbles housed in a museum affiliated to the school of drawing. Gibert can probably be regarded in retrospect as having played an important role in instilling a profound disgust for schools in Cézanne’s mind—a disgust that he professed until the last days of his career. In one of his

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812 Banging his glass with anger so hard on the table that it broke, Cézanne was reported by Vollard to have once exploded against professors with his usual flurry of insults: “Les professeurs, ce sont tous des salauds, des châtrés, des jean foutistes; ils n’ont rien dans le ventrre !” Vollard, op. cit., 48.
characteristically scurrilous imprecations, the old Cézanne would reflect on what he considered his major waste of time spent in school trying to learn “formulas”—horrendous thing:

This is why institutes, grants, and honors can only have been created for cretins, clowns and jokers…. Let those people go to School, and have loads of teachers. I don’t give a damn…. I wouldn’t like for young people to experience what happened to me. I know, I know, if the official salons remain so inferior, the reason is clear, they only try to give shape to formulas to various extents. Sensation is at the base of everything for a painter. I will never stop repeating it.813

As for Pissarro he was told that he would attend the family trade business—in which there was but little room for him to express his “sensation.” Story has it that he would draw the traffic of people on the docks behind his parents’ backs instead of counting the loads of merchandise being taken off the ships in the harbor. He would draw, not the stuff that people were unloading, but the people themselves. Ex-slaves814, and children of slaves with whom he grew up: these were the chief reason that sustained his interest, both as an artist and as a person, in the island. It was not until he met a traveling Danish artist, Fritz Melbye, who passed by Saint Thomas on his way to

813 Conversations, 135.
814 Pissarro returned to Saint Thomas after graduating from high school in Paris. He returned just at the time of the slaves rebellions of 1848 that brought slavery to an end in the Caribbeans.
Venezuela, that the idea for Pissarro to become an artist began to germinate in his mind. The following story is well-known: he eventually ran away from his family in order to escape moral pressures and in order to dedicate himself solidly to his new calling. Contrary to Cézanne, and very much to the later admiration of his younger colleague, Pissarro learnt to draw without schools, nor teachers, but next to his friend Melbye. Cézanne late in life would remember this striking feature of the early career of his friend—as if he still envied his beginning in life:

Ce qui fait que nous sortons peut-être tous de Pissarro. Il a eu la veine de naître aux Antilles, là il a appris le dessin sans maître.815

*Beginnings*

The first human being could … stand and walk; he could speak and indeed talk—i.e. speak with the help of coherent concepts—and consequently think. The urge to communicate must have been the original motive for human beings who were alone to announce their existence to living creatures outside themselves, especially to those which emit sounds which can be imitated and which can subsequently serve as a name. A similar effect of this urge can still be seen in children and thoughtless people who disturb the thinking section of the community by banging, shouting, whistling, singing and other noisy

815 Conversations, 121.
pastimes (and often even by noisy religious devotions). For I can see no
motive for such behavior other than a desire on the part of those concerned to
proclaim their existence to the world at large.\textsuperscript{816}

“It is absolutely true that the artist is born.”\textsuperscript{817}

I promised I would return to these two texts mentioned in the first section of this
essay.

The notion of “beginning” one’s career took on a positively crucial function in the
careers of all four artists: beginning came down to giving shape to one’s own
existence as an artist. This was an essential gesture for all of them. It is of interest to
compare briefly how each of these four individuals began as an artist. With Johns this
concept was primordial and very formative for the rest of his career. The beginning of
any work may stem from any number of reasons, tells Jasper Johns: “As far as
beginning to make a work, one can do it for any reason.”\textsuperscript{818} But beginning his life as
an artist took with him a radical meaning: everything he had produced before a
certain point was destroyed. Each one of these artists explored different strategies in
order to create—not just art—but themselves. In this sense, their beginnings in art are
inevitably linked to an autobiographical drive. This autobiographical impulse is

\textsuperscript{816} Kant, “Conjectures…”, \textit{op. cit.}, 222 (footnote). (Kant’s emphasis)
\textsuperscript{817} Ibid. Fichte: \textit{The Science of Ethics, as Based on The Science of Knowledge}, trans. A. E. Kroeger,
accompanied with a quasi-nihilistic force. It is very obvious in the cathartic gesture of Jasper Johns destroying everything he had produced up to the point when he suddenly **was** an artist. It is also clear in the *tabula rasa*-like aspect of Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*, as well as in his decision to turn his back to the model in a class-drawing.

Turning one’s back on teaching institutions and schools: this is precisely what Pissarro and Cézanne believed in with a passion. Cézanne was not as fortunate as Pissarro in having had a “free” beginning: he later on took his revenge against school formulas much more fiercely than Pissarro did.

*A Sense of Community*

If one briefly compares the two photographs of Johns and Rauschenberg with a group of friends on a beach in Long Island, to the photograph of Pissarro and Cézanne in Pontoise, both images testify to the sense of community that kept these two groups—and many artistic groups in between together. Both groups formed, interestingly enough, as ‘after school’ groups or communes where ideas, projects, strategies were discussed, and debated. The background of the impressionist group is almost too well-known to be reiterated here. For a brief reminder, let us just point out that the group essentially consisted of two schools that were seen as more ‘liberal’ than the main line followed by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. These two schools consisted of the Ecole Suisse, named after its tutor, the père Suisse, and the Ecole Gleyre, likewise
called after its founder. Pissarro, Cézanne, Guillaumin, among others had met at the 
first school; and subsequently met students of the Gleyre School. The noteworthy first 
introduction took place in Renoir’s studio: Bazille who shared Renoir’s studio, once 
brought in Pissarro and Cézanne, referring to the two newcomers as “two great 
recruits.”

As for the New York School, the sense of community that tied young artists, 
especially of the second generation together, has been abundantly documented. The 
two main schools that produced students who got together and formed especially tight 
groups were 1. Hans Hofmann’s students who eventually formed two galleries, the Hansa gallery and, later on, the James gallery. One of Hoffmann’s students thus 
described the ambiance experienced in the artist’s class:

Through force of personality he transformed his classes into energy situations 
within which students were able to learn more from each other rather than from himself.819

The voice of this student testifies to the fact that the Rauschenberg/Johns exchange, 
largely based on this principle of “learning from each other” was by no means a

819 Robert Richenberg, Hofmann Students Dossier, quoted by Irving Sandler, The New York School: 
unique phenomenon. (Likewise, one could apply these very words to the situation experienced by Cézanne and Pissarro a century earlier.)

Among the group of the more famous students who had studied with Hofmann, one could count Frankenthaler, Rivers, Kaprow. The other major school that contributed to the formation of groups of young artists was Black Mountain. In the latter case, it was literally inscribed in the chart of the school to encourage “shared common purposes” among students. The school’s program made it clear that the institution was:

Dedicated to two enterprises—establishing a community in which people shared common purposes and responsibilities, and creating a climate in which art of the highest excellence might flourish.\textsuperscript{820}

It is there that Rauschenberg as a student met such peers as John Chamberlain and Kenneth Noland. Jasper Johns did not attend Black Mountain—although it is fair to say that, shortly after his meeting with Rauschenberg, he too was soon immersed in its wider circles. With its reputation as an innovative and liberal school, Black Mountain attracted an impressive array of teachers on its faculty: Stefan Wolpe, and John Cage in music; Merce Cunningham taught dance and choreography;

Buckminster Fuller, designing and engineering. More than the school in itself, it is the presence of all these individuals that counted most. The visual arts in Black Mountain were chiefly dominated by Josef Albers — whose impact on future generations of artists remains yet to be further examined and evaluated. Of other notable importance, were art critics Eric Bentley and Paul Goodman; photographers Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind; architect, Walter Gropius, and poets Edward Dahlberg, Olson, Creeley, and Robert Duncan, who essentially defined what was known as the New York school of poets. The most significant aspect in the formations of Johns and Rauschenberg’s lives in contrast to Pissarro and Cézanne, is that the circles of school relations they made mattered to them for the rest of their lives. To Pissarro and Cézanne, on the other hand, inter-subjective relations were forged in opposition to the values of the school system.

*What Inter-Subjectivity can Teach Us About the Vexing Problem of Cézanne’s Dating*

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Having seen how ‘beginnings’ have shaped the lives of these four artists both existentially and professionally, let me now consider a few concrete examples of how these sets of interchanges manifested themselves through relationships between the works of these artists.

The Pissarro/Cézanne relationship presents a few high points during which the two artists’ works resemble each other to the point of confusion: 1872-1875, and intermittently the very beginning of the 1880s and the mid-1880s. Suffice it to say for now that the period around 1875 saw the production of a group of works by both artists that look so close to each other that it can be difficult at times to tell them apart. Works such as Pissarro’s Route de Saint-Antoine à l’Hermitage, Pontoise, 1875 (on loan to the Basel Kunstmuseum) [Ill. 18] and Cézanne’s Le Clos des Mathurins à Pontoise (l’Hermitage), 1875 [Ill. 17] look not only very close to each other but also testify to the rich exchange between these two artists. On the basis of the close relationship with the work by Pissarro, it is possible to date precisely the work by Cézanne. Despite the fact that there is hardly any agreement on the dating of

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824 As on most works by Cézanne, there is no agreement among scholars as to the date of this work: Robert Ratcliffe gives it a date of 1873, in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cézanne’s Working Methods and Their Theoretical Background, (University of London: Courtauld Institute, 1960). Ratcliffe’s argument is based on the fact that there exists another painting by Pissarro of the same motif (P&V 212) that is dated 1873—but Ratcliffe oddly enough doesn’t seem to see that the formal and visual kinships between the Pissarro and the Cézanne: P&V 304 and JR 310 are much more obvious than even between the two paintings by Pissarro three years apart: P&V 304 and P&V 212.
Cézanne’s works, here is a case where there is little possible doubt: if we only look at the two works by Pissarro—P&V 212, and P&V 304 [Ills. 16 and 18]—that depict the same subject matter, these two canvases are so different from one another that they almost could be by different artists. What simply happened within the interval between the first and the second paintings by Pissarro is that Cézanne’s presence and his vision became an important factor in the making of Pissarro’s second painting (PV 304). PV 304 and JR 310 [Ills. 17 and 18] present so many features in common that they simply must have been executed simultaneously by both artists. These two works reflect the structure of a conversation: each artist responds to the other (pictorially, rather than through speech) around a commonly agreed topic. One may therefore conclude assertively that the Pushkin painting was not executed at some undefined point between 1875 and 1877, but was painted in 1875, failing which the Pissarro itself whose date never seems to be taken fully into account, stops making sense in relation to this painting. Here is an example of the two artists crossbreeding around the same trunk of pictorial problems, responding to the same challenges,

Georges Rivière in Le maître Paul Cézanne, (Paris : Librairie Floury, 1923), gives this painting the date “vers 1877,” and Lionello Venturi in the first catalogue raisonné of the artist’s works, Cézanne, Son art—son œuvre, (Paris: editions Paul Rosenberg, 1936), no. 172, first dated the picture ‘1875-1877’ but in his unpublished revised edition thought the picture would be more likely datable to 1877. On the whole, this endless exercise of dating and redating Cézanne’s paintings—the vast majority of which do not carry any date—may well appear tedious to readers outside the field of impressionist scholarship. Here is a case, however, where the actual date one decides upon means and implies far more than just how to slot this particular work in Cézanne’s opus. If it was created in 1873 (Ratcliffe) or in 1877 (Rivière and the second Venturi), it could not have been created in concert with Pissarro. Given the data we know about their lives together, their constant interaction, the number of such pairs of works with identical motifs, it seems highly improbable that Cézanne would have painted this on his own. Given the strong likelihood that these two paintings were painted side by side, or at least in close proximity of each other (both temporally and locally), we must look at these two paintings differently than if they had been executed years apart from each other.
creating in common a pool of possible means of expression and responses, and using each in order to promote a new vocabulary, and, at the same time, paradoxically affirm each his own individuality. The confrontation between these two works reveals the close facture and a vocabulary shared by both artists. The illustration dossier A (nos. 5-37) provides more ample evidence as to the close pictorial dialogue that both artists sustained for nearly twenty years. At certain points in these artists’ careers, one can detect a virtual osmosis between their art: see for instance illustration nos. 19 and 20, 21 and 22, 23 and 24, 25 and 26, 27 and 28, and 29 and 30. In the first half of the 1880s, their concerns for specific facture problems clearly nurtured their dialogue: see illustration nos. 31-35. Later on, paradoxically both individuals, Cézanne and Pissarro became almost completely estranged from each other—Cézanne became more isolated, and Pissarro, more social by temperament, continued to see ever new and younger friends and colleagues. Whereas they had been very close colleagues—and formed a closer association than any other within the impressionist group—they ceased contact for the last twenty years of their lives: solitude took over solidarity—or solipsism replaced osmosis. Nevertheless, neither of them ever forgot this point of intense interaction. Pissarro, in a letter written in 1895 uttered these retrospective remarks:

Ce qu’il y a de curieux c’est que dans cette exposition de Cézanne chez Vollard on voit la parenté qu’il y a dans certains paysages d’Auvers, Pontoise

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Pissarro was certainly referring to pictures like the two paintings painted side by side at les Mathurins in which the process of mutual exchange was so complete that Pissarro at the end of his session was Cézanne had produced a painting that looked considerably different from the painting with the same motif that he had produced a couple of years earlier.

*Solitude vs. Solidarity*

It is precisely this odd, though gratifying dynamic between individual values and togetherness that Pissarro had in mind in his comments written about the Cézanne exhibition of 1895—where he was rediscovering his old friend’s art after a period of nearly ten years of estrangement. Interestingly, he did not mention the word “influence” but seemed to prefer the word “parenté” (kinship). Cézanne too was capable of remembering this past mutual kinship, despite decades of relative solitude. I have tried to stress that the experience of solitude in Cézanne’s life did not erase the experience of solidarity with others, of which he had had a deep experience while working with Pissarro.

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There is little doubt that Cézanne was an individual conflicted with himself. His relationship with Zola would certainly suffice to illustrate this point.\textsuperscript{826} Cézanne was a difficult personality. However, what made him difficult is perhaps also what appealed to him to Pissarro’s eye: a dogged obstinacy to work (or to ‘réaliser’, as he would put it); a complete contempt for all conventions and rules—which translated itself into a legendary capacity to swear and resort to shocking language. Pissarro not only tolerated all this, but to a degree condoned it, and even sympathized with Cézanne’s wild and unpredictable persona. Pissarro was at heart a passionate rebel as well—as his commitment to anarchism shows.

As Bernard once put it, Cézanne was “tout entier à l’art” and gave up everything else.\textsuperscript{827}

[Il] tourne résolument le dos aux décadences, soient-elles picturales, soient-elles mondaines ; il est un moine enfermé dans le cloître de la peinture ; il ne vit, il ne pense, il ne soupire que par elle et pour elle.\textsuperscript{828}

Pissarro too, on certain occasions, felt tempted by this Cézannian mode of life—although he would never have sacrificed his family ties to his art.

\textsuperscript{826} See Vollard, \textit{op. cit.}, Chapter X: “Cézanne et Zola,” pp. 70-78.
\textsuperscript{827} Emile Bernard, \textit{Le Mercure de France}, 1 June 1915; quoted in Vollard, \textit{En écoutant…, op. cit.}, 296.
\textsuperscript{828} Ibid.
In this context, it is remarkable that a character as changeable as Cézanne’s would have kept his loyalty to the memory of Pissarro. Proof of his complex, yet touching character comes with this telling anecdote: in 1906, Cézanne who, at that point was adulated by the whole art world, or nearly, exhibited a *Vue du Château Noir* with the Société des Amis des Arts in his home town, Aix-en-Provence, only a few months before his death. There, he registered his name in the exhibition, with the following mention: “élève de Pissarro.” A fuller interpretation of what this rather moving gesture may have meant for Cézanne still remains to be produced. Suffice it to say that Cézanne was paying homage to a friendship that had obviously transformed both friends’ lives. Touching as it was, this mention must have appeared as a surprise to Cézanne’s admirers: Cézanne was some one who had lots of students—many of whom he didn’t even know. How could this man adulated by a whole new generation claim to be the student of some one else? One recognizes here Cézanne’s predilection for provocation—even though this decision also reveals Cézanne’s humility, and, in fact, his loyalty to the memory of Pissarro. Other considerations may have entered his mind, too. Not having communicated very much with him at all for decades, Cézanne might have felt some guilt after Pissarro’s death—and ironically only a few months

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829 See John Rewald, *Cézanne A Biography*, (New York: Abrams, 1986), 270. Rewald assumed that the work presented to that local exhibition was a watercolor.
before his own death. This late symbolic gesture of recognition of what he had learnt from Pissarro revealed that he had remained aware of what inter-subjectivity is about: that it is actually possible to reach in one’s art a gradual autonomy (not to depend on other systems’ values and recipes) through immersing oneself in an intense moment of interaction or that “opening” oneself to others—or to a “significant” other—was the best way to reach oneself. This dimension of openness was identified by Kant himself as being inherent, or intrinsic to subjectivity. Putting it negatively, the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas saw in this opening of subjectivity the sign of a definite incapacity “to close oneself up from the inside.”

It has appeared to many historians that Cézanne in his late years “closed himself up from the inside.” The single mention that Cézanne attached to his own name proves that it was not so—or at least, not always so. As Pissarro had put it, while commenting on the great Cézanne retrospective of 1895—and Cézanne may very well have had word of that comment—they were “together” but kept what was essential: “their sensation.”

Finally one could read in this gesture by Cézanne another message. He seemed to be saying: I became myself through the lesson (being the ‘élève’) of Camille Pissarro; here was someone who never lost sight of his self, but who only reached his self by giving himself to others. This paradox is the paradox of inter-subjectivity, and was very much incarnated by both pairs of artists under study here.

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Emmanuel Levinas quoted by Alain Renaut, in Kant aujourd’hui, (Paris : Aubier, 1997), 189.
Rauschenberg Includes a Painting by Johns Into His Own Work

Closely analogous examples come to mind about the relationship between Rauschenberg and Johns. The two artists had looked at each other’s works intently. Two examples of their own kind of performance-driven artistic careers will easily demonstrate the point I am illustrating: this oscillation between solidarity and solitude, or exchange and individual reflection. The examples borrowed from the two twentieth-century artists necessarily conjure up a different sensibility, and different set of attitudes to works of art from those that were inherent in Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s epoch. While it took the two impressionists time, reflection, and practice to come to forge a set of pictorial procedures that satisfied them—and upon which they could freely draw and improvise—the two New York artists, a century or so later, figured out that there was a much simpler way to borrow an idea, or an artistic “mark:” all you needed to do was to take it! Between April 26 and May 31, 1955, Rauschenberg, marking his dissatisfaction at the fact that the artists he had recommended for the Fourth Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture at the Stable Gallery, had not been included, he torpedoed that decision by literally and physically “including” these artists’ works in his own. Rauschenberg had intended to include works by Jasper Johns, Ray Johnson, Stan VanDerBeek, and Susan Weil (the four artists he wanted to see in the exhibition) within his own works. Only two works
by these artists were available: a small encaustic flag by Johns, and a small oil painting by Weil. He took these and stuck them within a larger work by himself. This work was called Short Circuit. [Ill. 153] The point was, however, very clear to all viewers: a work by Rauschenberg “included” a work by Johns, and one by Weil. It seemed to warn the organizers of the show: “if you do not acknowledge these artists in their own rights, but acknowledge me, then they will become part of “me,” and you will thus acknowledge them too….” Subtle, partly perverse, cunning, and essentially generous and inclusive, this gesture definitely constitutes a remarkable trait of solidarity between one artist and others.

* Straight Lines vs. Circles: Rauschenberg’s “Brilliancy”*

Another example points more directly to the dual relationship between Johns and Rauschenberg exclusively. In an article titled “The Fabric of Friendship,” David Vaughan engaged Johns in a conversation about his friendships and collaborations. Even though Johns remarked that he was never much involved in happenings, he recalled that one day, Allan Kaprow picked him and Bob Rauschenberg from the audience “and asked that we work on opposite sides of a suspended piece of muslin. One of us was told to paint circles and the other straight lines.” While Johns explained that he was the one who dealt with “unsteady” and “nervous” verticals,

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Rauschenberg was to do his circles. Then, having had a bright idea, Rauschenberg suddenly impressed Johns “by his brilliance. He, having discarded his brush, simply dipped the top of a jar into paint and then printed it onto the fabric.” Almost more significant than Johns’s actual reminiscence of this feat of “brilliance” on Rauschenberg’s part, is the fact that ever since Johns has consistently used and re-used discrete, silent marks of “circles” that seem to be humming a subtle homage to this act of brilliance by Johns’s co-artist at the time. The latest case in point can be seen in several of Jasper Johns’s recent works, namely in Untitled (Halloween), encaustic on canvas with objects, 1998, Untitled, encaustic on canvas, 1998, Working proof for Untitled, 1998, intaglio with watercolor additions and marginalia, Untitled, intaglio, 1998, Catenary (I Call to the Grave), encaustic on canvas with objects, 1998, and Untitled, intaglio, 1999.

What was at stake throughout both of these collaborations was less the creation of a new style, or the establishment of a new system of aesthetic values, than a complex dual procedure, a daily working out of new problems, a common response to pictorial and artistic challenges that took more than one person to solve.

These two cases of artistic collaboration have demonstrated at least two things: first, it appears that the process of artistic research is no easier than any cognitive research project, that it is made of starts and stalls; it takes the shape of a continuous quest through which the end-result always remains a horizon, a task, an ongoing pursuit, that always necessitates further tries. Secondly, a study of these two collaborations has brought out one of the great paradoxes inherent in modernity: on the one hand, modernity begins to take place with questioning the system of values of the past, and by placing an emphasis on the critical power of the individuals who can stand up on their own, alone against the tradition; on the other hand, these individuals are in need of other individuals who mutually need to have their rights as individuals confirmed as such. This paradox takes the shape of the opposition between solitude and solidarity.

Thus this oft-quoted text on mutual influences written by Pissarro, reflecting on his relationship with Cézanne, takes on a new dimension:

Ils [the critics] ne se doutent pas que Cézanne a subi des influences comme nous tous et que cela ne retire rien de ses qualités; ils ne savent pas que Cézanne a subi d’abord l’influence de Delacroix, Courbet, Manet et même Legros, comme nous tous ; il a subi mon influence à Pontoise et moi la sienne. Tu te rappelles les sorties de Zola et Béliard à ce propos ; ils croyaient qu’on
inventait la peinture de toute pièce et que l’on était original quand on ne ressemblait à personne. Ce qu’il y a de curieux c’est que dans cette exposition de Cézanne chez Vollard on voit la parenté qu’il y a dans certains paysages d’Auvers, Pontoise et les miens. Parbleu, nous étions toujours ensemble ! mais ce qu’il y a de certain, chacun gardait la seule chose qui compte, « sa sensation »… ce serait facile à démontrer… Sont-ils assez niais !…

Even though it has often been quoted, this text has seldom been analyzed in detail—Pissarro’s elliptic, and highly idiomatic style, together with the fact that he often jumps mediations through his argumentations has never helped a clear understanding of what he meant. In this text, he clearly opposes two sorts of “influences:” the first type concerns the sort of influences that “we all” (comme nous tous) experience. The second type of influences is those that are rather more curious, in that one can ‘influence’ back. One can respond. Cézanne was under my influence; and I was under his. These are “mutual influences” or live influences—as opposed to the influences that Pissarro lists that have to do with the more traditional sense of influence. Pissarro clearly distinguished that sense of influences by amalgamating these together as in a small catalogue. Precisely in order to avoid the confusion that Pissarro is facing by using the same term for different experiences of dialogues, I have preferred to use the term “influence” as little as possible and replace it by such concepts as those of “dialogue” or “interchange.”

834 Pissarro/JBH, vol. 4/1895-98, 121.
*Dialogues Between All Four Artists*

It is precisely the mutual or reciprocal character of these influences that Pissarro described that Bakhtin developed in his study of dialogical relationships in language:

Orientation of the word toward the addressee has an extremely high significance. In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the *product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addressee and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the ‘one’ in relation to the ‘other’. I give myself verbal shape from another’s point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addressee and addresser, by the speaker and his interlocutor… 835

These ‘words’ by Bakhtin decidedly establish the two-way interaction of all utterances. They also permit to see clearly the parallels between cases of utterances,

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(not of words, but of art works) between Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one hand, and Johns and Rauschenberg on the other.

In numerous ways, these two pairs of artists have in fact a surprising amount to ‘tell’ each other. Having found in fact a surprising number of parallels between Pissarro’s works and Rauschenberg’s, [Illustration Dossiers D, G, and M], I once asked Rauschenberg whether he had ever looked at Pissarro’s works. Rauschenberg, after a few seconds of reflexion, replied negatively, although he quickly added, somewhat facetiously, that Pissarro had looked at him. I am tempted to take this anti-historicist joke seriously. In many ways, it seems indeed that Cézanne and Pissarro established certain bases in the art world that seemed to become fully operatable by the two American artists a century later.

* Dirt, Dirty Painting, ‘Grattures de palette’ and Stuff *

In fact, if one dwells on the literal meaning of a critical review such as the highly deprecating piece written by Louis Leroy[^836] on Pissarro’s painting entitled Gelée blanche[^837], one could easily read there a technical depiction of a work by Rauschenberg—for instance, Dirt Painting (for John Cage) [Ill. 142]

[^837]: P&V 203. This painting now hangs at the Musée d’Orsay.
Ça des sillons, ça de la gelée ?… Mais ce sont des grattures de palettes posées uniformément sur une toile sale. Ça n’a ni queue ni tête, ni haut ni bas, ni devant ni derrière.

Looking at a Pissarro, though disparagingly, Leroy could be mistaken as describing a Rauschenberg, this time not disparagingly. The metaphors that the French nineteenth-century critic uses to evoke the Pissarro become the very stuff out of which a work like Dirt Painting by Rauschenberg is made. In a similar way, the critic and novelist Edmond Duranty, more famous in art history for his pamphlet defining “New Painting” than for his novels, addressed the same issue. In one of his novels, the main character Maillobert These are the words that the narrator uses to describe his visit to Maillobert/Cézanne’s studio:

Mes yeux furent assaillis par tant d’énormes toiles suspendues partout et si terriblement colorées, que je restais pétrifié. « Ah ! ah ! dit Maillobert838 avec un accent nasillard, traînant et hyper-marseillais, Monsieur est amateur de peinture (peinnntturrre) ? Voilà mes petites rognures de palette ! » ajouta-t-il en me désignant ses plus gigantesques toiles…839

838 Maillobert is the name given by Durany to Cézanne in this description.
Finally, adding to this accumulation of metaphors related to dirt, trash, waste, or palette scrapings, Manet was reported to refer to Cézanne’s early work as “la peinture sale.”

Rauschenberg’s facetious remark about Pissarro having looked at his work before he looked at his, seems to find its ground in the number of texts that describe the early works by Pissarro and Cézanne in terms of dirt or waste—that is in terms of the materials that Rauschenberg himself put to use for and within some of his work of the early 1950s. To put it differently, one could say that between Pissarro’s La gelée blanche and Rauschenberg’s Dirt Painting, for instance, there is only a difference of means and methods, but not of intentions. Pissarro makes paint look like dirt, through a process of emulation (or what the linguists would call a process of ‘motivation’) by which the medium used by the artist ends up looking like what it is supposed to depict: the pigments appear to be what they depict, i.e. a dirt path covered by frost or a muddy path running alongside a river [Ill. 137]. In the 1950s, Rauschenberg was invited to participate to a an exhibition on the (then Romantic-sounding) subject of “Nature in art.” The intentions of the organizers were apparently to investigate alternatives to the then dominance of abstraction in the New York art world.

Rauschenberg, surprisingly, accepted the invitation, but surprised every one when he sent a piece that consisted in a small square of earth and real grass that were kept


together by some chicken wire. Steinberg reads this gesture as a transposition “from nature to culture through a shift of ninety degrees.” Even though it can perfectly well be read this way, I prefer another interpretation of this gesture. In this decision to exhibit a square patch of grass, one finds a dimension characteristic of much of Rauschenberg’s work—which is to cultivate tautologies. In order to depict nature, I am picking up a patch of grass—and here it is, true to nature. Rather than a “shift” from nature to culture, I prefer to see in this gesture one of inclusion: nature remains what it is and a sample of it is selected and inserted within a frame (with chicken wire). Nature and culture collide with each other while both retain their specifics: it is their juxtaposition within the broader cultural institutional space of an art gallery that heightens the tension between the two worlds. Again, however, Pissarro had done just the same by introducing his peasants walking on dirt road, and his unsophisticated landscapes that reeled of farmland. These were far too “inelegant” for the cultural context of the time—to quote Jasper Johns referring to the responses of the Paris public to his and Rauschenberg’s performance Homage to David Tudor in 1961 [Ills 175-77] Hence the need passionately felt by Cézanne and Pissarro throughout the 1860s to build an alternative cultural context of their own that would, by definition, accept what they were doing.

842 This event is described by Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria, 87. “The artist visited the show periodically to water his piece—a transposition from nature to culture through a shift of ninety degrees.”
If Pissarro makes his paints look like dirt, what Rauschenberg does is simply to drop
the motivation link between the medium and its referential. For Pissarro, according to
Leroy, painting looks like dirt; for Cézanne, according to Manet, painting is dirty,
although the way Gelée blanche was described by Leroy is, through an ellipsis, by
dropping the prepositions of comparison (like, as if) and presenting this picture as if it
was mere dirt thrown on the canvas. The critic Leroy claimed that he was guiding a
friend through the impressionist exhibition:

…I led him before the Ploughed Field of M. Pissarro. At the sight of this
astounding landscape, the good man thought that the lenses of his spectacles
were dirty. He wiped them carefully and replaced them on his nose.
“By Michalon!” he cried. “What on earth is that?”
“You see… a hoarfrost on deeply ploughed furrows.”
“Those furrows? That frost? But they are palette-scrapings placed plainly on a
dirty canvas. It has neither head nor tail, top nor bottom, front nor back.”
“Perhaps… but the impression is there.”
“Well, it’s a funny impression!”

In effect, we attend through the painting by Pissarro another case of either what
Steinberg calls a shift from nature to culture—or what I would call a clash between

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the two while an uncultured piece of nature is presented within a cultural context where it is not welcome.

For Rauschenberg, at least in his works of the early 1950s, dirt is dirt. The medium, in other words, has become its own referential, and the referential needs no other medium than itself to depict itself—Rauschenberg soon became familiar with this method given that Monogram and numerous other works proceed in the same way. We have reached a situation of pure and simple tautology. No simulation is therefore needed.

In a sense, if some credit can be lent to Duranty’s text other than in its description of Maillobert/Cézanne’s studio, it is in its focus on the artist’s interest in the chemical make-up of paint. Here again, this brings Cézanne very close to Rauschenberg, and to Johns. Duranty relates that the artist was surrounded by pharmaceutical jars with various Latin inscriptions indicating the type of drugs they contained. Amused with the author’s mark of surprise at the sight of these jars, Maillobert/Cézanne replied with a touch of cynicism that he was happy to show off to the “others” that he was making “[de] la vraie peinture” with mixing up drugs, while the “others” with their beautiful colors are only capable of making drugs. Here are the terms that Duranty uses to describe the way Maillobert/Cézanne fabricates his green:
Il trempa la cuiller dans un des pots de pharmacie et en retira une vraie truelle de vert, qu’il appliqua sur une toile où quelques lignes indiquaient un paysage. Il tourna la cuiller en rond, et, à la rigueur, on put voir un pré dans ce qu’il venait de barbouiller. Je remarquai alors que la couleur, sur ses toiles, avait une épaisseur de près d’un centimètre, et formait des vallons et des collines comme un plan en relief. Evidemment, Maillobert croyait qu’un kilogramme de vert était plus vert qu’un gramme de la même couleur.844

One sees echoes of this nearly fetishistic attachment to paint as matter in the way Johns works up his surfaces with scraps of newsprint, glue, and the thick viscous layers of encaustic color that coat the whole thing, as in Green Target—a painting which, incidentally, in its acidic greens is not without reminding us of Cézanne anyway. This love (I almost wrote ‘lust’) for raw, dense, thick matter that ends up, almost against the wills of these artists, gaining a definite luster is also enjoyed in a great many of Rauschenberg’s early works—especially the Black Paintings, the dirtscapes, and some of the Red Paintings.845 [Ill. Dossier H] The circle almost closes upon itself if one thinks about Cézanne and Pissarro splashed matter about on their canvases in the late 1860s. Can one just imagine a moment Cézanne’s reaction when he faced paintings such as Nature morte, [Ill. 138] or Une place à La-Roche-Guyon!

844 Duranty, op. cit., 320.
845 Rauschenberg continues to be very attached to matter per se. In the ‘80s, for instance, he went through different experiments of collaborations with craftsmen from other countries out of which came a group of large ceramic works. One of them, as if in echo of the Dirt paintings was titled: Dirt Shrine.
In fact we have a good idea of his reaction. John Rewald in his dissertation on Cézanne, refers to a remark made by Cézanne to Louis Le Bail:

S’il avait continué à peindre comme il le faisait en 1870, il aurait été le plus fort de nous." 846

Both artists, Pissarro and Cézanne, were proving to each other, with concrete demonstrations, that they were ready to paint, not just with a knife, but with a gun. At one end and the other of modernism, these two pairs of artists seem, indeed, to be articulating analogous concepts and ideological concerns through different, although closely resembling, languages. Whether it be through dirt (Rauschenberg), or fragments of newsprint glued and painted over with encaustic (Johns) or paint made to look like dirt (Pissarro and Cézanne), these four artists found one another by ways of enabling their viewer to engage in an aesthetic experience of beauty through looking at materials that would suggest the exact opposite. Facetiously, one could say that all four artists can claim to have engaged in some form of alchemy—the transmutation of prosaic materials into precious matter.

846 Rewald, Cézanne et Zola, op. cit., 120. In 1870, Pissarro and Cézanne were separated by the Franco-Prussian war. What Le Bail designates (repeating a quote he had heard decades before) is not “en 1870” but “jusqu’en 1870” as we know from letters the enthusiasm paid by Cézanne to Pissarro’s works between 1865 and 1870—and especially for Les côteaux de l’Hermitage, Pontoise (P&V 58), now at the Guggenheim.
“This “openness” both toward the world around them as well as toward the possible meaning of their works is a link among them.” It is with these words that Barbara Rose was characterizing the unity of concerns that she saw between four artists for an exhibition she curated in Cincinnati in 1971. The four artists, in question, were Duchamp, Johns, Rauschenberg, and Cage—Duchamp had died in 1968. This show could be seen as an homage of the three living artists toward their mutual deceased friend. One of the traits that Rose identified between the four artists was that all four had “been especially aware” of “problems of communication.” She saw this as the reason why all four artists “intentionally send messages whose meaning is open to many interpretations.”847 This awareness of the problems of communication inherent in art did not begin with Duchamp. Cézanne and Pissarro, before them, had in their own ways, and with their own means, deeply immersed themselves in the problems of communication inherent in making art for others—not just for oneself. Rauschenberg expanded a bit on this idea in a later interview with Barbara Rose who quoted words written by John Cage in the introduction to a performance given in 1956 by Merce Cunningham:

The novelty of our work derives therefore from our having moved away from simply private human concerns towards the world of nature and society of which all of us are a part. Our intention is… simply to wake up to the very life we’re living…848

As Rose points out, Cage is here specifically referring to the working dialogue he held with Merce Cunningham for several decades. She is also quite right in pointing out that in fact these words would apply just as well to the dialogue led by Johns and Rauschenberg together—and it even extends to a whole generation of Neo-Dada artists living at the same time in New York. It is the claim of this essay that such a statement largely applies to Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s intentions as well: did they too not decide to move away from “simply private concerns” towards “the world of nature and society of which all of us are part”? Pissarro was from the very beginning less engaged in “simply private concerns” than Cézanne was, as he had always worked with others—from the early days of his artistic career spent with Fritz Melbye in Saint Thomas, and then in Caracas. Cézanne, on the other hand, did not share the problems of his daily pictorial practice with any one until he met Pissarro. He was, however, deeply immersed in his group of artistic friends in Provence. To Cage’s expression (the “simply private human concerns”) designates artistic concerns withdrawn from the world, focused on oneself. I would add that the latter concerns—

the immersion of one’s art within the outside world, or within the world of others—are even more human: they point, in fact, toward the very definition of humanity.

The results of their works may certainly have shocked parts of their audiences or viewers at times. I once asked Jasper Johns why he felt that a performance event given in Paris, in which both he and Rauschenberg participated by performing spontaneous acts of their own within a pre-defined amount of time, had been such a scandal. His reply was: “It wasn’t elegant enough!” and he laughed. My answer to the same question would tend to stress the fact that these artists were sharing too much with the audience: there was something like an excess of communication. Everything was revealed: all the art was out there. Painting became literally a stage-act or a wreath of flowers—its time of execution was what was given to see. The result did not matter as much as the production—the latter term is to be understood in both of its meanings: both as the result of a certain work action, and as a theater ‘production.’ The life-time of the object produced (a wreath of flowers) was more or less the same as the time of the performance. The period during which the work of art generated a particular response from its audience (shock or pleasure) defined the very time of existence of the work of art itself. The fact that this wreath of flowers had

849 The performance Homage to David Tudor had been organized by Darthea Speyer for the Théâtre de l’Ambassade des Etats-Unis in Paris. Jasper Johns contributed a target-shaped wreath of flowers with his name and David Tudor’s; Rauschenberg created First Time Painting on stage, having attached microphones to record the sound of his executing the work within a pre-established length of time.
taken on the form of a target was a clear indication that the rest of Johns’s works—certainly his targets—could (and should) know the same fate.

No matter what one thought of the results, there was an essentially communal effort, a tension towards others that were the driving forces behind the early works of these artists, Johns and Rauschenberg, and Cage and Cunningham. Before them, a century or so earlier, Pissarro and Cézanne also opened up alleys of vision for each other, and offered each other (just like Johns and Rauschenberg did) the luxury of having a “private” audience, an alter ego. They too, highly dissatisfied with the expectations of “elegance” that dominated the official art world, decided to change the art world. And they did—together with the help of their impressionist colleagues. Pissarro and Cézanne, however, were the intransigent ones among the group, and were ready at some point to split off in order to assert their efforts more radically than their friends and colleagues were ready to accept. Cézanne and Pissarro wanted no compromise at all with the official art world—the “crowd” or the “masses” should be left the only judges of the results of their doings. With each other’s help, they found the mutual encouragement and the force of exploring what lay beyond what Cage called one’s “simply private concerns.” In turn, the fact that they both opened up to each other’s art, made their art all the more open as well—all the more flexible, all the more

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850 See Brettell, *New Painting*, op. cit. and Cézanne, *Correspondance*, 115 who clearly speaks for Pissarro as much as for himself when he writes: “je souhaite ardemment que la foule sache au moins que je ne tiens pas plus à être confondu avec ces messieurs du Jury qu’ils ne paraissent désirer être confondus avec moi.”
human. It is not only in formal terms, but also in human terms that the collaborative episode with Pissarro changed Cézanne’s art: as we saw before, the “detour” through a dialogue with some one else—and we saw that some one else could also include artists of the past—became in effect a condition for returning to nature and confront oneself. We also saw that the final phase of Cézanne’s life that culminated with a confrontation with oneself was also co-extensive with a need to be heard, seen and read by others. Cézanne needed to tell others the truth in painting. This final episode constitutes but one link inseparable, in my mind, from the younger artist’s engagement with Pissarro. While with Bernard, or with the young Gasquet, Cézanne “re-lives” (through memory) the earlier moments of his youth, with Pissarro in painting, with Zola in literature: with both, in conversations. Thus, Cézanne never ended being “élève de Pissarro:” he was an élève who learnt as much as he taught.

*Encounters of Encounters*

This whole essay can read like the compared stories of two encounters—two encounters that encountered one another. These encounters, as we saw, were in neither case, unique to each pair of artists—each one of these encounters was one among several other significant encounters. Some of these other encounters were shared with each other, some were not: Cézanne and Pissarro shared Oller (who

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probably acted as a teacher or mentor to Cézanne at the Académie Suisse and Guillemet as strong friends at the beginning of their lives; Gauguin also became an important presence for both artists. Even though he and Cézanne fell out, Gauguin continued to revere Cézanne’s work, collected some of his work; meanwhile, he also fell out with Pissarro over ideological artistic concerns (the atheist Pissarro could not stand what considered the religious or symbolic overtones of Gauguin’s art from the late 1880s onwards); yet, they too retained a great deal of quiet admiration for each other.

Likewise, Rauschenberg and Johns were at the nexus of numerous other relationships and friendships. We have seen how both artists have enjoyed—together and separately—the loyal and intense friendships of these other two great friends and co-artists: Cage and Cunningham. Johns and Rauschenberg were also often described as having carried on Duchamp’s spirit, and this is with Duchamp that I would like to conclude this section. In a seldom mentioned live interview with Duchamp himself, the interviewer, Alain Jouffroy asked Duchamp about his “influence” on the two young American artists. Duchamp’s humility seemed at first a little offended that one could assign so much power to him; he then explained:

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852 Letter from Guillemet to Oller, 1866. Referring to Cézanne who claimed to have done a good picture in Aix even though he is usually very harsh upon himself, Guillemet concludes: “Que ton élève a donc fait de chemin il est méconnaissable.” Francisco Oller: Un realista del impressionismo, op. cit., 226.
853 Alain Jouffroy taped a rare interview with Duchamp in French on December 8, 1961 at the artist’s New York home, on 28 West 10th Street. The conversation was later edited and published in Une
Ma présence n’est pas suffisante quand même pour avoir une telle influence. L’influence est venue du fait que l’*inter-communication* inter-continentale a permis des voyages beaucoup plus faciles, beaucoup plus fréquents, entre les français à New York, entre les américains à Paris—ce qui n’existait pas non plus il ya 50 ans. Il faut donc penser que cet *inter-échange* a facilité un événement, si vous voulez, de la pensée du monde entier. Il n’y a plus la France, l’Amérique, l’Allemagne, tout ce côté de souveraineté nationale disparaît sotout dans le monde des arts.

Jouffroy : Oui, mais pour de jeunes artistes comme Rauschengerg et Jasper Johns, vous êtes le seul artiste des générations précédentes qui ait résisté, en quelque sorte, à leurs yeux. Je ne crois pas que ce soit là un hasard.

Duchamp : Non, je les aime beaucoup aussi : ils sont très gentils. D’abord parce qu’en dehors du côté peintre ou du côté artiste, je regarde surtout l’esprit du monsieur qui peint-----et qu’il peigne des choses très géniales ou pas, ça ne m’intéresse absolument pas, si le monsieur est imbécile comme…, ou est bête comme un peintre, comprenez-vous—ce qui est le cas très souvent. Mais dans le cas de Rauschenberg et de Jasper Johns, ils sont remarquablement intelligents, en plus. C’est un plaisir de les voir, de parler avec eux, d’*avoir un échange*.

*Révolution du regard*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 107-124. I transcribed the present notes directly from the tape. The emphasis is mine.
This completely spontaneous conversation between Duchamp and Alain Jouffroy tells us a lot about the way Duchamp himself interacted with other artists, and what especially appealed to him in his interchange with Johns and Rauschenberg.

Duchamp explains that when he sees a ‘monsieur’ painting, he is less interested in what he paints than in what he has to say. On top of everything else (en plus) Johns and Rauschenberg are “remarkably intelligent.” These three activities: seeing—talking—thinking—were all three inter-dependent in the interchanges that Duchamp described with Johns and Rauschenberg. This reminds us of the text by Kant mentioned in the first section where these three activities together with walking are identified by Kant as the incipient moments of humanity:

The first human being could … stand and walk; he could speak and indeed talk—i.e. speak with the help of coherent concepts—and consequently think.\footnote{Immanuel Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History,” (1786), in Political Writings, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 222.}

What Duchamp designates in his references to Johns and Rauschenberg could also provide the base for a definition of humanity in art. Incidentally, Johns and Rauschenberg took the “standing and walking” aspect of the Kantian definition of the origins of mankind very \textit{literally} through their numerous references to footprints,
[Ills. 200-03] hand prints, and either their allusions to dance, or in the case of Rauschenberg, his active participation in dancing performances: *standing, walking, dancing* seemed indeed within their art to the activity of *thinking* through the mediation of an interaction with others. Pissarro and Cézanne did not dance. They too walked, however: covering miles and miles, combing through the Auvers and Pontoise region, almost in search of exhausting every square inch of the cadastral maps of the area where they both lived and worked. [Ill. 1] The high frequency of peasant figures walking on a country path (as in Pissarro’s famously debased *Gelée blanche*, for instance) is an indication that the act of walking was, indeed, an essential aspect of rural life. Cézanne’s landscapes, in contrast, are often devoid of people—even in paintings they executed together such as Pissarro’s *Route de Saint-Antoine à l’Hermitage, Pontoise, 1875* 855 (on loan to the Basel Kunstmuseum) and Cézanne’s *Le Clos des Mathurins à Pontoise (l’Hermitage)* 856 (Pushkin Museum) Pissarro depicts a passing carriage; Cézanne does not.

Let’s return to Duchamp. The essence of the argument of the present essay in encapsulated in the gist of Duchamp’s reply to his interviewer. The interviewer questions him about his influence on American art. Duchamp replies in terms of communication. One cannot help feeling struck at the fact that in 1961 already Duchamp would speak of “inter-continental inter-relationships,” would claim that

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855 Pissarro and Venturi, *op. cit.*, no. 304.
856 John Rewald, *op. cit.*, no. 310.
“there is no more France, America, Germany” as if almost de facto announcing the end of national boarders. He added an important precision, however: “in the arts.” The social, political, and even economical reality still lied well behind Duchamp’s prophecy, but it echoed another prophecy of the same kind, equally surprising: Kant’s idea of “perpetual peace” instrumented through “an enduring and voluntary association” of all the states, thus creating a community of Weltbürger. The situation that Duchamp observes “in the art world” led him to think of a model of inter-relationships that was not that distant from the idea of a free-willing cosmopolitan association of individuals and groups, who thus transcend their own boarders, and their “national identities.”

In Duchamp’s opinion, the old model of “influences” could not be of much use to discuss his relationship with Johns and Rauschenberg. Instead, he decided to use with great emphasis the much richer and more complex notion of communication (or interchange). Duchamp goes perhaps a little fast when he describes the state of open inter-relationships that have facilitated exchanges between nations, peoples, and artists. (One has the feeling hearing his interview that he is describing the age of the internet and of fast global telecommunications.) A few sobering facts counter-balanced the enthusiastic tone of voice of Duchamp as he described this promising new era. With all the accelerated means of communication mentioned by Duchamp,

the wave of furor that struck the European public when in June 1964 Rauschenberg was awarded the International Grand Prize in Painting (together with an award of two million lire) at the XXXII Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d’Arte in Venice, offered a test-case for Duchamp’s statement. Even within their own countries, Rauschenberg, Johns and the generation they represented were not always readily accepted. Even in New York, their success was far from immediate. The elegantly phrased reservations of the trustees of MoMA, and the euphemisms used by Alfred H. Barr during the meeting of the Acquisition Committee at the Museum of Modern Art, when he presented four paintings, including Flag, illustrate the point. Even if the specific historical conditions did not prove Duchamp’s predictions to be quite right at the time, the future—our present—seems to have proved him right. Not only through his art, but in his general world-view, Duchamp establishes at the core of his program the notion of interchanges. So was the case for Johns and Rauschenberg—and, I argue, Pissarro and Cézanne. Duchamp sees these communicative relationships operate at a number of levels: between nation-states (to the extent that it appears to Duchamp as if boarders, or boundaries that guaranteed national identities and limited the practice of communication are now down); between cultures and artistic forms (that seem to be traveling faster than anything else—and be prone to encourage exchanges); between generations (Duchamp was born in 1887—he was three years younger than Pissarro’s youngest son—while Rauschenberg was born in 1925, and Johns in 1930—the age of Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s grand-children); between
individuals (Johns and Rauschenberg, for instance.) The gamut of potential activities generated by the notion of these interchanges is thus formidable, and formidably complex.

* Status of these Encounters

How does the remarks drawn by Duchamp upon experiences of interchange in the American art world of the ‘50s and ‘60s affect what we know about Pissarro and Cézanne? We now know how extensive, and profound their artistic interchange also was. We know that their inter-relationship was much more than just an intense pictorial and graphic collaboration ‘on the motif’ that led them both to produce dozens of paintings each, scores of drawings—all articulating the same pictorial language, though through different inflections, and very personal emphases on the part of each individual. We also know that these two artists shared throughout their lives a capital of artistic references and pragmatic conceptions that made them much closer than was previously thought, even beyond the point in 1885 when they last exchanged meaningful working procedures for their art. [Ills. 29-35] Is this enough, however, to compare their interchange to the multifarious interchange that took place between Rauschenberg and Johns? Referring back to Duchamp’s remarks about the age of “inter-continental interchanges,” let me first bring up a brief biographical reminder. Pissarro met Cézanne in 1861 in the context of a small group of expats who
largely came from elsewhere, and mainly from “inter-continental” horizons as well: Pissarro from the Caribbean islands, Oller (who most likely taught Cézanne and introduced him to his Caribbean-born friend) from Puerto Rico, Aguiar, another friend of Pissarro’s, from Cuba—and Cézanne, (who, in a way, came from a continent of his own) originated from a culture whose strong accent made him sound like a foreigner and whose pride did not carry much sympathie for the ‘Franciots’ (the Frenchies). Inter-continental interchanges did exist already back then. Even today, incidentally, it is also quite certain that few artists have traveled as much, and seen as many continents as Gauguin did (who voyaged and saw all continents, including the Antarctic). Duchamp, however, does not have in mind just extensive traveling as a sign of the new age of interchanges and communication. He is talking about actual interchanges between cultures and individuals. It is true, of course, that prior to the period described by Duchamp, modernism (of which Pissarro and Cézanne were principal early participants) had embodied an era in which the aesthetic and the social worlds appeared more or less irreconcilable: art, following Baudelaire’s stimulus, “alienated itself from life and withdrew into an untouchable and complete autonomy.”\footnote{Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project,” in The Anti-Aesthetic, \textit{op. cit}, 10.} It is precisely this claimed ‘autonomy’ (the word “independence” would be more aptly used here in my opinion) that the surrealists, and the dada revolution had in mind to blow up by forcing “a reconciliation of art and life.”\footnote{Ibid.} It is this reconciliation that Duchamp has in mind when he refers to the promising new
phase of the ‘60s—and that Rauschenberg and Johns embody through their art. Nobody had gone further than Johns and Rauschenberg in this direction. A notable objection, however, has also often been raised to such efforts—specifically focusing on the legacy of the surrealist/Dada adventures. This is how Habermas summarizes it:

...all those attempts to level art and life, fiction and praxis, appearance and reality to one plane; the attempts to remove the distinction between artifact and object of use, between conscious staging and spontaneous excitement; the attempts to declare everything to be art and everyone to be an expression of subjective experiences—all these undertakings have proved themselves to sort of nonsense experiments. 860

There, I am afraid, I see in Habermas a tendency to over simplify. He uses as a chronological dividing line for “these attempts to level art and life” what he calls the surrealist revolution, and I strongly presume that he includes in this the dada moment as well. From a factual point of view, what invalidates Habermas’s remarks is Duchamp’s observation that life and art have seemingly opened up to each other—to however limited an extent—through Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s experiments. The resounding success in America and abroad of their art in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s proved Duchamp’s point. Even though both artists recoiled at being labeled as “Neo-Dada” artists, “attempts to level art and life” have characterized both of their practices 860

Ibid.
in many ways. What Habermas designates as “sort of nonsense experiments” (while specifically having in mind the surrealist legacy), are these very experiments and the forms of art that resulted from them and continue to enjoy huge success amidst a vast public.

According to Habermas, however, the main mistake of the surrealists was this oversight:

In everyday communication, cognitive meanings, moral expectations, subjective expressions and evaluations must relate to one another. Communication processes need a cultural tradition covering all spheres—cognitive, moral-practical and expressive. A rationalized everyday life, therefore, could hardly be saved from cultural impoverishment through breaking open a single cultural sphere—art—and so providing access to just one of the specialized knowledge complexes. The surrealist revolt would have replaced only one abstraction.\(^\text{861}\)

In other words, the surrealist revolt only worked at what Habermas calls the expressive (or aesthetic) level—leaving the cognitive and the moral-practical levels untouched. I have tried to show in fact that both pairs of artists—despite the vast differences in the historical conditions in which they lived, and in the art forms that

\(^{861}\) Ibid., 11.
they produced—all had in common to have addressed their arts through a multi-dimensional approach that precisely attempted, in an unusual way, to link up these three spheres. On the cognitive level, one could write books on Pissarro’s and Cézanne’s ‘theories’ of art. Leaving aside the question of their coherence, or their allegiance to some of the tenets of German romanticism, each artist was profoundly engaged in a personal effort to analyze the meanings of what they were doing, for themselves and for others. They both also were prone to lavish comments upon the arts of their peers, or of artists of the past whom they revered. On the whole, it has appeared clear that they both formed a (somewhat odd-sounding, and idiosyncratic) theory of art that reveals the ideological kinship of both artists throughout their careers. At the same time, Pissarro and Cézanne claimed to be diffident of theories—theories, to them, could only come after the action, not before. In other words, painting was not illustrating a theory; it was the theory, for them, that illustrated painting. Painting was a reflexive activity. On the cognitive level, Johns and Rauschenberg certainly have lived up to Duchamp’s laudatory statement: “ils sont remarquablement intelligents” and, like Pissarro and Cézanne, they have applied their intelligence to as acute and detailed an understanding as possible of their artistic practices, and of their limits. Those limits are essentially of interest to them in order to be transgressed. Going back to an earlier point, I will suggest that the difference of cognitive approach to their art between Johns and Rauschenberg is that Johns’s approach would be more oriented towards a criticist (or a transcendental)
understanding of his art—whereas Rauschenberg would be rather drawn towards a phenomenological approach. Johns is interested in the conditions of possibility of the representation of X—as well as in its conditions of impossibility. Rauschenberg, on the other hand, tends to focus more on the fact that something is given to him/us—the rush of the given facts of life, and how to represent this rush, or merely to direct it—or to stage-direct it. Hence, almost naturally, Rauschenberg’s very keen and profound interest in the stage as a space of representation. To him, to perform and to represent are one and the same thing. Analogously, I am tempted to draw the same line between Pissarro and Cézanne. It seems to me that Pissarro would tend more towards a criticist/transcendental approach: his is more of a legalistic reflexion on painting: what works and what doesn’t? why is sentimentality to be banned? How to control one’s effects? Cézanne’s reflexion, on the other hand, is absorbed by his fascination towards nature that sucks up the artist’s whole attention, and almost his entire being. All witnesses who saw Cézanne paint tend to confirm that he would, at times, become entranced while honing his attention on his motif. While he was working with Pissarro, a field-worker passed by and made fun of the fact that Cézanne wasn’t doing much. Yet, whatever their tempos, their considerable differences, both pairs of artists recognized in each other “a real artist” (as Johns said about Rauschenberg.)

From a moral-practical point of view, I have attempted to show that the communication processes at work within these artistic interchanges are inseparable

862 Pissarro Archives, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford: Lucien Pissarro’s 1912 sketchbook
from certain moral concerns in each of these artists. I have provided several examples
to the effect that all four artists have never separated their artistic experiences from
several active interchanges with others. It was most apparent in Cézanne’s and
Pissarro’s early hopes that their efforts could lead to a reformation of the inadequate
social and political structures of the official system of recognition in the French art
world. The two of them were more ruthlessly committed to this political and practical
cause than any other of their impressionist colleagues. I have shown that
Rauschenberg and Johns incarnate a deep commitment to do art for others, and to be-there-for-others as well, as Levinas might put it. Thus if the success of “everyday
communication,” is based on an effective inter-relationship between “cognitive
meanings, moral expectations, subjective expressions and evaluations,” then, we find
here, by the same token, a measure of the ground upon which the art forms of all four
artists continue to enjoy such success. One day, it is to be hoped that a museum will
offer us the opportunity to see their works of art hanging on the same walls, thus
‘successfully communicating’ with each other, and reincarnating the early dialogues
that produced them.
CONCLUSION
Pas de théories ! Des œuvres… Les théories perdent les hommes.
Paul Cézanne

Cézanne : Il faut se faire une optique, il faut voir la nature comme si personne ne l’avait vue avant nous.
Emile Bernard : Vous êtes un nouveau Descartes, vous voulez oublier vos prédécesseurs, pour reconstruire le monde en vous-même.
Cézanne : Je ne sais pas qui je suis. Etant peintre, je dois être un œil original.
Bernard : N’en résultera-t-il pas une vision trop personnelle, incompréhensible aux autres hommes ? Car enfin, peindre n’est-ce pas comme parler ? Lorsque je parle, j’emploie la langue dont vous usez ; me comprendriez-vous si je m’en étais fait une nouvelle, inconnue ? C’est avec le langage de tous qu’il faut exprimer des idées nouvelles. Peut-être est-ce le seul moyen de les faire valoir et de les faire admettre. Emile Bernard and Paul Cézanne in a conversation

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863 Paul Cézanne, Conversations, op. cit., 110.
“The art community feels [his] presence and his absence. He has changed the
condition of being here.”

These words were written by Johns about Duchamp after
his death. They convey a great deal of admiration, and emotion—an emotion shared,
said Johns, with the ‘art community’ at large. It is as if Johns was expressing his grief
on the behalf of the art community. This was a beautiful homage. It was after all
Duchamp’s claim (partly facetious, partly serious) that he had reversed the axis
between the active artist and the passive observer: the observer now being the one
who was to make the art. Surely, therefore, “the art community” must have felt very
strongly Duchamp’s departure—some, perhaps even, with some relief thinking that
they might be left off the hook. It is not easy to share with an artist the responsibility
of making art, and, by the same token, to participate in the making of art history. But
Johns and Rauschenberg themselves, and many others with them, had carried things
too far: there was no turning back. Johns and Rauschenberg most definitely carried
the torch that Duchamp, in a sense, passed on to them. They have made sure that the
art community would not fall asleep once Duchamp was gone. But even while
Duchamp was still alive, the two artists could very well be characterized by the words
Johns himself wrote about Duchamp: the art community definitely feels their
presence—and thank goodness, has not had to feel their absence. They too have very

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much changed the condition of being here. From *White Canvases* to *Flag*, and beyond, these two artists have propelled us to the forefront of the stage of the art scene. Art has become something of a show, or a performance whereby we find ourselves already in motion within their very works. We are, in a sense, part of these very works of art. If Duchamp was right by saying that the observer makes the work of art, then Johns and Rauschenberg went one nudge further by deciding that they would ‘make’ their observers. Of course, this circular structure artist/art/receiving subject was not new.

Cézanne and Pissarro, when they appealed to the crowd, over and over, wanted to take the risk of seeing the ‘crowd’ come and comment upon their art—be part of the action—and decide who was worth showing, or not. Pissarro barely passed the test that they had set up for themselves; Cézanne failed it—until he took it again thirty years later, and passed at that point. Today, it seems difficult to imagine that these artists, canonized by the art community, may have experienced difficulties being judged by other observers (four or five generations ago.) The two of them began to pave the road upon which Johns and Rauschenberg learnt to run and fly. By opening up their art to what goes on in the street, by simply tolerating that a certain there-ness of the life worlds in which they lived should permeate their canvases, they, in a way, created a situation by which a certain randomness became a ‘factor’ in their compositional procedures. Life poured in on their works as it came along, to an
analogous extent as it did on to Johns’s and Rauschenberg’s works. Having set their intentions to shock the system of the art world, they contributed to a situation by which the concept of an artist working in his/her ivory tower became more and more obsolete. The world was both partly integrated within their own works as a source of elements to be depicted—in the case of Cézanne, the observation of the world and the imaginary cohabitated to a sometimes daunting extent—and the world was invited to join them and cast judgment on the merits (or lack of these) of their productions.

The question of the *communicative* functions in art is therefore not new, even if, as we saw, it has not been given much attention within the circle of modernism proper. Albrecht Wellmer cites the disagreement between H. R. Jauss and Adorno precisely around this question. Wellmer explains why Adorno does not refer to these *communicative* functions. (The terms of this analysis are analogous to the question I raised in Section II, and at the beginning of Section III about why Greenberg did not pay attention to inter-subjectivity.) Here is the gist of Jauss’ argument with Adorno:

There is a good reason why Adorno does not refer to [the communicative functions of art], namely that it is only possible to pose questions about reception and communication in connection with art if we first question the unequivocal interrelationship that Adorno constructs between reality, utopia and the work of art. But where this interrelationship is presupposed, problems
of reception and communication are reduced to the problem of *adequately apprehending this interrelationship itself*, and all that matters there is genuinely experiencing works of art and deciphering them philosophically. When we start to speak of communicative functions in art, the constellation reality/art/utopia is effectively replaced by the constellation reality/art/receiving subject, which can no longer be conceived as a linear relationship, but only as a circular one in which art is accorded a function in living praxis; art is conceived as something which *actively affects* reality. 

In many different ways, these artists have established circular relationships in which their art has been accorded “a living praxis.” They have established this constellation that Jauss describes in two ways: 1. with each other by being each other’s “receiving subject;” 2. by turning the table towards us and inviting us to join in—knowing that it is always possible to turn down the offer. (Pissarro, incidentally, warned his son that his art was not for by-passers: he knew that his art necessitated time and attention from the viewers.) Indeed, this invitation to join them (whether it be the two impressionists, or the two New York artists of the ‘50s-60s) comes at a price. We are supposed to give it time for one thing. We are also supposed to accept their odd rules

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by which there are no rules. The point is that, if willing, the observers may well end on the stage with the artists—all four artists being welcoming and demanding at the same time.

One usually sees in avant-garde practices tendencies towards arch-individualism. The avant-garde would in many ways reveal the quasi prophetic texts written by Nietzsche more than a century ago.

To say I more often and in a stronger voice than the majority of men, to impose oneself upon them, to stand up against every attempt to reduce [one] to the role of an instrument or organ, to make oneself independent (if only through others submitting themselves, if independence can be achieved only at this price), to prefer a precarious social situation to uniform, sure comfortable arrangements, and to regard a costly, wildly extravagant, and absolutely personal way of living as necessary if man wishes to become greater, more powerful, more prolific, more daring and more rare…

Even if one is forced to recognize in this text a striking portrait of the dominating features of our world (or non-world) today—especially as it finds its most pronounced expression in the art world—the point I have endeavored to prove in this

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essay is that Nietzsche’s prophecy does not sum up the entirety of the art world. In fact, these two examples of inter-subjectivity offer a total refutation of this statement by Nietzsche. As Renaut noted, one can see in this text written by Nietzsche in 1880-1881 (therefore at the time when the Cézanne/Pissarro relationship was reaching its climax) an extraordinary “‘prefiguration more than a century ago of the individualism of our own time—down to the tiniest details: narcissism, exclusive concern for oneself, the cult of independence, the sacrifice of the social, even the consumerist ethic.’”

The two examples studied prove that the Nietzschean diagnostic is thankfully not absolute. There are, if one wants to be pessimist, exceptions to the cult of independence and the exclusive concern for oneself. If one wants to be optimist, one can say that, in fact, the modern rule oscillates constantly between the two axes: concern for oneself vs. concern for others. These appear as the inseparable book-ends within which the span of our lives orient themselves. The other point that the two examples studied here have shown is that one doesn’t need to cultivate exclusively the values of arch-individualism in order to assert one’s self—quite the contrary, in fact. Both examples show that being with another, working with another and thinking-of-the-other are not contradictory with reaching out to oneself, and developing oneself more fully. In fact, one might argue that one reaches oneself all the more easily as one works with another. Now, of course, Johns and

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Rauschenberg’s examples are not the rule in the art world—even though one could think of more cases of true inter-subjectivity than one expects. It is true, nevertheless, that throughout the modern era, with the expansion of the values of individualism that Renaut has splendidly described, the counterpart, in the art world (and almost everywhere) has amounted to a profound distrust in reason. Yet, ironically, it is from this distrust in reason that a genuine communicative praxis stems and offers an alternative to both of the aporetic systems that have largely characterized the experience of modern art: on the one hand, we have seen a dogmatic drive to create a sense and values universally valid for all in the modernists constructions; on the other, the counter-system opposed largely by post-modernism has consisted in the claim that no sense nor values may be drawn from the experience of modern, and especially post-modern art. This stance ironically brings together so-called radicals and conservatives—both camps refusing to see any sense in modern art. The former defer to the need to respect the “heterogeneity of the language games;” the latter refuse to see any sense in the experience of modernity. Beyond this reductive alternative, communicative pragmatics sketch another perspective: some sense can be constructed out of modernity; in fact, this sense-making activity begins when two people engage in a conversation or enter into a collaborative space together. This other type of sense—that basically escapes both the dogmatic perspective (as in the historicist/modernist legacy) and the nihilistic perspective (inherited by now almost half a century of deconstruction). Rather than a distrust in reason, or the imposition of
a dogmatically conceived reason, this third alternative begins with the recognition of one and the other, and a participatory re-construction of reason (understood as a plural and relational activity.)

* Distrust in Reason: Adorno and Horkheimer

What has undoubtedly given a bad name to any effort towards a ‘communicative theory’ stems from the intellectual energy spent on the behalf of Horkheimer and Adorno—prior to any communicative theory worthy of its name—to dismantle any attempt to rehabilitate the premises of what the Enlightenment had stood for. The verdict of Adorno and Horkheimer just at the end of World War II commands admiration for its sharpness and its quick measure of the monstrous and aberrant compendium of catastrophic events that unfurled on the world. While the sharpness of their condemnation can strike us as being so timely and impressive, one cannot help wondering, fifty years later, if, by casting their blanket condemnation so widely they did not end up throwing the baby with the bath water. When one reads a text like this:

Liberated from the control of the same class which tied the nineteenth-century businessman to Kantian respect and mutual love, Fascism (which by its iron discipline saves its subject peoples the trouble of moral feelings) no longer
needs to uphold any disciplines. In contradistinction to the categorical imperative and all the more in accordance with pure reason, it treats men as things—as the loci of modes of behavior.\footnote{Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, \textit{Dialectic of Enlightenment}, (New York: Continuum, 1989), 86. (First published as \textit{Dialektik der Erklärung}, (New York: Social Studies Association, 1944).}

One cannot help wonder whether the authors are not barking at the wrong tree. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, “… the totalitarian order gives full rein to calculation and abides by science as such. Its canon is its own brutal efficiency.” Yet, in the next sentence, the two authors leap forward (or backward) and claim that “[i]t was the hand of philosophy that wrote it on the wall—from Kant’s \textit{Critique} to Nietzsche’s \textit{Genealogy of Morals}.”\footnote{Ibid.} The logical chain of reasoning of these two authors is simple to follow: 1. reason is based on calculation [ratio in Latin means calculation]; 2. this calculating force of reason is oriented towards self-preservation, which is the grounding principle of scientific activities, and “the soul of the table of categories;” 3. the totalitarian regimes display nothing but the “full reign” of calculation managed with brutal efficiency. Therefore, totalitarian regimes offer no more than an arena where one sees “reason” in full realization of itself. The ultimate core of the problem rests with the author who established the table of categories, and the era that produced such a philosophical scheme, the Enlightenment.
Nowhere does it seem to occur to Horkheimer and Adorno that the conclusion of their syllogism may be falsely deduced. It certainly would be difficult to contest the fact that a description of the table of categories proceeds from some rational activity. Likewise, it required a prodigious effort of organization and calculation, i.e., some rational activity as well, on the part of the Nazi and the Soviet administrations in order to perpetrate their genocides. While both of these observations are correct, it does not follow at all from the combination of these observations that all rational activities are alike. In fact, the crucial flaw of their reasoning is not so much the fact that they fail to address that there can be an almost infinite number of possible uses of calculating rationality, but, rather, that rational activity is a means to an end, rather than an end to itself. The question then becomes how does one assign an end to these rational activities? The fact is that as vast efforts of rationalization are required to prevent children, and whole populations to contract AIDS on the African continent. Likewise, the repulsive acts of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the Balkans did, as one knows, require sophisticated methods of ‘cover up’ and a great deal of organization too. Does this imply that, all things being equal under the hellish eclipse of reason, one should simply equate both efforts as the equivalent symptoms of “rationalized forms of oppression?” Analogously, the fact that reason is instrumental in both setting forth crimes against humanity, and organizing humanitarian rescue efforts— as it is used in an infinity of other possible tasks in between these two extremes—surely suggests that one should indeed rationalize (in the very sense of calculating) how best to assign
a goal to one’s own life? The way to think about these vast examples was suggested by Horkheimer and Adorno’s staunch rebuffing gesture against any form of rationality. We now return to where we began. There are essentially two types of rationality—even though there is, as I have just emphasized—an infinite number of possible ways of utilizing rationality towards innumerable possible goals. At bottom, however, one should distinguish between rational activities led on one’s own, and rational activity led in common. Acknowledging others may take very different forms. It begins by simply turning to some one and acknowledging his/her presence. At the other end of the scale, it also may involve saving some one’s life. In between, again, there lie an infinite number of shades of possible interactions with others—of which we have seen two powerful examples that clearly indicate that our aesthetic culture is not exclusively centered around a cult of the individual per se.

*Where Are We Today? And What Does Inter-Subjectivity Mean to Us?*

In a remarkable little book, a few French artists formed together a little group and proceeded in asking a selection of art professionals (curators, scholars, critics, and artists) the same questions that Charles Morice posed in 1905 in an inquiry with the title “Enquêtes sur les tendances actuelles des arts plastiques.”871 Published just two years after Pissarro’s death, and a year before Cézanne would die, the article aimed at

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871 The article was published in *Mercure de France*, August 1, 1905—and the full results of the inquiry were published through three issues: August 1, August 15, and September 1, 1905.
trying to understand where the newly-born twentieth century was going. Five questions were asked to about fifty living artists. The questions were the following:

1. Avez-vous le sentiment qu’aujourd’hui l’art tend à prendre des directions nouvelles?
2. L’impressionnisme est-il fini? Peut-il se renouveler?
4. Quel état faites-vous de Cézanne?
5. Selon vous l’artiste doit-il tout attendre de la nature ou seulement lui demander les moyens plastiques de réaliser la pensée qui est en lui?

What is interesting is that the artists selected today appear mostly unknown, with the exceptions of a few—van Dongen, Rouault, Maurice Denis, Vallotton. The absence of Matisse and Picasso among the addressees is indicative of the aesthetic choices of the editorial board of Mercure de France at the turn of the last century. Yet, the type of questions asked, and the answers brought to those, not only constitute the base for an interesting sociological understanding of the period, but these also are very easily translated in our language—just as easily as the modern impulse present within the ideological doctrine finds an easy application within our present context. Following
the same model, and updating the five questions to “our time” the three present artists have asked thirty professionals to answer the following questions:

1. Si l’événement de la fin du siècle précédent retenu par l’enquête de Charles Morice a été l’impressionnisme, quel(s) événement(s) majeur(s) retenez-vous pour la compréhension de l’art d’après-guerre à nos jours ? Quels artistes vous paraissent émerger ?

2. « La fin de l’avant-gardisme » est-elle une heureuse ou une fâcheuse nouvelle ? Que pensez-vous de ses conséquences pour l’art et pour la critique ?

3. Faut-il écarter une résurgence de la peinture et de la sculpture au 21ème siècle ? Le goût de juger des œuvres peut-il renaître aussi ?

4. Les analyses sociologiques ont montré l’importance des valeurs de communication dans l’art contemporain au détriment des valeurs liées à l’œuvre. Quel avenir pour les musées si la confusion est entretenue entre ces deux systèmes de valeurs ?

5. À votre avis, l’art contemporain est-il parvenu à ses fins : décevoir toute attente d’art ? Que dire alors de sa prétention au musée ? Son insuccès persistant auprès du public s’explique-t-il uniquement par le traditionnel rejet de la nouveauté ?

Among the thirty answers given to each of these five questions, the blending of a total relativism and of a very assertive dogmatism is the sign that there is a certain continuum within the critical system that operates within the “contemporary art world.” Among critical voices that depart from these two alleys, I would like to highlight the response of Yves Michaud, a well-known art critic in France for being quite openly critical of the self-congratulatory art world—without falling into the bias of advocating a return to the good old values of the past. Michaud has the uncharacteristic humility of opening up his response to the question: what is the major event of the last half of the 20th century? by stressing first of all that it depends on the scale one adopts, and the public one considers. Nevertheless, he retains three phenomena that, according to him, have changed the way things were. Michaud mentions first Pop Art, then “Fluxus” and finally the emergence of Internet, and of digital technologies. Not highly original in itself, the explanations Michaud gives to his choice are worth being considered here. Besides its immediate appeal within the public, Michaud sees the originality of Pop Art in the way it drew upon a previously unfathomable source of images that came from the suddenly much more diverse and technically challenging surrounding. As Michaud put it, “le Pop art est une forme d’art-reflet qui infirme complètement l’idée d’une coupure de tout l’art contemporain avec le public.”

This fascinating definition of the work of art as a “reflet” also addresses frontally the ways in which Rauschenberg and Cézanne largely conceive(d)

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873 Ibid., 33.
of their art. Certainly, the Rauschenbergian principle that there is no wrong subject in art applies just as well to the art of Pissarro, and of Cézanne, as it does to his own. The same notion of “reflet” takes on a different connotation within Johns’s work: more than reflections, Johns has preferred to explore imprints—the indexical marks of objects that he touches, or sees, and that surround him—or of himself as in the Skin studies for instance. [Ill. Dossier E] In this sense, a whole spectrum (figuratively and literally) of objects, most familiar to Rauschenberg, have not made it into the world, or onto the surfaces of Jasper Johns: bits and pieces picked up from junkyards, newspaper clips, photographs have—with few exceptions—have been absent from Johns’s imagery. As it has been abundantly emphasized, Johns, in his own unique way, chooses objects and signs of everyday life that are conspicuous for their banality, or for the fact that one has forgotten their physical existence as a simple object behind their universal function as a sign: Flag is the ultimate example of this. But Johns, unlike Rauschenberg, seldom presents his objects: he re-presents and, I would add, re-re-represents when he, for instance, draws a drawing of one of his paintings. [See Illustration dossier F] What I mean is that what seems to fascinate Johns ad libitum is the fact that these objects, icons, symbols, figures, function as representations of a particular abstraction, while being very concrete themselves: the figure ‘2’ represents the numerical value: two. It can be seen at the same time (by

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874 I am thinking, of course, of Souvenir I and Souvenir II where one sees a machine-made photo of the artist printed on a plate and produced in a Japanese souvenir shop. More recently, Johns has used an offset reproduction of a galaxy, together with a photograph of his father as a young boy sitting on his grandfather’s lap.
some one who does not know the Arabic numeral system) as a serpentine figure, or simply as a strange form. This is the kind of tension that interests Johns. What happens, seems to ask Johns, when one represents a sign, and when the act of representing overwhelms the sign, drowns it in encaustic? What happens, next, when one wants to represent the representation of this sign, whereby the act of representation, and the choice of the medium actually change? Johns’s oeuvre could be described as an echo chamber, or as a Galerie des glaces wherein certain signs, objects, have formed a world of its own, and where this world is constantly reflecting itself, and reflecting reflections of itself. Each new image, though, is different and declinable situations, new technical or artistic questions.

Whether participating to the technique of the ‘reflet’ or of the ‘imprint’ Rauschenberg and Johns have produced, each of them, an extremely complex oeuvre wherein the world (or a fragment of it) seems to have come in tangential contact with the surfaces of their works. Both of their corpuses of works largely respond to the definition once given by Cézanne of what an artist must be:

“‘l’artiste doit être comme une plaque sensible, un appareil enregistreur simplement, au moment où il œuvre.’” Cézanne himself was echoing one of the comments of his old friend Pissarro when the latter described one of the conditions of their métier:

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875 Conversations, 111.
“s’imprégner de ce milieu en le modifiant selon [sa] personnalité.”

In fact, this definition accurately applies to all four of the artists in this essay: they all have done just that—absorbing their surrounding while imprinting their personal marks on it as well. Johns and Rauschenberg just pushed this statement further than Pissarro or Cézanne could have predicted was possible. Neither of them probably ever thought that someone one day would stand up and say: “the world is a painting” or “This is a map of the United States: this is my painting.” Yet, the definitions of their own works (and of their own worlds) made such statements, such accomplishments, largely possible. It suggests that out of the chaos, and the *Weltlosigkeit* (the loss of the world) that has characterized our present, it is, in fact, possible to edify different smaller, inter-subjective worlds. These are neither meaningless, nor do they hold a universal (heteronomous) meaning for all. In between, these small worlds—these aesthetic configurations—begin with the efforts of one individual *addressing* another, and this other individual *addressing* him back. What began with two, three, four people or more ended up engendering a whole new aesthetic experience that concerns, not just a few individuals, but millions of them, who, through exhibitions, books, the internet are, one way or the other, connected with the aesthetic experiences put in place by these four individuals. The fascinating thread between these two pairs of artists, across centuries and continents, also suggests a certain “persistence of modernity” (to borrow Wellmer’s expression.) This persistence of modernity both dispels the all-out pessimism of some of the doom-and-gloom prognosis of certain

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876 CP/JBH, III, 393.
post-modern trends while allowing room for a moderate and cautious optimism. What Pissarro and Cézanne, on the one hand, and Rauschenberg and Johns, on the other, have proven to us through their aesthetic contributions, is that \textit{all is not lost}. 
ILLUSTRATIONS
Dossier A: Dialogues
Dossier B: Portraits/Self-portraits
Dossier C: Rounded Themes: Stones and Balls/Paint Cans/Circles (Tires)
Dossier D: Objects, Fragments, Balls/Figures/Stuff
Dossier E: Studios/Imprints/Transfers
Dossier F: Flags/Stripes/Stars/Dots
Dossier G: Space/Dirt/Land/Common Place
Dossier H: Black and White Paintings
Dossier I: Gray vs. Color
Dossier J: Light
Dossier K: PERFORMANCE I: Duchamp/Cage/Cunningham/Music
Dossier L: PERFORMANCE II: Flight/Fall/Gravity/Acrobatics
Dossier M : Animals
Conclusion
Appendix 1: Chronology of Pissarro and Cézanne

Conjectured dates for events and for undated or apparently misdated letters appear between brackets.

Paragraphs and bold letters indicate moments in the life of each artist partially oriented towards inter-subjectivity.

Unless otherwise designated, the citations have been reproduced from their original sources without correction in spelling or punctuation (or if not from their original sources, from their published transcriptions).

The bibliographic references are shown in their entirety the first time, then abbreviated according to the key below.

<table>
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**Pissarro**

“Voici ma biographie: né à St-Thomas (Antilles danoises), 10 juillet 1830. Venu à Paris en 1841 pour entrer à la pension Savary à Passy, je retournai à la fin de 1847 à St-Thomas, où je commençai à dessiner tout en étant employé dans une maison de commerce. En 1852 j’abandonnai le commerce et je partis avec M. Frits Melbye, peintre danois, pour Caracas (Venezuela) où je restai jusqu’en 1855, je retournai au commerce à St-Thomas. Enfin, je revins en France à la fin de 1855, à temps pour voir trois ou quatre jours l’Exposition universelle. Depuis, je me suis fixé en France, quant au reste de mon histoire de peintre, elle se rattache au groupe impressionniste.”


**Cézanne**

Birth of Paul Cézanne at Aix-en-Provence, 28, rue de l’Opéra, on January 19, 1839.

Birth certificate, Archives communales d’Aix-en-Provence.

« En Provence. Une jeunesse romantique avec des vers, des promenades déclamatoires près de Zola, son ami de collège; Hugo, Musset, dispersés dans les feuillages sur les bords de l’Arc; une arrivée à Paris enthousiaste [en avril 1861], des conversations de nuit dans la grande ville — que l’on rêve de conquérir — sous les étoiles. Puis un peu de misère par la famille rébarbative quoique fortunée; un mariage; les échecs près du public et des artistes impuissants; le paroxysme des théories (sa plus géniale époque) et enfin la retraite et l’absolu. »

Emile Bernard, “Paul Cézanne”, *les Hommes d’Aujourd’hui*, 8th volume, n° 387, no date

(1891).
1861

Cézanne stays in Paris from April to September. According to Pissarro, it was in 1861 that he and Oller went to the Swiss Academy atelier Suisse to see Cézanne: “ce curieux Provençal” who “faisait des académies à la risée de tous les impuissants de l’école”. Georges Rivière maintains that it was during Cézanne’s second stay in Paris (starting from November 1862) that Cézanne met Pissarro and Guillaumin at the atelier Suisse; Georges Lecomte states that it was 1863; Théodore Duret, 1864.

Letter J BH 1181, from Pissarro to his son Lucien, dated December 4, 1895;


1863

May 15
Opening of the Salon des Refusés. Pissarro (PISSARO 468 Paysage, 469 Etude, 470 Village), Manet, Fantin-Latour, and possibly Cézanne exhibit, although Cézanne’s name does not appear in the exhibition catalogue.


The participation of Cézanne is according to an article by Arnold Mortier in le Nain jaune, reproduced by F. M. (Francis Magnard) in le Figaro, April 8, 1867; Jacques Lethève, Impressionnistes et symbolistes devant la presse, Armand Colin, Paris, 1959, p. 44-45 and note n° 9 p. 279.

Bazille introduces Pissarro and Cézanne to Renoir.
After the Salon des Refusés, Cézanne — who will probably spend the entire year in Paris — brings Zola to the ateliers of Pissarro, Béliard, Monet, Degas, Renoir, Fantin-Latour and others.

1865

In the course of the year
Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley, and less constantly, Cézanne, frequent the atelier that Bazille and Monet rent together at 6, rue de Furstenberg, from the beginning of January, 1865, to January 14, 1866.


March 15
Cézanne, not having been able to visit Pissarro, invites Pissarro to see him at the Suisse Academy for a morning or at his place for an evening (in Paris, 22, rue Beaulreillis). Or, if not, he suggests that Pissarro set a date. “Samedi [March 18] nous [Cézanne and Oller] irons à la baraque des Champs-Elysées [the Salon] porter nos toiles, qui feront rugir l’Institut de rage et de désespoir. J’espère que vous aurez fait quelque beau paysage”.


[August 26]
Guillemet writes to Pissarro: “Je demanderai d’abord beaucoup de renseignements sur la peinture. Combien de tableaux en train. – combien de vendus [...] Le salon a-t-il eu un bon résultat auprès des marchands [...] Avez-vous des nouvelles de Cezanne et d’Oller ? Voilà le gros des choses à m’apprendre”.

He invites Pissarro to join him at Yport and at the very least hopes to cross paths with him again in October at La Roche-Guyon: “Si votre petite femme ne se fâchait pas je vous proposerai de venir passer le mois ici (logé et nourri gratis) on avancerait le voyage. Assurez-la que c’est dans votre intérêt et que vous trouverez de beaux motifs pour vous — trois semaines ou un mois ne sont pas tout un siècle et elle pourrait patienter un peu en attendant votre retour.”

Letter from A. Guillemet, Yport (by Fécamp, Seine Inférieure to Pissarro, dated Saturday, August 26; communiquée by Alexia de Buffévant, Wildenstein Institute; vente Archives de Camille Pissarro, hôtel Drouot, Paris, November 21, 1975, no 79.
Guillemet insists that Pissarro meet up with him in October at La Roche-Guyon: “Je compte énormément sur vous pour Laroche; c’est promis du reste, n’est ce pas ? Cela me semblera bien bon de revoir de la bonne peinture et d’en faire avec un vrai lapin tel que vous je suis si abrutis des peintres que je rencontre ici, tous des épiciers et des gandins.

“Cézanne viendra probablement avec nous. Je lui ai écrit après avoir reçu votre lettre. Il s’embête fort là bas [at Aix]—Je lui ai parlé d’Oller et voici ce qu’il m’a écrit: Dieu de Dieu quel bougre que cet Oller quelle vie artiste—”


Pissarro writes to his friend Franc(isc)o Oller (y Cestero) in Puerto Rico.

“Guillemet est enchanté d’avoir de tes nouvelles, il comptait aller voir Cézanne à Aix […]. Nous avons des nouvelles de Cézanne, il est toujours à Aix, il sera à Paris dans un mois et demi, tous les trois nous comptons sur un beau tableau de toi et surtout pas jésuite.”

1866

[Beginning of the year]
Camille Pissarro rents a place at Pontoise, rue du Fond-de-l’Ermitage (the present rue Maria-Deraismes). This is the address listed in the catalogue of the Salon. According to Janine Bailly-Herzberg, the lease dates from the month of January at n° 1 of the rue du Fond-de-l’Ermitage.

Yet in his letter to Oller of December 14, 1865, Pissarro had stated his intention to stay at La Varenne-Saint-Hilaire until April 1866.

Ludovic Rodo Pissarro will note, based on a document that belonged to his father: “16 janvier 1866, quittance de loyer, allée Ste-Hyacinthe, La Varenne-St-Hilaire, terme échu”.

February
Cézanne participates in the Thursday receptions held by Zola in his apartment at 142, boulevard du Montparnasse.

March 28
Marion sends some news of Cézanne: “Je viens de recevoir une lettre de mes amis de Paris: Cézanne espère n’être pas reçu à l’exposition, et les peintres de sa connaissance lui préparent une ovation.”

April 12
Marion copies other news of Cézanne from a letter he received from Valabrège: “Cézanne t’a déjà écrit sa visite chez Manet. Mais il ne t’a pas écrit que Manet avait vu ses natures mortes chez Guillemet. Il les a trouvées fortement traitées. Cézanne en a une grande joie, une joie qu’il ne développe pas et sur laquelle il n’insiste guère selon son habitude. Manet doit lui faire une visite. [...]
“Paul sera sans doute refusé à l’exposition. Un philistin du jury s’est écrié en voyant mon portrait [un portrait de Valabrègue par Cézanne] que c’était peint, non seulement au couteau, mais encore au pistolet. Une série de discussions se sont élevées déjà. Daubigny a prononcé quelques mots de défense. Il a dit qu’il préférait les tableaux chargés de hardiesse aux nullités accueillies à chaque salon. Il n’a pas eu l’avantage.”

Marion then mentions the plan for a collective exhibition independent of the Salon. Cézanne, Guillaumin, Guillemet, Degas, Manet and notably, Renoir, had just been turned down by the jury of the Salon.

Letter from Marion to Morstatt; Alfred Barr, “Cézanne, d’après les letters de Marion to Morstatt, 1865-1868”, p. 46.

April 19

Cézanne writes for the second time to the superintendent of the Beaux-Arts (his first letter remains unknown) to protest his rejection from the Salon and to call for the restoration of a Salon des Refusés.


April 26

Writing, it appears, from Madrid, Oller asks Pissarro to send one of his works to be exhibited next to Oller’s own in Madrid (Oller had done the same thing with Cézanne before), and he suggests that Pissarro use Tanguy as an intermediary. Pissarro must have already known the hardware merchant Julien Tanguy (1825-1894) at this time.


April 27

Article by Zola calling for the restoration of the Salon des Refusés.


May 1-June 20

Pissarro exhibits at the Salon, palais des Champs-Elysées.

“PISSARRO (CAMILLE), né à St-Thomas (colonies françaises [sic]), élève de M. A. Melbye.
A Pontoise, rue du Fond-de-l’Ermitage; et à Paris, chez M. Guillemet, Grande-Rue, 20 (Batignolles).

1564 - Bords de la Marne en hiver [PV 47].”

Pissarro does not designate himself the student of Corot anymore: “Il [Corot] parle sévèrement à Pissarro, c'est lui-même qui nous l'a confié.”


On the other hand, Pissarro keeps the support of Daubigny, who apparently fought hard to have Pissarro’s painting accepted by the jury.

**May 20**

Favorable review of Pissarro by Zola appears in *l’Evénement*.


**[July 31 or August 1]**

From Bretagne, Guillemet asks Zola for news of Cézanne, Pissarro and Solari.

Letter from A. Guillemet, from a village in Brittany (Guildo-en-Crehen), to Zola, dated Wednesday the 31st. Guillemet must have confused Tuesday the 31st with Wednesday the 1st. Date from the year 1867 by Renée Baligand, “Lettres inédites d’Antoine Guillemet à Emile Zola (1866-1870)”, 1978, p. 184-185.

**[August 17]**

GUilleMET NOTIFIES PISSARRO OF HIS RETURN TO PARIS FROM BRETAGNE AT THE END OF THE MONTH. HE PLANS TO SEE PISSARRO AT PONTOISE OR AT PARIS, AS WELL AS CÉZANNE, AND THEN HE EXPECTS TO DEPART FOR AIX OR ELSEWHERE IN THE MIDI, POSSIBLY WITH PISSARRO:

“J’ai eu de vos nouvelles tout dernièrement par Zola à qui j’ai écrit dans ma détresse pour avoir quelques nouvelles des amis Vous faites, m’a t-il dit, tableaux sur tableaux pour à l’époque du salon, choisir dans le tas.

“[…] mon intention est d’aller soit à Aix soit dans un autre endroit du Midi où je pourrai travailler jusqu’en janvier et tranquillement. Le temps je pense doit être beau dans ces contrées. Je verrai du reste Cézanne à cet effet. Si vous pouviez y aller comme vous le pensiez quelle belle partie ensemble et quelles pochades colorées. Cézanne doit faire un tableau avant d’aller embrasser sa famille. Peut être est-il déjà fait. Si vous les voyiez dites leur mille amitiés et remerciez bien Zola et Cézanne de leurs lettres. Elles m’ont fait grand plaisir J’irai du reste les voir à mon arrivée —”

Letter from A. Guillemet, at M. Dagorne’s at the Guildo in Crehen par Plancoët (Côtes-du-Nord), to [Pissarro], dated Friday, August 17; communiquée (préciser) by Alexia de Buffévent, Wildenstein Institute.
September
Pissarro plans to submit to the Exposition universelle of 1867.
Letter from A(ntoine) Guillemet to Oller, dated September 12, 1866;
association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise; reproduced in Francisco Oller, 
un realista del impresionismo, exhibition catalogue, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Porto Rico, 1983.

[September or October]
Pissarro and his family settle in Paris, at 108, bd Rochechouart.
Letter from Guillemet to Pissarro, dated October 23, 1866; John Rewald, 

September 12 (Cézanne: student of Oller)
Guillemet writes to Oller: “Cézanne est à Aix où il a fait un bon tableau. C’est lui qui 
le dit, et il est fort difficile pour lui-même. Il a fait des études superbes d’audace, 
Manet ressemble à Ingres en comparaison. Que ton élève a donc fait de chemin, il est 
méconnaissable. [...] Pissarro te dit mille choses aimables et nous souhaitons tous 
avec Cézanne de te voir bientôt.”
Letter from A. Guillemet to Oller, dated; copy at the association des Amis 
from Pissarro, Pontoise.

[October?]
Pissarro leaves Pontoise to settle in Paris.
Letter from Guillemet to Pissarro, on the back of a letter from Cézanne dated 
by him, “Ci jourd’hui 23 October 1866 an de grâce”; John Rewald, Paul 

[From autumn?]
Pissarro begins to frequent the café Guerbois (the address at 11, Grande-Rue, 
Batignolles, will become 9, avenue de Clichy, from 1868 on). At the café, he 
encounters Manet, Degas, Fantin-Latour, Guillemet, Cézanne, Bazille, and Zola, 
among others.
Théodore Duret, Histoire des peintres impressionnistes, Librairie Floury, 
Address in Jacques Hillairet, Dictionnaire historique des rues de Paris, 8th 

[October 17]
Cézanne asks Zola for news of Pissarro, and tells him: “Mais vois-tu, tous les 
tableaux faits à l’intérieur, dans l’atelier, ne vaudront jamais les choses faites en plein 
air.”
October 23
From Aix-en-Provence, Cézanne writes to Pissarro that Guillemet has joined him. He asks for Oller’s address, their mutual friend who has returned to Puerto Rico.
“Vous avez parfaitement raison de parler du gris, cela seul règne dans la nature, mais c’est d’un dur effrayant à attraper. [...] Vous n’envoyez pas à Marseille, eh bien, ni moi non plus. Je ne veux plus envoyer, d’autant que je n’ai pas de cadres, que ça fait faire des dépenses qu’il vaut mieux les consacrer à peindre. C’est pour moi que je dis ça, et puis merde pour le Jury.”
Guillemet adds: “Cézanne a fait des peintures très belles. Il refait blond et je suis sûr que vous serez content de 3 ou 4 toiles qu’il va rapporter — [...] Vous voilà à Paris et je pense que votre femme s’y trouve mieux qu’à Pontoise.”

November 2
Letter from Guillemet and Cézanne, both in Aix, to Zola: “Nous avons reçu une lettre de Pissarro qui se porte bien. Vous l’avez vu du reste dernièrement.”
Guillemet describes Cézanne thus: “Son physique est plutôt embelli. Ses cheveux sont longs. Sa figure respire la santé et sa tenue fait sensation sur les cours.”

End of the year
Pissarro participates “chaque semaine”, with Bazille?, Solari, and Georges Pajot, in the “réceptions du jeudi” held by Zola in the apartment he occupies at 10, rue de Vaugirard, Paris.

December 10
Zola reports to Valabrègue: “Pissarro ne fait rien et attend Guillemet.”
1867

Pissarro and his family return to live in Pontoise, most likely after the winter.

**February 19**
Zola writes to Valabrègue: “Paul [Cézanne] travaille beaucoup, il a déjà fait plusieurs toiles, et il rêve des tableaux immenses”.


**March 30**
Bazille composes a letter addressed to the count of Nieuwerkerke, superintendant of the Beaux-Arts, petitioning for the restoration of the Salon des Refusés. The right-hand side of one page bears the signatures of “Claude Monet, A. Renoir, C. Pissarro, A. Sisley, A. Guillemet, F. Oller, J. Le Cœur”, and Latouche, and, on the left-hand side those, most notably, of E. Manet and Martin.


The petition is dropped off at M. Latouche’s, an art dealer, in order to collect new signatures.

Article by Castagnary in *la Liberté*, April 1, 1867.

Five pages of signatures willed eventually be adjoined under the headline, “Approuvé par MM.”, including those of C. Daubigny, Karl Daubigny, E. Béliard, Bracquemond, C. Corot, and J.-B. Jongkind.

Archives du Louvre, Salon de 1867.

**[April 2]**
Bazille informs his mother that his work was not accepted by the Salon, and that a petition is circulating in favor of an exhibition of rejected paintings. He has decided to send nothing more to the Jury. “Ce que je vous dis là, une douzaine de jeunes gens de talent le pensent comme moi. Nous avons donc résolu de louer chaque année un grand atelier où nous exposerons nos œuvres en aussi grand nombre que nous le voudrons. Nous inviterons les peintres qui nous plaisent à nous envoyer des tableaux. Courbet, Corot, Diaz, Daubigny et beaucoup d’autres que vous ne connaissez peut-être pas, nous ont promis d’envoyer des tableaux, et approuvent beaucoup notre idée. Avec ces gens-là et Monet, qui est plus fort qu’eux tous, nous sommes sûrs de réussir.”

April 4

ZOLA WRITES TO VALABREGUE: “QUELQUES PETITES NOUVELLES POUR FINIR: PAUL [CEZANNE] EST REFUSE, GUILLEMET EST REFUSE, TOUS SONT REFUSES; LE JURY, IRRITE DE MON “SALON”, A MIS A LA PORTE TOUS CEUX QUI MARCHENT DANS LA NOUVELLE VOIE.”


April 8

Article appears in the Figaro criticizing the two paintings by “Sésame” (Cézanne) rejected at the Salon.

F. M. (Francis Magnard), le Figaro, April 8, 1867, citing an article by Arnold Mortier that appeared in le Nain jaune; Jacques Lethève, Impressionnistes et symbolistes devant la presse, 1959, p. 45.

April 9

Written request for a hearing from Nieuwerkerke, dated and signed by Pinel, Chataud, Bureau, Grosclaude — names found among those in the petition of March 30 — to start a new appeal “pour lui remettre une petition”. On April 11, Nieuwerkerke responds by saying that he will receive them, but that an exhibition of rejected paintings will not be renewed. The delegates for the painters will write to him again on April 13 so that he may set a date for the hearing.

Archives du Louvre, Salon de 1867; mentioned in Hommage à Claude Monet, 1980, note n° 4 p. 55.

April 12

Publication in le Figaro of an excerpt by Zola from a letter addressed to M. Magnard, editor, defending Cézanne and supporting the painters’ petition: “D’ailleurs, il ne tient qu’à M. de Nieuwerkerke que le Grog au vin et Ivresse soient exposés [les toiles de Cézanne refusées].”


April 13

A new petition is written by Chataud, dated and signed by himself, Bazille, Pissarro, Monet, Guillemet, Legrand, Renoir and others, calling for “le droit d’appel devant l’opinion publique” from Nieuwerkerke.

Archives du Louvre, Salon de 1867; mentioned in Hommage à Claude Monet, 1980, note n° 4 p. 55.

April 24
Article appears in *la Liberté*, miscellaneous section, announcing that “La caisse des Associations populaires rue Saint-Martin, 141, lance une souscription [...] pour l’organisation d’un Salon des Refusés.”


**April 27**
Article published in *la Presse*: “M. de Nieuwerkerke, tout en refusant son adhésion à l’idée d’une contre-exposition, a donné aux artistes délégués de sérieuses espérances de réforme dans les prochaines élections du jury.”


**April 28**
Article announcing that “M. de Nieuwerkerke a reçu en audience particulière MM. Grosclaude, Chataud et Pi[n]el, délégués des artistes peintres dont les tableaux ont été refusés”, and that Nieuwerkerke has refused them a counter-exhibition.
On May 5, a similar news item appears in the same *Chronique*, and a brief article reminds the rejected painters that “une souscription est ouverte à la caisse des associations populaires, rue Saint-Martin, 141, dans le but de leur donner le moyen d’exposer leurs œuvres.”


[May]
Bazille informs his parents that the painters, able to raise only 2 500 F, must renounce their project.


**May 20**
Monet notifies Bazille that Courbet will soon open a solo exhibition. “Son intention est de conserver sa bâtisse où il a déjà fait faire un atelier pour lui au premier; et l’année prochaine quand on le voudrait, il louerait la salle à ceux qui voudraient y faire une exposition.”


Monet undoubtedly must have thought that their group could rent the pavilion from Courbet.
1868

[Until March]
Pissarro and his family live in Paris at 108, bd Rochechouart (in conformity with the address printed in the catalogue of the Salon of 1868, and with Pissarro’s letter of October 11, 1868).

January 19
Death of Emma Isaacson, half-sister of Pissarro, in London.


[From January 20 to around the 29]
Pissarro returns to London, where he stays at the home of the Isaacsons. He asks his brother to intercede with their mother so that she will provide Julie with a monthly pension. Rachel Pissarro’s response remains unknown.


[February 13]
While studying under Chesneau, Cézanne registers himself as a copyist in the Louvre. His card, n° 278, bears his address in Paris: 22, rue Beautreillis.


[April 2]
Solari informs Zola that he has found “au Salon [avant l’exposition] Pissarro, Guillemet, enfin, tous les Batignolles [nom donné au groupe d’après l’adresse du café Guerbois]. Ils trouvent le tableau de Cézanne très bien. Depuis j’ai vu Cézanne qui m’a dit que le dernier était encore mieux.” Nevertheless, Cézanne will be rejected while Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Bazille, Renoir, Degas, Berthe Morisot, and Manet will be accepted to the Salon.


April 2
Baptism of Jean (born August 8, 1867), son of Claude and Camille Monet, in the église Sainte-Marie des Batignolles in Paris. Julie Vellay is designated the godmother, Frédéric Bazille, the godfather. The address of Julie, inscribed on the baptism certificate, is the same one as the infant’s parents: 8, impasse Saint-Louis.

**April 27**
Marion discloses to Zola his opinion of Cézanne: “Son nom est trop connu déjà et trop d’idées révolutionnaires en art s’attachent à lui pour que les peintres membres du jury faiblissent un seul instant. Et j’admire la persistance et le sang-froid avec lequel Paul m’écrivit: ‘Eh bien! on leur en foutra comme cela dans l’éternité avec encore plus de persistance.’”
Letter from Marion, Marcheille, to Morstatt, dated; Alfred Barr, “Cézanne, d’après les lettres de Marion à Morstatt, 1865-1868”, 1937, p. 48.

**[April]**
Daubigny, is again a member of the jury of the Salon this year, announces to Pissarro: “Mon cher Pisaro [sic], vos deux tableaux sont reçus.”
Letter from Daubigny to Pissarro, undated; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

**[From April to October]**
The Pissarro family resides in Pontoise. Camille keeps his pied-à-terre in Paris at 108, bd Rochechouart (according to the catalogue of the Salon).
According to the letter JBH 5, dated October 11, 1867.

**May 1-June 20**
Pissarro exhibits at the Salon:
“PISSARO [sic] (CAMILLE), né à Saint-Thomas (Antilles)."  
*Boulevard Rochechouart, 108.*  
**2015** — La côte de Jallais. [PV 55]  
**2016** — L’hermitage. [PV 52 ?]

**[From May 16 to around mid-December]**
Cézanne stays at Aix on the property of his parents at the Jas de Bouffan.

**May 19**
Long and laudatory review of Pissarro by Zola.

May 20
Zola asks Duret: “Avez-vous vu les tableaux de Camille Pissarro, et êtes-vous de mon avis?”


May 29
Publication of an article by Castagnary that favorably mentions Pissarro and emphasizes the efforts of Daubigny to make the new painters accepted.


June 1
Another review by Zola with a few complimentary lines on Pissarro.


June 9
Positive review of Pissarro by Odilon Redon.


Astruc (“Salon de 1868”, l’Etendard, August 5, 1868) and Jean Ravenel (Alfred Sensier) publish good reviews of Pissarro.

[August 7]


[Shortly after October 11]
Pissarro and his family are living in Paris at 23, rue Chappe (according to the October 11 letter).

[End of December]
Piette writes to Pissarro: “Vous avez l’air satisfait de vos tableaux de cette année, c’est bon signe et sans doute que vous finirez bien par avoir du succès.”

Ludovic Piette (1826-1878), a friend of Pissarro who lives at Montfoucault, commune de Melleray ?(Mayenne), studied at the Suiss Academy around 1860 during the same period that Pissarro, Cézanne and Monet were there. Did Piette meet Pissarro there? The only portrait of Piette by Pissarro (PV 25) dates back to 1861.

[In the course of the year]
Along with Guillaumin, Pissarro paints some awnings and shop signs. A painting by Guillaumin depicts Pissarro at work (*Camille Pissarro en train de peindre des volets*, undated, musée municipal de Limoges).
Guillaumin: “Je quitte la rue de Londres [Compagnie d’Orléans], pour ne faire que de la peinture, essai de peindre des stores pour vivre, ça ne va pas. Temps durs. 1867-68, impossible de vivre, et je déteste la bohème.”
1869

Beginning of the year
Probably at this time of the year Cézanne gets to know Hortense Fiquet, age 19, who becomes his companion.
John Rewald, Cézanne et Zola, 1936, p. 67.

[In the spring, before May 3]
Pissarro and his family settle in Louveciennes, maison Retrou, 22, route de Versailles, in a house still standing at the same address.
Letters JBH 7 and 12.

May 1-June 20
Pissarro exhibits at the Salon:
“PISSARO [sic] (CAMILLE), né à Saint-Thomas (Antilles).
Chez M. Carpentier, boulevard Montmartre, 8.
1950 — L’ermitage.”

May 3
Pissarro writes to the administration des Beaux-Arts to protest his painting’s bad placement in the Salon.
Letter JBH 7, from Pissarro, Louveciennes, dated.

In the course of the year
The meetings at the café Guerbois continue — they will cease during the war — with the occasional participation of Pissaro as well as that of (according to Monet) Cézanne, Bazille, Degas, Fantin-Latour, Manet, Monet himself, Renoir, and Sisley.

Monet recalls: “Cézanne venait parfois au café Guerbois où notre groupe se réunissait après la guerre de 70. Il était toujours vêtu à la bonne franquette, plutôt négligé, et portait, pour retenir son pantalon, une ceinture rouge comme les ouvriers... [...] ‘—Manet, par contre, ne se montrait qu’en gentleman, ganté, la canne aux doigts, le haut de forme sur la tête. En entrant Cézanne jetait un coup d’œil méfiant sur l’assemblée. Puis, écartant sa veste, d’un mouvement de hanche très zingueur, il remontait son pantalon et rajustait ostensiblement la ceinture rouge à son flanc. Mais en la présence de Manet il se découvrait et nasillait avec son rire:
“‘Je ne vous donne pas la maing, monsieur Manet, je ne me suis pas lavé depuis huit jours.’”


**July 20**

Guillemet writes to Zola for news of Cézanne, Pissarro and Monet. Guillemet inquires about Cézanne: “a-t-il terminé heureusement son tableau ? Il est temps qu’il produise selon son idée et il me tarde de lui voir prendre la place qu’il doit avoir. Que la peinture est une drôle de chose; il ne suffit pas d’être intelligent, pour bien faire. Enfin avec le temps, il arrivera, je n’en doute pas.”


During this summer Monet resides in Saint-Michel, a hamlet of Bougival, and from July to September 1869 Renoir lives in Voisins, a hamlet of Louveciennes. Among the painters of Bougival, Guillemet counts Pissarro (as he shows in his letter of December 21) and possibly also Sisley, who comes to live at Voisins around this time.

**August 28**

Guillemet responds to Zola. Pissarro has painted a “tableau pendule [...], cette colombe dans les mains de jeunes femmes vêtues simplement. [...] Ce que vous me dites de Paul [Cézanne] m’attriste en revanche beaucoup, le brave garçon doit souffrir comme un damné de tous ces essais de peinture où il se jette à corps perdu et qui ne réussissent que bien rarement, hélas.”


**September 4**

Letter from Zola to Valabrègue: “Paul [Cézanne] m’écri qu’il y viendra sur-le-champ [à Paris] si vous pouvez lui prêter deux cents francs. D’ailleurs, il ne peut rester à Aix un jour: de plus sans rentrer dans le giron de la famille.”


**December 21**

Letter from Guillemet to Zola: “Je n’ai eu aucune nouvelle de Paris depuis mon installation ici et j’ai écrit à Pissarro hier.” He sends his regards to Cézanne, Duranty and Manet.
1870

Pissarro and his family continue to reside in Louveciennes, maison Retrou. Pissarro depicts Julie in front of the façade in his painting, *la Route de Versailles à Louveciennes*, PV 96, dated 1870.

**January 7**
The American dealer George A. Lucas buys from Martin a painting by Pissarro for 20 F, *la Route de Versailles à Louveciennes, effet de neige* (Baltimore Maryland Institute).


**Around May**
Publication of an article and caricature of Cézanne in front of two of his canvases rejected by the Salon, one of which is V 88, *Portrait d’Achille Emperaire*.


**May 1-June 20**
Pissarro exhibits at the Salon:
“PISSARO [sic] (CAMILLE), né à Saint-Thomas (Colonies danoises).
A Louveciennes (Seine-et-Oise); et à Paris, chez M. Martin, rue Laffitte, 52.
2290 — Automne.
2291 — Paysage.”


According to Tabarant, the dealer Pierre Firmin Martin (1817-1891) bought these two paintings from Pissarro.

**May-June**
Favorable reviews of Pissarro by Castagnary, Théodore Duret, Jean Ravenel (Alfred Sensier), and Zacharie Astruc.


**May 30**
Théodore Duret requests from Zola an introduction to Cézanne: “J’entends parler d’un peintre nommé, je crois, Cézanne ou quelque chose d’approchant, qui serait d’Aix et dont les tableaux auraient été refusés par le jury.”

Zola responds the same day: “Je ne puis vous donner l’adresse du peintre dont vous me parlez. Il se renferme beaucoup, il est dans une période de tâtonnements, et, selon moi, il a raison de ne vouloir laisser pénétrer personne dans son atelier. Attendez qu’il se soit trouvé lui-même.”

**May 31**
Cézanne is one of the witnesses of Zola’s wedding, held at the mairie of the XVIIe arrondissement. Address: 53, rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, in Paris.
Marriage certificate, Archives de Paris.

**June 30**
Pissarro announces to Duret that he will come over to Duret’s for lunch the next day, and that he will bring a small picture with him (PV 83, vente Duret of March 19, 1894, n° 32).
Letter JBH 8, from Pissarro, Paris, to Duret, dated.

**July 19**
The French Empire declares war on Prussia.

**August 27**
Piette apprises Pissarro of travel conditions to his place at Montfoucault.

**September 9**
Pissarro’s mother begs him not to engage against the Prussians: “Je te prie de ne pas t’exposer si j’ai absolument besoin de toi je t’enverrai une dépêche mais en attendant reste bien tranquille où tu es.”
Letter from Rachel Pissarro, Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, to Camille (written by Amélie Isaacson, niece of Pissarro), dated; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

[Shortly before September 13]
Faced with the advancement of the Prussians, the Pissarro family quickly leaves Louveciennes — before September 13, according to the September 17 letter of Louis Estruc, Julie’s brother-in-law — to take refuge in the house of Ludovic Piette at Montfoucault. They leave behind their furniture and works of art, including a few canvases left in their care by Monet, undoubtedly because he feared their conditional seizure by judicial order. (cf. Monet’s December 21, 1871 letter to Pissarro).


September 17
Louis Estruc acknowledges his receipt on the 14th of Pissarro’s letter, in which Pissarro announces his family’s relocation to Montfoucault. Estruc has shown the letter to Béliard. He also provides news of the Prussian advance and of hardships in Paris.


September 30
Additional advice of Mme Pissarro to her son: “Tu me donnes un bel espoir en parlant comme tu le fais. Ainsi je ne dois plus te revoir. Je t’en prie, mon cher fils, ne fais pas d’imprudences pense que j’ai assez de chagrin tu n’es pas français [il est Danois] aussi ne va pas t’exposer inutilement.”


October 10
The day before, Rachel Pissarro has consented to the marriage of her son Camille to Julie Vellay (whose name she does not pronounce/whose name she refuses to pronounce) (c’est sans doute à cause de la haine? où c’est par hasard?), but she changes her mind and suggests that he secretly get married in London. Pissarro and Vellay do not marry until June 14, 1871, at Croydon.


October 21
Birth of Adèle Emma Pissarro, at Montfoucault. The Pissarro family has two other children: Lucien (born on June 20, 1863), and Jeanne Rachel, born May 18, 1865. Birth certificate n° 27, mairie de Melleray.

Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, Arbre généalogique de la famille de Camille Pissarro, 1939; unpublished, association des Amis de Camille Pissarro, Pontoise.

**November 5**
Death of Adèle Emma Pissarro at Montfoucault. Death certificate n° 34, mairie de Melleray.

**November 18**
Cézanne — who has been at Aix for a few months (since June 7) — is elected to the supervisory committee of the municipal school of drawing.


**[Until autumn 1871]**
Cézanne is living in Midi, first at Aix, then at L’Estaque, where he resides with Hortense Fiquet until around March 1871, and then probably at Aix again.


He will say to Vollard: “Ecoutez un peu, monsieur Vollard! Pendant la guerre, j’ai beaucoup travaillé sur le motif à l’Estaque.”


**[Shortly after December 3]**
Arrival in London of Pissarro and his family.

Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, *Curriculum vitae*; unpublished, association des Amis de Pissarro, Pontoise.

It is likely that they reside first in Lower Norwood, moving to Upper Norwood later.

1871

January 8
Piette informs Pissarro of events from the war. He adds: “Vous n’osez pas montrer votre peinture ? J’ai toujours eu cette appréhension, l’Angleterre a Rosa Bonheur pour idole. Que dire après cela ?”


January 21
The art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922), also in refuge at London, writes to Pissarro:
“Vous m’avez apporté un charmant tableau et je regrette de ne pas avoir été à ma galerie pour vous faire mes compliments de vive voix. Dites-moi donc, je vous prie, le prix que vous en voulez et soyez assez aimable pour m’en envoyer d’autres dès que vous le pourrez. Il faut que je vous en vende beaucoup ici. Votre ami Claude Monet m’a demandé votre adresse. Il ne savait pas que vous étiez en Angleterre. Il demeure lui-même Bath Place n° 1, Kensington.”


Shortly after this first contact, Durand-Ruel will buy at least two paintings from Pissarro.

Letter JBH 9, from Pissarro to Duret, undated.


First months of the year
In London, Pissarro visits the National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum with Monet.

Letter from Pissarro to Wynford Dewhurst, dated November 6, 1902;


Pissarro and his family move to Chatham Terrace, Palace Road, in Upper Norwood, Surrey (according to a June 5 letter by Pissarro).
January 29
Félicie Estruc informs her sister Julie Vellay that, according to a newspaper article, “les batteries prussiennes se sont chargé de détruire” Vellay’s house at Louveciennes.

Letter from Félicie Estruc, Paris, to Julie, dated; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

February 22
Edouard Béliard conveys some news to Pissarro:


He does not mention Bazille’s death on November 28, 1870, in the battle of Beaune-la-Rolande, which Manet found out on February 8.


March 6
Display of a new group(ing) of works in Durand-Ruel’s first exhibition at his London gallery, The German Gallery, 168, New Bond Street. Two works by Pissarro are exhibited: n° 38, A snow effect; n° 41, View in Upper Norwood (PV 110 ?).


March 10
Félicie Estruc, having returned the day before to Louveciennes, informs Julie of her house’s devastation. M. Ollivon, a neighbor of the Pissarros, was able to save some forty paintings and a few pieces of furniture.

Letter from Félicie Estruc to her sister Julie, dated Friday the 10th; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.
Pissarro responds to Retrou, stating his intention to return to Louveciennes at the end of the month:

“Vous me dites qu’une certaine quantité de mes affaires ont été sauvées par M. Ollivon; d’après lui-même, cela n’a pas l’air d’être grand-chose, si j’en juge par mes tableaux; il a pu en sauver une quarantaine et j’en avais de douze à quinze cents, tableaux, études, croquis, le travail de vingt ans de ma vie. [...] Je n’ai plus qu’un lit qui est brisé, plus de matelas, ni sommier, pas de vaisselle, batterie de cuisine, etc., et tant de petites choses composant le ménage, mes albums, mes livres, l’outillage du métier de peintre, en fin de compte, je vois trois ou quatre gros meubles plus ou moins avariés de sauvés, c’est triste.”


March 27

The Ollivons provide “M. et Mme Pissarro” with more details on the state of their house and what they were able to save: “J’oubliais de vous dire que nous avons des tableaux très bien conservés, seulement il y en a quelques-uns que ces messieurs, crainte de se salir les pieds, avaient mis par terre dans le jardin, ça leur servait de tapis, mon mari les a ramassés, ils sont aussi chez nous.”

Letter from Mme and M. Eugène Ollivon to the Pissarros, dated; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

March 27 or 28

Pissarro and Monet submit their works to the jury of the Salon of the Royal Academy. Their paintings will be turned down.


The French painter James Tissot, in refuge at London, buys from Pissarro one of his rejected canvases.

Letter JBH 85, from Pissarro, Paris, to Duret, dated January 17, 1881.

[May, after the 9]

Pissarro responds to Duret with a letter. Up to this point he has only sold two paintings, and both of them to Durand-Ruel. “Oui, mon cher Duret, je ne resterai pas ici, et ce n’est qu’à l’étranger que l’on sent combien la France est belle, grande, hospitalière, quelle différence ici, on ne recueille que le mépris, l’indifférence, et
même la grossièreté [...]. Peut-être serai-je avant peu à Louveciennes — j’y ai tout perdu, il me reste une quarantaine de tableaux sur mille cinq cents — que diable ont-ils pu faire de tout cela! des guerriers!”

Letter JBH 9, from Pissarro, “2, Chatham Terrace, Palace Road, Upper Norwood, Surrey”, to Duret, undated.

May 30
Duret informs Pissarro that he will return to London for several months to flee the horror of Paris. He wishes to buy from Pissarro one or two paintings from England, “ce qui vous plaira le mieux et ce qui aura le plus d’originalité et de saveur sui generis.”


June 2
Monet, having departed for the Pays-Bas, asks Pissarro to remove his two seascapes exhibited at the International Exhibition, and to resell the frames.


June 5
Pissarro responds to Duret: “J’ai peu de tableaux, trois ou quatre tout au plus, s’il y en a parmi qui puissent vous convenir je serai content de vous les vendre.” By cause of “sauvagerie”, he still hasn’t gone to see Berthel.

Letter JBH 10, from Pissarro, “2, Chatham Terrace, Palace Road, Upper Norwood, Surrey”, to Duret, dated.

June 14
Camille Pissarro and Julie Vellay get married at Croydon.

JBH, vol. 1, p. 31.

June 16
Duret compliments Pissarro on his Effet de neige and the paintings by him that Durand-Ruel has shown him. Accompanied by Berthel and Hecht, “un amateur distingué de Paris,” he will visit Pissarro the next day.


Berthel is the first known owner of Route d’Upper Norwood, PV 114.

[June 17]
Monet sends some news to Pissarro, who has been unsuccessful in selling Monet’s frames.


[Shortly before June 23]
The Pissarros return to Louveciennes to live at maison Eugène Ollivon, 24, route de Versailles.

Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, Curriculum vitae; unpublished, association des Amis de Pissarro, Pontoise.

[From autumn to the beginning of December]
Cézanne, back in Paris, lives at 5, rue de Chevreuse.

Letter from Solari to Zola; unpublished, John Rewald, Cézanne et Zola, 1936, p. 78.

November 22
Birth of Georges Henri Pissarro at Louveciennes.

Birth certificate n° 45, mairie de Louveciennes; copy of document communiquée by J. and M. Laÿ.

December 21
Monet, now an inhabitant of Argenteuil, suggests that Pissarro come see him in his Paris studio, bringing along the few canvases Monet had left in his safekeeping at Louveciennes.


1872

January 4
Birth of Paul Cézanne, son of the painter and Hortense Fiquet, in the apartment they have been occupying since the beginning of December 1871 at 45, rue Jussieu, in Paris.

Birth certificate de Paul Cézanne; Archives de Paris.

[February]
Beginning in March, according to the Archives Durand-Ruel, the dealer, Durand-Ruel, buys regularly from Pissarro. By the end of the year, he will have paid Pissarro a sum of 5 900 F in eleven installments.


[During the first months of the year]
The amateur broker of art Achille Arosa (1818-1883) buys from Pissarro *le Pavé de Louveciennes*, PV 74 and commissions four overdoors from him, each for 100 F: *le Printemps*, PV 183; *l’Été*, PV 184; *l’Automne*, PV 185; and *l’Hiver*, PV 186. The commission probably dates back to the first months of the year, since *l’Hiver* represents a view of Louveciennes.

Letter JBH 660, from Pissarro to Lucien, dated May 9, 1891.

[February 18]
Dr Gachet and the painter Amand Gautier call on Pissarro two days after his return to Louveciennes. The doctor takes care of the young Georges.

Letter JBH 15, from Pissarro, Louveciennes, to Dr Gachet, dated Saturday morning.

Date of visit according to Paul Gachet, *Lettres impressionnistes au Dr Gachet et à Murer*, Grasset, 1957, p. 25.


According to Paul Gachet, son of Dr Gachet, the doctor first encountered Pissarro in the studio of Gautier. Dr Gachet counts Rachel Pissarro among his patients from around 1865.


February 23
Monet transmits a payment of 100 F to Pissarro for a painting purchased by his brother Léon Monet. He acknowledges the receipt of his own canvases previously left behind in Pissarro’s care.


[Around April 8]
The Pissarro family moves to a place in Pontoise, 16, rue Mallebranche, owned by Gateau. The current address is 18, rue Revert.

Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, *Curriculum vitae*; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

Map of alignment of rue Mallebranche, around 1860; Archives départementales du Val-d’Oise.

April 9
Dr Gachet buys a house at Auvers, rue Rémy (present address: 78, rue du Docteur- Gachet).

Paul Gachet, Deux Amis des Impressionnistes, 1956, p. 50 and 53.

[Sometime in the spring, after March 27]
Cézanne, Hortense Fiquet and their child come to meet Pissarro at Saint-Ouen- l’Aumône, near Pontoise, hôtel du Grand-Cerf, 59, rue Basse.

Information communiquée to John Rewald by Paul Gachet; John Rewald, Cézanne et Zola, 1936, p. 79.

Cézanne must have arrived sometime after March 27, since a letter by Achille Emperaire, dated from this day, announces that he stops living with Cézanne in Paris.


April 28
The sculptor A. Rossi and the painter L. Authiès ask Pissarro to sign a petition in favor of an exposition des refusés.


June 18
Petition addressed to Jules Simon, minister of Instruction publique, des Cultes et des Beaux-Arts, calling for a Salon des Refusés. There are twenty-six signatories, among whom Pissarro (by proxy) and Cézanne. The request is turned down.


September 3
Guillemet, who has not seen Pissarro for a long time, renews contact with him:
“A peine installé à Paris, j’ai fait la rue Laffitte et visité les marchands, Dur. Ruel y compris. Et ce que je voulais vous dire c’est que j’ai vu partout de vous des notes charmantes et aussi bien que possible, et que j’ai eu envie de vous le dire tout de suite. […]J’ai donc vu chez Dur. Ruel, surtout des peintures claires, variées, vivantes en un mot et qui m’ont fait le plus grand plaisir. Vu aussi des Monet et Sisley très bien, mais moins dans l’intimité de la nature peut être. […]J’ai vu à Paris Manet, Duranty et Zola. Nous avons beaucoup parlé de vous”.

Letter from A. Guillemet, 20, avenue de Clichy, to Pissarro, dated “3 sept. 1872”; communiqué by Alexia de Buffèvent, Wildenstein Institute.
Pissarro invites Guillemet to Pontoise.

“Béliard est toujours auprès de nous, il fait des études à Pontoise, très sérieuses, ce sera une personnalité. Guillaumin vient passer quelques jours chez nous, il travaille toujours le jour à la peinture et le soir à ses fosses, quel courage! Notre Cézanne nous donne des espérances et j’ai vu des peintures; j’ai chez moi une peinture d’une vigueur, d’une force remarquables. Si, comme je l’espère, il reste quelque temps à Auvers où il va demeurer, il étonnera bien des artistes qui se sont hâtés trop tôt de le condamner. Enfin, mon cher Guillemet, il ne manquerait que vous; vos voyages terminés, vous nous feriez plaisir en venant nous voir, cela donnera un peu de vie à notre Pontoise.”

Letter JBH 18, from Pissarro, Paris, to Guillemet, dated.

Pissarro, about Cézanne, reminiscing the time they spent together:

“Ils [les critiques] ne se doutent pas que Cézanne a subi des influences comme nous tous et que cela en somme ne retire rien de ses qualités; ils ne savent pas que Cézanne a subi d’abord l’influence de Delacroix, Courbet, Manet et même Legros, comme nous tous; il a subi mon influence à Pontoise et moi la sienne. Tu te rappelles les sorties de Zola et Béliard à ce propos; ils croyaient qu’on inventait la peinture de toute pièce et que l’on était original quand on ne ressemblait à personne. Ce qu’il y a de curieux c’est que dans cette exposition de Cézanne chez Vollard on voit la parenté qu’il y a dans certains paysages d’Auvers, Pontoise et les miens. Parbleu, nous étions toujours ensemble! mais ce qu’il y a de certain, chacun gardait la seule chose qui compte, “sa sensation”... ce qui serait facile à démontrer... sont-ils assez niais!...”


Joachim Gasquet attributes these comments to Cézanne:

“Pissarro a eu une énorme influence sur moi. Mais j’ai voulu faire de l’impressionnisme quelque chose de solide et de durable comme l’art des musées. [...] Mais une tache verte, écoutez un peu, ça suffit pour nous donner un paysage, comme un ton de chair pour nous traduire un visage, nous donner une figure humaine, oui. Ce qui fait que nous sortons peut-être tous de Pissarro. Il a eu la veine de naître aux Antilles, là il a appris le dessin sans maître. Il m’a raconté tout ça. En 1865 déjà il éliminait le noir, le bitume, la terre de Sienne et les ocres. C’est un fait. Ne peins jamais qu’avec les trois couleurs primaires et leurs dérivés immédiats, me disait-il. C’est lui, oui, le premier impressionniste. L’impressionnisme, quoi ? c’est le mélange optique des couleurs, comprenez-vous ? La division des tons sur la toile et la reconstitution dans la rétine. Il fallait que nous passions par là.”

In 1904, Cézanne will say to Emile Bernard:

“J’ai compris lorsque je rencontrai Monet et Pissaro [sic] qui eux s’étaient débarrassés de tout ce bagage, qu’il ne fallait demander au passé que l’enseignement de la Peinture. Ils avaient comme moi l’enthousiasme du grand romantique; mais au lieu de se laisser prendre par ses vastes machines, ils ne recherchaient en lui que les bénéfices du coloris d’où devait sortir une nouvelle application de la palette. Pissarro a fait la nature comme personne, quant à Monet, je n’ai jamais rencontré un pareil metteur en place, une facilité si prodigieuse à saisir le vrai... L’imagination, c’est très beau; mais il faut avoir les reins solides; moi, au contact des impressionnistes, j’ai compris que je devais redevenir un élève du monde, me refaire étudiant, tout simplement. Je n’ai pas plus imité Pissaro et Monet que les grands du Louvre. J’ai tenté une œuvre à moi, une œuvre sincère, naïve, selon mes moyens et ma vision.”


In 1904, Cézanne will write to Emile Bernard: “Jusqu’à quarante ans j’ai vécu en bohème, j’ai perdu ma vie. Ce n’est que plus tard, quand j’ai connu Pissarro, qui était infatigable, que le goût du travail m’est venu.”

Emile Bernard, Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne, une conversation avec Cézanne, 1926, p. 35.

Similar comments reported by Joachim Gasquet in Cézanne, 1926, p. 189.

September 21

Pissarro returns to Pontoise from Paris in order to receive Guillaumin. In his letter, he invites Mme Zola to come find a doe rabbit.

Letter JBH 19, from Pissarro, Paris, to Zola, dated.

It appears that Guillaumin made two works, both dated September 1872, at the home of Dr Gachet: an engraving, le Pont de Bercy, with the mark of a cat inspired by the doctor; and a canvas, Nature morte; fleurs, faïence, livres (musée d’Orsay, Paris), wherein the fabric, borrowed from the doctor, is the same one that appears in Cézanne’s Bouquet au dahlia jaune (musée d’Orsay, Paris).

November 29

Sisley offers to give Pissarro one of his canvases from Argenteuil. He also suggests, along with Manet and Monet, to invite Durand-Ruel to dinner.

Letter from Sisley, Voisins, to Pissarro, dated; vente Archives de Camille Pissarro, November 21, 1975, n° 183.
None of the paintings by Sisley will appear in the 1928 or 1929 sales of the Pissarro collection.

[December 4]
Pissarro, Sisley, Monet and Manet invite Zola to come dine with them at the Café anglais.


December 11
Cézanne, having missed his train, spends the night at the Pissarros in Pontoise while Pissarro is in Paris.


[December 18]
Piette asks Pissarro whether he and his group of painters have decided to submit their works to the jury of the next Salon, with the end of complying with the jury’s decision.

Letter from Piette to Pissarro, undated; JBH, Mon cher Pissarro, 1985, p. 82-84.

[End of the year]
Cézanne and his family leave Saint-Ouen-l’Aumône and Paris, to live at rue Rémy in Auvers-sur-Oise, near the home of Dr Gachet, about three miles from the Pissarro’s. In his letter of September 3 to Guillemet, Pissarro indicates that Cézanne “va demeurer” at Auvers. A painting by Louis Van Ryssel (pseudonym for Paul Gachet) depicts the house of Cézanne: Maison habitée par Cézanne à Auvers en 1873, 1905. P. Gachet, Deux Amis des Impressionnistes, 1956, fig. 33.
The house still stands at 66, rue Rémy (present address).

Cézanne had met Dr Gachet in 1858 while the doctor was visiting Auguste Cézanne, the father of Paul, at Aix. de la part d’une connaissance commune.

P. Gachet, Deux Amis des Impressionnistes, 1956, p. 28.
Cézanne borrows a painting from Pissarro, Louveciennes (PV 123), to copy (V 153).

Pissarro recommends that his cousin, collector Alfred Nunès, go and see Sisley and Monet.
Document unpublished from the vente Archives de Camille Pissarro, hôtel Drouot, November 21, 1975, lot n° 3; JBH, vol. 1, p. 32.
1873

Beginning of the year
Cézanne, Guillaumin and Dr Gachet take a hike in the vallée de la Bièvre, during the course of which Cézanne (MM 3) and the doctor engrave an etching.


[Around 1873]
Daubigny, living in Auvers, meets Cézanne: “Je viens de voir au bord de l’Oise une pochade extraordinaire, dit-il à un ami, c’est d’un jeune, d’un inconnu: un certain Cézanne!”


A peasant from Auvers reports: “Monsieur, j’ai vu bien souvent les tableaux de MM. Cézanne et Pissarro. M. Pissarro, en travaillant, piquait (et mon paysan faisait le geste) et M. Cézanne plaquait (autre geste).”


While Cézanne and Pissarro were painting together in Auvers:
“Cézanne était assis sur l’herbe, sans doute attendant l’heure de son effet et papa peignait un peu plus loin, un paysan qui passait s’approcha de papa et lui dit: peignaient tous deux dans les environs d’Auvers, Pissarro vit s’approcher un paysan qui lui dit: ‘Il s’la foule pas, vot’ ouvrier!’”


Cézanne — like Pissarro — has his things delivered by a grocer named Armand Rondest who, under the insistence of Dr Gachet, ends up accepting some pictures as payment. Four Pissarros and three Cézannes will appear in the vente Rondest, September 8, 1929, at L’Isle-Adam: by Pissarro, PV 211, 219, 492 and *la Pompe à feu*; by Cézanne, V 134 (*la Maison du père Bernard*), *Paysage boisé, Bouquet de zinnias (ou coréopsis)*. One Guillaumin is also sold, *Quai à la neige à Bercy*.


Paul Gachet, unpublished text; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

Pissarro presents one of his canvases to a teacher of Pontoise, Charles Roulleau, probably PV 433.

Paul Gachet, unpublished text; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise
Cézanne works in the house of Dr Gachet. The house includes an atelier, for which he suggests the creation of a rooflight facing the north. There he paints some still lifes, notably: V 179, 180, 183, 185, 189, 216, *Nature morte au vase d’Urbino* (V p. 347) and *Bouquet de dahlia jaune* (musée d’Orsay).


**January 31**

Duret, upon return from a long trip to the United States and Asia, proposes to buy a large painting from Pissarro at about the month of April. “Il me manque un grand tableau de Pissarro et je sais qu’il faut se hâter avant que ça ne soit aussi cher que les Corot et les Hobbema.”


**February 2**

Pissarro responds to Duret that he would be very interested in hearing his account of Japan, “ce pays extraordinaire, si curieux d’aspect, et surtout si artiste.” He admits that he and his painter friends are beginning to make a “trouée” thanks to Durand-Ruel. He intends to show Duret some “études hardies”.

Letter JBH 20, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Théodore Duret, erroneously dated February 2, 1870.

**March**

Durand-Ruel buys three paintings from Pissarro for relatively high sums: two for 1000 F each and one for 2 250 F. After March 1872, the account books belonging to Durand-Ruel are incomplete and the titles of the works that he buys remain unspecified.


Within a span of two years, from January 1871 to March 1873, Durand-Ruel bought thirty canvases from Pissarro for a total of 11 400 F. Throughout the year of 1873, he will pay 5300 F for paintings by Pissarro.


**In the course of the year**

It appears that by 1881, Tanguy was only able to sell three of Pissarro’s canvases. During that same period, Pissarro will buy from Tanguy 3 313 F’ worth of colored paints, according to Janine Bailly Herzberg (or 2 413 F’ worth from 1874 to 1880, according to Shikes and Harper).

The first payment made by Cézanne to Tanguy, 10 F, appears to date back to August 5, 1873. Then, following this payment, 10 F on April 5, 1875, 20 F on May 15, 1875, 20 F again in May 1875, 52.50 F on March 20, 1876, 50 F on October 26, 1877, 480 F throughout the year of 1879, and 200 F on February 15, 1880. Tanguy will sell a painting by Cézanne on October 25, November 1 and December 30, 1875, for 50 F each, on March 30 and September 20, 1876, for 50 F each; and in 1884 and 1885, for, respectively, 200 and 150 F each.


**[April 19]**
Duret transmits to his cousin Etienne Baudry, an amateur of art, a letter of recommendation addressed to Pissarro, in which he writes: “Je vous fais compliment de votre tableau des Alsaciens-Lorrains; mais c’est encore trop nouveau et trop hardi pour les moutons de Panurge et les bourgeois.”


*Vente Tableaux modernes [...] offerts par l’Union philanthropique et fraternelle des Alsaciens-Lorrains émigrés en Algérie*, April 18 and 19, 1873 (Lugt 33909).

**April 22**
Monet invites Alfred Nunès, cousin of Pissarro, to have lunch with him on April 27, hoping that Pissarro will come, too. He mentions the plan for their future society of artists: “Vous [Pissarro] me direz si vous avez vu Béliard, si nous sommes en mesure de nous réunir pour terminer.

“Je suis allé à Rouen; j’ai aussi un souscripteur, et qui ne tiendra pas de place aux expositions. C’est mon frère [Léon].

“Décidément, tout le monde trouve cela bien, il n’y a que Manet contre.”


**Starting from 1873**
Painters and writers hold meetings at the café de la Nouvelle Athènes at 9, place Pigalle. Their meetings will cease in 1883, shortly after the death of Manet.

“Manet, Renoir, Degas y venaient presque quotidiennement. Cézanne n’y faisait que de rares et courtes apparitions, d’autant plus brèves qu’il disparaissait dès qu’il voyait entrer quelqu’un qui lui déplaisait.”


**April 24**

Pissarro receives a cardboard box of thank you notes for his contribution to the vente des Alsaciens-Lorrains.

Printed cardboard box, Paris, dated; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

**April 26**

Duret sends 500 F to Pissarro for the purchase of a picture.

“Un paysage sans âme, sans sentiment, n’est pas un paysage, c’est une nature morte. Continuez donc cette voie sans faire de concessions aux bourgeois, et sans trop vous préoccuper de Monet et de Sisley qui frisent un peu le dilettantisme, et vous irez loin. Vous serez peut-être plus de temps à arriver à la grande renommée auprès du grand public, mais cela n’en viendra que plus sûrement en son temps.

“Je voudrais bien cet été que vous me fassiez des blés murs, jaunes et fort ensoleillés. Je ne sais pourquoi les peintres ont si rarement traité ce sujet.”


**[End of April or beginning of May]**

Piette writes to Pissarro, acknowledging the latter’s absorption in the plan for a society. He himself is scarcely favorable to the project, judging it useful but impossible to realize (he mistrusts painters for their general fickleness). He would have preferred that the society be restricted to those few painters of talent who are friends of Pissarro.


**May 2**

Pissarro thanks Duret for his encouragement and for the 500 F sent in payment for *l’Inondation* (Hartford, The Wadsworth Atheneum). He defends the work by Monet, pointing out Daubigny’s recent declaration to him that the Jury of the Salon made no sense at all.

Letter JBH 21, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.
May 5
Article published by Paul Alexis supporting the establishment of an “association” of artists.

May 7
Monet writes to Alexis, thanking him in the name of the group of painters gathered at Monet’s place.

May 11
Publication of an article by Ernest Chesneau that makes a reference to Pissarro.

May 12
Paul Alexis publishes the letter by Monet. He adds this comment: “Nous faisons donc des vœux pour la réussite du projet dont M. Claude Monet nous parle. Nous savons déjà qu’il aura avec lui plusieurs artistes de grand mérite, MM. croit savoir que Monet aura avec lui ‘plusieurs artistes de grand mérite’: Pissarro, Jongkind, Sisley, Béliard, Armand Gautier, Guillaumin, Authier, Numa Coste, Visconti, etc.” (the names in italics refer to those who will in the end not join the forthcoming “association”).
   Paul Alexis, l’Avenir national, May 12, 1873, p. 2.

The rules of the society mentioned by Alexis are drawn from statutes written up by Pissarro, entitled, “Société des artistes peintres, dessinateurs, graveurs, etc., de Paris.”

June 16
Piette maintains to Pissarro his opposition to the plan for a society. On a different note, he rejoices at the prospect of Pissarro soon sending him the promised portrait of Minette.
   Letter from Piette to Pissarro, dated; JBH, Mon cher Pissarro, 1985, p. 88-91.

July 5
Pissarro invites Duret and Hecht to come see the canvases that he will bring the next day to his atelier at 21, rue Berthe, à Montmartre.
   Letter JBH 22, from Pissarro, Paris, to Duret, dated.

July
Date inscribed by Gachet on the proof of an etching by Cézanne, *Entrée de ferme rue Rémý* (V 1161), engraved after the canvas *Chaumière dans les arbres, à Auvers* (V 139), which Pissarro will later own.


**August 7**
Monet, in dispute with Duret over the price of a painting (W 94), writes to Pissarro that he has decided to cancel the sale of his picture to Duret if Alfred Nunès would very much like to acquire it. Monet suggests that Pissarro tell him the response of Nunès while having lunch with him the next day.


**August 10**
Cézanne’s father sends his condolences to Dr Gachet on the death of one of his nephews. Dr. Gachet has informed him that his son, Paul, has treated him very kindly.


The doctor fights for Cézanne so that his father will consent to an increase in pension, which he eventually obtains.


**September 6**
Guillaumin writes to Dr Gachet that he hopes to see him soon at Auvers. “J’aimerais bien avoir votre avis et ceux de Pissarro et de Paul” on his recent studies.

Letter from Guillaumin to Dr Gachet, dated; *Lettres impressionnistes*, 1957, p. 65-68.

**September**
Date of an etching by Cézanne, *Tête de femme* (V 1160), engraved at the home of Dr Gachet.


**September 12**
Monet invites Pissarro to come visit him the next day so that they may further develop the statutes of their future society. Renoir will not be there.


**September 17**
Duret asks Pissarro, more than he would like, à son tour to “servir d’intermédiaire” in his dispute with Monet, since it was Pissarro who had introduced them.  

**September 20**
Since Monet affirms to Pissarro that he is in the right, Duret states that he will keep his promise and pay the requested price. He adds: “J’ai reçu le petit tableau [PV 213], je le trouve très réussi.”  

**September 23**
Monet informs Pissarro of the death of his father-in-law. Monet asks Pissarro to urge Duret to make his payment.  

[**Around the end of September**]
Pissarro sends to Piette the portrait of Minette.  
Letter from Piette to Pissarro, dated October 1 or 7, 1873; JBH, *Mon cher Pissarro*, 1985, p. 92-94.

**October 11**
Pissarro tells Dr Gachet — although Cézanne must have already informed him — that his baby and daughter Jeanne are sick. He would like the doctor to come see them. Such worries have been preventing them from finding a new house, since the one that the doctor found for them is unsuitable. For the time being, they have found a house at the Hermitage and plan to move in on Monday, October 13.  
Letter JBH 23, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Dr Gachet, dated.

**October 13**
The Pissarros move to 26, rue de l’Hermitage (according to the letters JBH 23, 26 and 27).  
Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, *Curriculum vitae*; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

Janine Bailly-Herzberg indicates that Pissarro would have lived at 10, rue de l’Hermitage, until October 12; but the address, presented without a source, appears to be inaccurate.  
JBH, vol. 1, p. 32. (Alain Mothe’s information.)
The house at 26, rue de l’Hermitage, property of Nicolas Cassard, has become the present 54, 54 (erreur: seulement “54”?) bis, rue de l’Hermitage. The house appears in the canvases PV 56, 242, 337, 495 and in a painting located in the musée Folkwang d’Essen.

Map of the alignment of rue de l’Hermitage, vers 1860; Archives départementales du Val-d’Oise.

[October 23]
Pissarro asks Dr Gachet to come to Pontoise to see his daughter Jeanne, who is sick.
   Letter JBH 24, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Dr Gachet, dated Thursday.

[October 28]
Pissarro tells Dr Gachet that he intends in a few days to go to Auvers, where he will wait for “l’ami Cézanne qui semble nous oublier.” Duret and Baudry (cf. their letters, respectively, from December 17, 1873, and February 13, 1874) came to buy from him some paintings. They want an effet de neige. Pissarro therefore asks Gachet to send him, through the intermediary of Cézanne, the one that he had loaned him.
   Letter JBH 25, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Dr Gachet, dated Tuesday.

October 30
Pissarro reports to Dr Gachet that he came by to see him that same day, but without success. He asks him to bring him “une grande plaque cuivre”.
   Letter JBH 26, from Pissarro, Pontoise, 26, rue de l’Ermitage, to Dr Gachet, dated.

Encouraged by Dr Gachet, Pissarro takes up engraving again, following the lead of Guillaumin, Cézanne, and the doctor himself under the pseudonym Paul Van Ryssel. Each person accepts the doctor’s proposal to adopt his own particular sign: a fleurette for Pissarro (on engravings MM 7, 9, 10, 12), a “hanged man” (pendu) for Cézanne (V 1159), a cat for Guillaumin, and a duck for Van Ryssel.


October 31
Pissarro thanks Duret for sending him the account of his voyage around the world published in le Siècle. He gives him his new address at Pontoise. He then expresses regret over the dispute that occured between Duret and Monet, all the more so because he holds them both in esteem. He advises Duret to “oublier tout cela pour ne penser qu’à l’Art”.
   Letter JBH 27, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

[November 1]
Pissarro solicits from Dr Gachet additional advice for the care of his sick children.
Letter JBH 28, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Dr Gachet, dated November 1.

**November 9**
Duret, “par l’entremise de M. Pissarro”, pays Monet the 200 F that he owes him.


**December 5**
Monet informs Pissarro that he has been running around Paris the entire day in an attempt to find the five society members that they lack (in comparison with the fifteen already gathered), but without success.


The specification of twenty members also appears in a draft of statutes that belonged to Pissarro. The stipulation undoubtedly comes from the last draft, since the partial publication of the statutes, on January 17, 1874, reintegrates some excerpts completed by those in charge. A manuscript list of twenty names can also be found among the papers of Pissarro, of which the first seven are quoted here:

“(1) C. Pissaro [sic], 26, rue de l’Hermitage à Pontoise.
(2) E. Belliard [sic], 69, rue de Douai à Paris.
(3) C. Monet, à Argenteuil.
(4) Guillaumin, 13, quai d’Anjou à Paris.
(5) Renouar [sic].
(6) Sisley, route de la Princesse, Voisin [sic].
(7) Cézane [sic], rue Rémy à Auvers-sur-Oise.”


**November 3**
Opening of Durand-Ruel’s seventh exhibition in his London gallery. The catalogue includes one painting by Pissarro: *Autumn* (n° 12).


**December 6**
Duret writes to Pissarro: “Degas m’a dit qu’il avait envie de votre tableau des Alsaciens Lorrains [PV 220, d’abord acheté par Durand-Ruel]; je le lui laisse. J’ai acheté vos trois ânes avec une petite bergère dans un paysage [PV 19].”

In this way, Duret owns four pictures by Pissarro. He proposes to exchange *l’Inondation*, valued at 200 F, for a *Printemps* (PV 213), but he finds it necessary to re-work the foreground. He also advises Pissarro to resist the influence of Monet or Sisley. “Vous n’avez pas le sentiment décoratif de Sisley, ni l’œil fantastique de
Monet, mais vous avez ce qu’ils n’ont pas, un sentiment intime et profond de la nature, et une puissance de pinceau qui fait qu’un bon tableau de vous est quelque chose d’absolument assis. [...] J’irai vous faire une petite visite un de ces dimanches, et si cela était possible, je ne serais pas fâché de trouver à voir quelque chose de Cézanne chez vous. En peinture, je cherche plus que jamais les moutons à cinq pattes.”


December 8
Pissarro agrees to the request for an exchange by Duret. He adds: “Dès le moment que vous cherchez des moutons à cinq pattes, je crois que Cézanne pourra vous satisfaire, car il a des études fort étranges et vues d’une façon unique.”
Letter JBH 29, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

December 11
Monet would like to see Pissarro so they can tally up the obtained signatures.

December 16
Degas buys a Pissarro painting, Champs labourés (PV 220), for 400 F from Durand-Ruel.


December 17
Etienne Baudry, cousin of Duret, composes a letter to Pissarro suggesting that he send as payment to Pissarro a twenty-liter barrel of Cognac.

Letter from Etienne Baudry, Rochemont, près de Saintes, to Pissarro, dated; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

December 26
Pissarro apprises Duret of his trip to Paris and of the sale of some paintings to Durand-Ruel. As he plans to show Faure and Martin some more of his paintings, he hopes that he and Duret may fulfill their exchange soon (cf. December 6 and 8 letters) so that he can show them l’Inondation.
Letter JBH 30, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

December 27
Date of the statutes of the “Société Anonymous coopérative, à personnel et capital variables, entre les artistes-peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs et lithographes”. Pissarro and Monet number among the seven administrators; Renoir becomes a member of the supervisory council.

Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité, January 17, 1874, p. 19-20.
1874

January 1
Duret’s response to Pissarro: “Je vous porte les deux tableaux [l’Inondation et les Anes]. Je vous prie de me retourner les ânes après les avoir signés et datés.”

[Beginning of the year]
Pissarro completes two portraits of the thirty-five-year-old Cézanne wearing the same hat casquette and winter coat for both sittings: one portrait is an engraved etching (MM 13), the other, the famous painting (PV 293).
Cézanne tells an amateur, probably Rondest, that he is planning soon to leave Auvers for Paris. “Si vous désirez que je signe la toile dont vous m’avez parlé, veuillez la remettre chez M. Pissarro, où j’y mettrai mon nom.”
Cézanne will live at 120, rue de Vaugirard (according to the exhibition catalogue of the Société Anonymous coopérative).

In a letter of undetermined date, Cézanne explains to his parents his reason for not returning to Aix: he would not feel free afterwards to set off again. From his father, he requests a pension of two hundred francs per month.

[January]
Piette tells Pissarro that he will not participate in the Société des peintres. The statutes that Pissarro sent him appear “pleins de réticences qu’il eût mieux valu éclaircir”.
Also, Pissarro has written to Piette “que Durand[-Ruel] est fini”.
“Votre copain, Monsieur Cézanne, doit avoir porté sa tente sur les bords tant chantés de la mer bleue.” Even though Cézanne was believed to have stayed at Auvers and Paris, throughout the entire winter of 1873-74, Cézanne might have departed again to Aix or possibly to L’Estaque.
Letter from Piette to Lucien and to Pissarro, undated; JBH, Mon cher Pissarro, 1985, p. 100-104.

January 13
First sale of the Ernest Hoschedé Collection (Lugt 34426), which includes six paintings by Pissarro. The dealer Hagerman purchases all of them at relatively high prices.


[Around January]
In a letter to Pissarro, Berthe Morisot consents to participate in the exhibition.

For his part, Degas asserts to Berthe Morisot’s mother that the exhibition will have “une portée assez réaliste pour qu’on ne s’en exempt e quand on est réaliste. [...] Et puis, nous trouvons que le nom et le talent de Mlle Berthe Morisot font trop notre affaire pour avoir à nous en passer.”


Manet attempts to dissuade Berthe Morisot from joining the group, but without success.

Letter from Joseph Guichard to Mme Morisot, mother of Berthe, undated; Correspondance de Berthe Morisot avec sa famille et ses amis, edited by Denis Rouart, Quatre Chemins-Editart, Paris, 1950, p. 76.

De Nittis will write to a friend:
“Manet refused to join the société, as he believes that he can definitely make it through the ‘fournée officielle’.”

Letter from De Nittis to his friend Adriano, dated Paris, April 5, 1874 (translated from the Italian); Mary Pittaluga and Enrico Piceni, De Nittis, Bramante Editrice, Milan, 1963, p. 302.

Monet will declare to Marc Elder:
“Jamais Manet n’avait consenti à se joindre à notre groupe, à figurer dans nos expositions particulières. Au contraire, il était en coquetterie avec les officiels qui le repoussaient pourtant. La peinture de Cézanne surtout lui était antipathique. Il ne
comprenait pas son talent, du moins à cette époque, car j’aime à croire qu’il serait revenu sur son opinion comme il l’a fait tant de fois. Il avait un argument décisif quand on le pressait d’être des nôtres: “Je ne me commettrai jamais avec monsieur Cézanne!”


**January 17**
Publication of the statutes of the “Société Anonymous coopérative d’artistes-peintres, sculpteurs, etc., à Paris”.

*La Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité*, n° 3, January 17, 1874, p. 19-20;

In fact, the publication consists only of extracts of the final draft, which has never been known in its entirety. For example, the “extrait du règlement d’exposition”, printed on the last page of the catalogue, does not appear inside.

**January 25**
Fantin-Latour seems to have hostile feelings toward the painters of the Société Anonymous: Manet “a des imitateurs qui lui font tort: Monet, Pizarro, Sislai et d’autres font de la peinture si peu faite, si exagérée que c’est mauvais pour ces idées-là. Ils font des charges de lui, sans sa finesse et son naturel.”


**February 3**
Date inscribed by Pissarro on *Enfant mort* (MM n° 133), a lithograph of Jeanne — in reality sleeping, drawn on transfer paper.

**February 13**
Pissarro solicits Duret for the two hundred francs that Duret owes him (cf. letter from December 6, 1873). Indeed, Pissarro finds himself in financial straits, since Durand-Ruel has been decreasing his payments to Pissarro.

Letter JBH 33, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret.

From the middle of 1873, during a period of recession, financial difficulties constrain Durand-Ruel to dramatically cut down on acquisitions. His rate of acquisition of Pissarro paintings will diminish markedly after 1875.

During the year of 1874, Durand-Ruel will continue to buy works from Pissarro totalling 5,035 F.


February 15
Durand-Ruel will continue to buy works from Pissarro worth 5,035 F.

February 20
Pissarro seeks advice from Dr Gachet for his sick daughter Jeanne.

[End of February]
Pissarro asks Dr Gachet for additional homeopathic potions for Jeanne.

March 5
Dr Gachet asks Pissarro to come to the aid of Daumier, their neighbor from Valmondois who is losing his vision.

A few years later, Pissarro will write to his son Lucien:

A few years later, Pissarro will write to his son Lucien:

February 15
Duret sends Pissarro 200 F. The Anes is back in his ownership, and he has also purchased from Audry a very small picture, his fifth, by Pissarro: “C’est un pont avec un bateau sur une rivière”. He recommends that Pissarro exhibit at the Salon: “Je vous engage à choisir des tableaux où il y ait un sujet, quelque chose ressemblant à une composition, des tableaux pas trop frais peints, et déjà un peu faits. Si vous le désirez je mets à votre disposition mon grand printemps [PV 213] pour l’exposition [du Salon].”


Pissarro found himself much closer to Cézanne’s staunchest opposition to the Salons.

Pissarro seeks advice from Dr Gachet for his sick daughter Jeanne.

Letter JBH 34, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Dr Gachet, dated.

Pissarro asks Dr Gachet for additional homeopathic potions for Jeanne.

Letter JBH 35, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Dr Gachet, dated Saturday.

March 5
Dr Gachet asks Pissarro to come to the aid of Daumier, their neighbor from Valmondois who is losing his vision.

“Vous qui êtes un organisateur, agissez.

“Que tous les vôtres se montrent. Organisez vivement une vente dans laquelle il y aura des tableaux de vous, de Manet, de Monnet [sic], de Sisley, Piette, Degas,
Gautier, Guillaumin, Cézanne (*), et de toute la coopérative, voilà s’il en fût jamais, une belle occasion de se montrer et d’affirmer le grand principe humain, la solidarité intellectuelle. [...] (*) Mr Rouhart [sic] Latouche [?] etc."

Letter from Dr Gachet, Auvers-sur-Oise, to Pissarro; association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

Is it partly due to this request that Daumier was able to collect 10 550 F in eighteen months, from November 1875 to April 1877.


April
On the subject of Cézanne’s participation in the Société Anonyme des peintres, John Rewald publishes the following information held from Lucien Pissarro: “Pissarro, qui avait déjà triomphé des objections faites contre l’admission de Guillaumin, maintenant soutenu par Monet, plaida la cause de Cézanne avec une conviction telle que son ami fut accepté.”


April 6
Death of Jeanne Rachel Pissarro, nicknamed Minette, aged eight years and ten months, from a respiratory infection at Pontoise, 26, rue de l’Hermitage. Ludovic Piette is one of the witnesses who signs the death certificate.

Death certificate n° 77, mairie de Pontoise.

April 9
Zola sends his condolences to the Pissarros.


[April 12?]
Henri Rouart takes part in the grief of the Pissarros.


April 15-May 15
First exhibition of the Société Anonyme des artistes peintres, in a rented space in Nadar, 35, boulevard des Capucines. One hundred sixty-seven numberered entries are listed in the catalogue, of which five bis and three numbers are not attributed. There
are thirty exhibitors, among whom Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Berthe Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley. “CÉZANNE (Paul)
120, rue de Vaugirard, Paris
42. La maison du Pendu, à Auvers-sur-Oise. [V 133]
43. Une moderne Olympia. [V 225]
   Esquisse. Appartient à M. le Dr Gachet
44. Étude: Paysage à Auvers. [V 138 ?]
PISSARRO (Camille)
26, rue de l’Hermitage, à Pontoise (Seine-et-Oise)
136. Le Verger. [PV 267]
137. Gelée blanche. [PV 203]
138. Les Chataigners [sic] à Osny. [PV 236]
139. Jardin de la ville de Pontoise. [PV 231]
140. Une Matinée du mois de juin. [PV 224]”

Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc. Première Exposition 1874.

The identification of the Verger of Pissarro poses a problem. Some authors believe that it refers to the Vergers en fleurs, Louveciennes, PV 153, but this identification does not take into account the articles by Louis Leroy and Castagnary, who both discuss a canvas depicting some cabbages. A single work from around 1874 combines these two descriptive elements: Jardins potagers à l’Hermitage, PV 267, a winter landscape signed and dated 1874.

Georges Rivière:
“Renoir fit partie de la “Commission” chargée de placer les tableaux. C’était une besogne difficile et fatigante; au bout de deux jours, il resta à peu près seul pour remplir cette tâche délicate. Inutile de dire que, malgré l’impartialité qu’il apporta dans la répartition de la cimaise entre les exposants, il ne réussit pas à contenter tout le monde. Pissarro, notamment, toujours imbu de ses théories égalitaires, eût voulu qu’on procédât par un tirage au sort [c’est pourtant ce que stipule le “règlement d’exposition”] ou par un vote pour déterminer la place de chaque toile; c’était pour lui une affaire de principe. On ne l’écouta pas, heureusement.”

Georges Rivière, Renoir et ses amis, 1921, p. 44-45.

Georges Rivière:
“Parmi les artistes qui voisinaient avec Cézanne, en 1874, à la galerie Nadar, Degas était peut-être le plus acharné à le critiquer. C’était par-dessus tout la couleur des tableaux de son co-exposant qui était antipathique à Degas. Il la trouvait brutale, exagérée, déraisonnable. Tous les “coloristes” lui déplaisaient, mais Cézanne était à ses yeux la caricature de ce genre ennemi. Il est vrai que Cézanne, de son côté, n’était
pas un admirateur de Degas. Et, cependant, la manière des deux peintres n’était pas aussi opposée qu’ils le croyaient l’un l’autre.”


The attendance of the exhibition is known in detail, day-by-day, for entries during the day as well as the night, thanks to the financial report drawn up on May 27, 1874: there were 3,510 paid entries for 1 F a-piece, and 320 or 322 catalogues were sold for fifty centimes each (two different sums appear in the balance).


**Exhibition reviews that mention either Pissarro or Cézanne**

**Favorable reviews of Pissarro**

- Ernest Chesneau, “Au Salon: avertissement préalable”, *Paris-Journal*, May 9, 1874, p. 2. Same article appears in *le Soir*, May 9, 1874, p. 3.
- Léon de Lora (pseudonym of Félix Pothey), “Petites nouvelles artistiques: Exposition libre de peintres”, *le Gaulois*, April 18, 1874, p. 3.

*Unfavorable reviews of Pissarro*

*Favorable reviews of Cézanne*
• Léon de Lora (pseudonym of Félix Pothey), “Petites nouvelles artistiques: Exposition libre de peintres”, *le Gaulois*, April 18, 1874, p. 3.

*Unfavorable reviews of Cézanne (sometimes insulting)*
• Jean Prouvaire (pseudonym of Pierre Toloza or of Catulle Mendès), “L’exposition du boulevard des Capucines”, le Rappel, April 20, 1874.

April
New address of the Pissarros at Pontoise: 18, rue de l’Hermitage, the property of Berlioz. The house still stands, at the present number 46 (notably depicted in PV 227). The 18 bis is possibly the address of a little adjoining studio. (Alain Mothe’s information.)

April 26
The painter and dealer Louis Latouche writes to Dr Gachet: “Aujourd’hui dimanche je suis de service à notre exposition. Je garde votre Cézanne [V 225]. Je ne réponds pas de son existence, je crains bien qu’il ne vous retourne crevé.”
Letter from Louis Latouche, Paris, to Dr Gachet, dated; Paul Gachet, Deux Amis des Impressionnistes, 1956, p. 58.

May 5
Pissarro informs Duret that some of his “petits tableaux anciens,” owned by Oller, are for sale.
He then gives news of the exhibition of the Société Anonymous: “Notre exposition va bien, c’est un succès. La critique nous abîme et nous accuse de ne pas étudier, je retourne à mes études, cela vaut mieux que de lire, on n’apprend rien avec eux.”
Letter JBH 36, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

May 12
Martin proposes to buy from Oller his early pictures by Pissarro.
Letter from Oller to Pissarro; unpublished, vente Archives de Camille Pissarro, November 21, 1975, n° 137.4.

May 19
The account book of Durand-Ruel records a payment of 700 F to Pissarro, the last one made that year.
Claude Roger-Marx has published the hand-written notes on Philippe Burty’s exhibition catalogue: Monet has noted there 1000 F for *Impression* (soleil levant); Pissarro, 1000 F for *le Verger* (PV 267); Cézanne, 200 F for *la Maison du pendu* (V 133).


It is probably during this exhibition that Cézanne sells his *Maison du pendu* to the comte Armand Doria, who will later trade it to Victor Chocquet.

Arsène Houssaye, preface to the *Catalogue de tableaux modernes, œuvres importantes de Barye, Boudin, Cals, Cézanne, […], etc.*, les 4 and 5 mai 1899 (Lugt 57195).

[May 22 or 29]
Cézanne returns to Aix-en-Provence (according to a June 24 letter).

**June 24**
Cézanne responds to a letter from Pissarro.

“Je vous remercie d’avoir pensé à moi, pendant que je suis si loin et de ne pas m’en vouloir que je n’aie pas tenu ma parole, par laquelle je m’étais engagé à vous aller dire bonjour à Pontoise avant mon départ. — J’ai peint de suite après mon arrivée, qui s’est effectuée un samedi soir de la fin du mois de Mai [22 ou 29 mai]. […] Maintenant que je viens de revoir ce pays-ci, je crois qu’il vous satisferait totalement, car il rappelle étonnamment votre étude en plein soleil et en plein été de la Barrière du chemin de fer [PV 266].

“Je suis resté quelques semaines privé des nouvelles de mon petit et j’étais inquiet, mais Valabrègue vient d’arriver de Paris et hier, mardi, il m’a apporté une lettre d’Hortense, laquelle m’apprend qu’il ne va pas mal.

“[…] Je serais heureux […] si vous pouviez me noter s’il y a des nouvelles recrues à la Société coop.”


**July**
Pissarro stays briefly at the home of his friend Piette at Montfoucault.

According to the letter of Guillaumin from July 23, 1874, and the letter of Cézanne from September 26, 1874.
Guillaumin, who believes that Pissarro is still at Piette’s at Montfoucault, informs him of Cézanne’s imminent return, and attempts to restore Pissarro’s confidence in his painting: “Paul [Cézanne] est attendu avec impatience, M. de Bellio a demandé à Tanguy une toile de lui à bon prix aussi pourvu qu’il lui apporte.

“Mon bon ami, vos lettres sont vraiment navrantes et bien plus que votre peinture que vous dites si triste, qu’avez vous donc à toujours douter de vous c’est une maladie dont vous devriez bien vous guérir. Je sais bien que le moment est dur, et qu’il est difficile de voir les choses gaiement, mais ce n’est pas à la veille où toute [unreadable word] va arriver qu’il faut vous désespérer. Soyez tranquille avant peu vous aurez la place que vous devez occuper.”


July 24
Birth at Pontoise, “quartier de l’Hermitage”, of Félix Camille Pissarro, who will be nicknamed Titi. Pissarro and Louis Estruc are signatories to the birth certificate on July 28.

Birth certificate n° 89, mairie de Pontoise.

[August]
The painter Alfred Meyer, one of the exhibitors of the Société Anonymous, confirms his intention to found with Pissarro a new society of artists. Meyer encloses a draft of the statutes of the planned society and a list of nineteen expected members, among whom Cézanne and Guillaumin. “Voilà un canevas qui a quelques rapports avec votre idée. Les ouvriers appellent cela un syndicat vous appellerez cela comme vous voudrez mais le principe est celui que vous sentez nécessaire vous même.”

On the back of this letter, Pissarro will write out a list of ten of his pictures along with their prices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P. route d’Auvers</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gelée blanche</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>maison du Chous</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Soleil couchant</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coteau soleil couchant</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>bord de l’Oise</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>le Verger</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Effet de Neige</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Effet de neige</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Etude sur le coteau</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3000”
August 25
In response to a letter by Pissarro, Guillaumin attempts to encourage him, even though he himself might be “dans la misère la plus complète”: “J’ai vu ce soir Martin et un de vos tableaux qui est une fort belle chose. Vous me dites que vous ne faites rien de bien je ne le crois pas après ce que j’ai vu. Je comprends que vous soyez très ennuyé et distrait de votre travail et c’est ce et c’est probablement ce qui doit gêner votre vue sur ce que vous faites. Tachez de ne pas vous laisser abattre. Le beau temps reviendra bien après cet orage contre la vente.”

Beginning of September
Meyer writes again to Pissarro. “Je n’ai encore vu personne, et je ne veux aller trouver personne, parce que je vous attend pour rallier un groupe nombreux. Je ne puis faire à moi seul ce que nous pouvons faire tous deux. […]
“Le docteur Gachette [Gachet] que j’ai vu c’est jours-ci m’a dit que vous reviendrez prochainement, j’attend ce moment avec une grande impatience, car nous ne fonderons sérieusement notre affaire qu’avec votre concours. Je vous ai déjà dis que seul il m’est impossible de rien faire. J’ai absolument besoin de vous, pour nous entendre et marcher.”

October 5
“Lorsque vous viendrez à Paris, prévenez moi, afin que je me trouve chez moi. Nous verrons ensemble ce travail et nous prendrons la détermination que vous croirez devoir prendre pour grouper les débris de notre association qui me paraît ne pas devoir se reconstituer de sitôt.”
October 20
Faced with financial trouble, Pissarro announces to Duret his imminent departure to Piette’s place, at Montfoucault, “J’y vais pour étudier les figures et les animaux de la vraie campagne. Comme il est probable que vous désirez avoir votre tableau de Paysan avec vache [PV 263 ou 296] à votre arrivée, je l’ai déposé chez Martin avec prière de vous le remettre.” He hoped to see Baudry that same month
Letter JBH 37, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret.
Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, *Curriculum vitae*; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

September 26
Shortly after his return to Paris, Cézanne writes to his mother.
“Pissarro n’est pas à Paris depuis environ un mois et demi, il se trouve en Bretagne, mais je sais qu’il a bonne opinion de moi, qui ai très bonne opinion de moi-même. Je commence à me trouver plus fort que tous ceux qui m’entourent, et vous savez que la bonne opinion que j’ai sur mon compte n’est venue qu’à bon escient. J’ai à travailler toujours, non pas pour arriver au fini, qui fait l’admiration des imbéciles. — Et cette chose que vulgairement on apprécie tant n’est que le fait d’un métier d’ouvrier, et rend toute œuvre qui en résulte inartistique et commune. Je ne dois chercher à compléter que pour le plaisir de faire plus vrai et plus savant.”

November 26
Dr Gachet tells his wife: “M. Cézanne arrivé de son pays est venu s’informer de toi, de papa Castets [Mme Gachet’s father], des enfants.”

December 11
Pissarro tells Duret Baudry must go see his paintings at rue Berthe. It is “l’ami Guillaumin, chargé de mes petites affaires”, who will show them to him. “J’ai travaillé pas mal ici, je me suis mis aux figures et animaux. J’ai plusieurs projets de tableaux de genre, je me lance timidement dans cette branche de l’art”.
Letter JBH 38, from Pissarro, Montfoucault, to Duret, dated.

*La Gardeuse de vache*, PV 296, dated 1874, has the following inscription on the back of the frame: “fait à Gagny [Gasny] près de La Roche-Guyon,” the only known mention of a trip Pissarro would have made in 1874.

December 17
General meeting for the dissolution of the Société Anonymous coopérative. The society members find themselves in debt at 184.50 F per person.

January 3
Before returning to Pontoise, Pissarro composes a will in which he designates his wife the sole legatee.
“Je prierai mes amis, MM. Ludovic Piette, A. Guillaumin et P. Cézanne, de vouloir bien être mes exécuteurs testamentaires et de vouloir bien, en souvenir de ma bonne amitié, accepter dans mes études et tableaux un souvenir de moi.” To his mother, he leaves a “grand tableau que j’ai déposé chez elle, lequel représente le Moulin du Pâtis à Pontoise [PV 62], un tableau, toile de moindre dimension, au choix de mes exécuteurs.”

JBH 39, will of Camille Pissarro, Montfoucault, dated.

[February]
Return of the Pissarros from Montfoucault to Pontoise (most likely 18, rue de l’Ermitage).
A. Tabarant, Pissarro, 1924, p. 27.

February 20
Pissarro receives 835 F of indemnities for war damages at Louveciennes.
“Registre portant récépissés des personnes auxquelles des avis d’allocations pour dommages de l’invasion ont été remis”; archives communales de Louveciennes, 4H1; copy of the document communiquée by J. and M. Laÿ.

March 24
Sale at the hôtel Drouot of seventy-three works by Monet, Morisot, Renoir, and Sisley (Lugt 35485). The attained prices are low: one hundred sixty francs on average.
Commissaire-Priseur Me Charles Pillet, expert M. Paul Durand-Ruel.
One of Renoir’s recollections of the event, as recounted by his son Jean: “Le public manifesta. Un monsieur traita Berthe Morisot de ‘gourgandine’. Pissarro donna un coup de poing à l’insolent. Une bagarre s’ensuivit. La police intervint.”

Auguste Renoir, on the authority of Ambroise Vollard:
“Tout de même, cette vente devait avoir pour moi un heureux résultat: je fis la connaissance de M. Chocquet. [...] Vous dirai-je qu’aussitôt que je connus M.
Chocquet, je pensai à lui faire acheter un Cézanne! Je le conduisis chez le père Tanguy, où il prit une petite Étude de nus. [V 266 ?]"


In all likelihood, Victor Chocquet (1821-1891) probably did not attend the sale: his name does not appear in the minutes of the sale among the buyers, and Monet will not meet him until February 5, 1876.


Tanguy will not record a sale of a Cézanne painting until October 21 (V 266 ?), November 1 and December 30, 1875, for 50 F each.

“Avoir à M. Cézanne”, on Tanguy’s headed writing paper, 14, rue Clauzel; undated (31 August 1885); Wayne V. Andersen, “Cézanne, Tanguy, Choquet”, *Art Bulletin*, June 1967, p. 137.

Maurice Denis, after paying a visit to Renoir in 1906:

“Mais Renoir admirait Cézanne... Il aimait raconter qu’il avait fait entrer chez Choquet le premier Cézanne de cette importante collection.”


[End of March]

Pissarro, who owes Mme Latouche 50 F, asks Duret to pay the sum for him.

Letter JBH 40, from Pissarro to Duret, dated Friday.

March 27

Duret sends 50 F to Pissarro.


June 4

Durand-Ruel gives Pissarro only 50 F, his last payment to the artist for the next five years.


[Beginning of June]
Having, no doubt, purchased a new painting by Pissarro, Duret sends him “les 200 francs promis, ce qui avec les f. 50 déjà envoyés fera 250 f. à-compte sur les f. 500 que je vous dois.”

They had gone to Tanguy’s place together to see an “étude de femme mauresque de Guillaumin”, which Duret has since bought.

“Je vous engage à entrer de plus en plus dans la voie que vous avez dernièrement essayée, l’association de l’homme et des animaux avec le paysage fait en plein air.”


June 12

Pissarro thanks Duret for sending him the payments of 50 and 200 F.

“J’ai déjà pensé, ainsi que vous me le conseillez, de faire un tableau important de figures en plein air, mais la volonté ne suffit pas; les sujets ne manquent pas, le plus difficile c’est de trouver un modèle, dans le caractère, qui veuille bien me poser; ce n’est qu’à force d’argent que l’on pourrait y arriver”.

Pissarro has painted “un petit tableau de genre destiné à Faure”, PV 321. He is also happy to learn that Duret acquired a painting by Guillaumin, “c’est un artiste de grand avenir, et un brave garçon que j’aime beaucoup.”

Letter JBH 41, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

August 18

Inauguration of the Union, an anonymous society of artists, painters, etc., with nineteen members. In the statutes, the first four members named are Alfred Meyer, Camille Pissarro, “à Pontoise, rue de l’Ermitage, 10 bis”, Louis Latouche, and Edouard Béliard, “à Pontoise, quai du Pothuis”; and, in the fifth position, Paul Cézanne, “à Paris, rue de l’Ouest, 67”. Pissarro participates in the administrative council for new members.

Statuts de l’Union, société anonyme à personnel and capital variables des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, architectes, lithographes, céramistes, etc., Paris, August 18, 1875; unpublished, association des Amis from Pissarro, Pontoise.

The listed address of Pissarro has a typo: it should be “18 bis.” (Alain Mothe’s information.)

October 1

Pissarro asks Duret how much he owes him, since “je n’ai pas le sou! [...] Je suis en train de faire une Bergère avec des moutons, toile de 20 [PV 322], si je réussis ce tableau, je serais enchanté de le bien placer; si vous connaissez quelqu’un qui en veuille, je vous prierais de faire tous vos efforts pour me le faire vendre.”

Letter JBH 42, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.
Faure will eventually buy the painting PV 322 (n° 74 in the collection catalogue).
Notice PV 322.

October 21
Pissarro thanks Duret for sending him 100 F: he still owes him 150 F. Pissarro will come to visit him on October 25, and expresses delight at the prospect of being introduced to the art critic Philippe Burty.

Letter JBH 43, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

[End of December]
Piette writes to Pissarro: “Bonjour de ma part à Monsieur Cézanne s’il est revenu de son voyage au pays du soleil. A-t-il rapporté un bon chargement d’études ?”

Letter from Piette to Pissarro, undated; JBH, Mon cher Pissarro, 1985, note n° 1 p. 122.

This letter, composed before a “nouvel an”, could not date from 1874 since Pissarro was still at Montfoucault at the end of that year. Along with another letter, sent from Piette to Pissarro in February 1876, this letter suggests that Cézanne was staying in Midi at the end of 1875 or beginning of 1876. According to Monet’s letter to Chocquet of February 4, 1876, he will be back in Paris at the beginning of 1876.

In the course of the year
Murer’s first encounter with Cézanne, and then Pissarro, through the intermediary of Guillaumin. According to Murer, who is a pastry shop owner: “C’est par Guillaumin, mon condisciple au collège de Moulins, que je connus d’abord Paul Cézanne, son voisin quai d’Anjou: 1875. Guillaumin m’amena ensuite Pissarro.” The name “Murer” is the pseudonym of Eugène Hyacinthe Meunier.

Letter from Murer to Duret, July 18, 1905; Anne Distel, les Collectionneurs des Impressionnistes, 1989, p. 208.

Cézanne indeed has a studio at quai d’Anjou, n° 15 that neighbors the studio of Guillaumin at 13, quai d’Anjou.


Pissarro makes the acquaintance of Antonin Personnaz, an amateur from Bayonne.

The census of 1876 counts the Pissarro family along with a servant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N° de Ménage</th>
<th>Individu</th>
<th>Nom</th>
<th>Prénom</th>
<th>Titre</th>
<th>Sexe</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Lieu de naissance</th>
<th>Titre</th>
<th>Naissance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>980</td>
<td>Pissaro Camille</td>
<td>Artiste</td>
<td>H.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Danois</td>
<td>2882</td>
<td>Rue de l’Hermitage 18</td>
<td>peintre marié</td>
<td>étranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2883</td>
<td>Vellay Julie</td>
<td>Sa femme F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>mariée Francaise</td>
<td>Danois</td>
<td>2883</td>
<td>Vellay Julie</td>
<td>Sa femme F</td>
<td>mariée Francaise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2884</td>
<td>Pissaro Lucien</td>
<td>Son fils</td>
<td>G.</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>Danois</td>
<td>2884</td>
<td>Pissaro Lucien</td>
<td>Son fils</td>
<td>G. 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2885</td>
<td>Pissaro Georges</td>
<td>id.</td>
<td>G.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Danois</td>
<td>2885</td>
<td>Pissaro Georges</td>
<td>id.</td>
<td>G. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2886</td>
<td>Pissaro Camille</td>
<td>id.</td>
<td>G.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Danois</td>
<td>2886</td>
<td>Pissaro Camille</td>
<td>id.</td>
<td>G. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2887</td>
<td>Grandin Marie</td>
<td>domestique F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>étranger Française</td>
<td>Danois</td>
<td>2887</td>
<td>Grandin Marie</td>
<td>domestique F</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The population of Pontoise increases to 6,412 inhabitants, of whom 84 are strangers. Census of the population of Pontoise, 1876, terminated by the mayor Germain on December 31, 1877; Archives départementales du Val-d’Oise, cote 9M808/4.

February 4
Monet invites Chocquet and Cézanne to have lunch at his place the next day, as he would be happy to make the acquaintance of Chocquet.


February 5
Renoir and Rouart suggest that Caillebotte join their plan for an exhibition: “Nous avons pensé qu’il serait bon de renouveler l’essai tenté en commun d’une exposition particulière, à cet effet nous nous sommes entendus avec M. Durand-Ruel qui nous loue deux salles dont la plus grande.”


February 7
Pissarro, not having the means to pay his rent in Paris, makes an appeal to Duret to send the 150 F owed to him.

Letter JBH 44, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

March 18
De Molins searches for a place for two paintings by Pissarro. He will bring an amateur to the exhibition and then to the studio of Pissarro. De Molins himself would like to acquire a work.

Letter from A. de Molins to Pissarro, dated; vente Archives de Camille Pissarro, hôtel Drouot, Paris, November 21, 1975, n° 137-3.

March 22
Guillaumin informs Pissarro that neither he nor Cézanne will participate in the next exhibition.

“Je n’exposerai pas avec vous, et la raison est que ne n’ai pas de tableau à exposer je n’avais que la marine qui était chez Tanguy, et elle n’est plus à moi: c’était ce qui me reste il n’y a rien C’est la misère: je n’ai en aucune façon l’intention de renoncer en quoi que ce soit, mais encore pour lutter faut il avoir des armes et je n’en ai pas pour le moment. J’ai fait part à Cézanne de votre première lettre: je crois qu’il s’abstiendra pour cette année.”


[Between March 24 and 26]
Degas apprises Berthe Morisot — Mme Eugène Manet since December 22, 1874 — of their next exhibition. “On ouvre jeudi matin, 30 de ce mois”.

Letter from Degas to Berthe Morisot; Correspondance de Berthe Morisot, 1950, p. 93-94.

March 27
Duret advises Pissarro to show more numerous and more important paintings in the Deuxième Exposition de Peinture. “Vous n’êtes là qu’avec six toiles dont quelques-unes ne sont pas faites pour frapper et impressionner avantageusement le public et les bourgeois. [...] Allez demander à Faure votre grand paysage [PV 58]! Il vous faut une Œuvre.”


It is Julie who responds to Duret, adding these words, “Duré te donne un bon conseill. L’avenir en dépend. Fait tout ton possible. Je t’envoie ses lettres, il n’y a pas de temps à perdre.”

Since the exhibition catalogue mentions twelve paintings, and not six, it is likely that Pissarro followed the advice of Duret.

**March 30-April 30**
The Deuxième Exposition de Peinture is held in the rooms rented by Durand-Ruel at 11, rue Le Peletier. Two hundred forty-eight works are listed in the catalogue under two hundred fifty-two numbers. There are nineteen exhibitors, among whom Caillebotte, Degas, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, Sysley (sic). Neither Cézanne nor Guillaumin exhibit.

Pissarro’s works appear in the last of the three exhibition rooms, hung next to the paintings of Degas, Tillot, Cals, Rouart, François, Béliard, and Ottin the younger (according to the article by Philippe Burty and Emile Blémont).

Théodore Duret and Georges Rivière — the latter confusing the 1874 exhibition with that of 1876 — will emphasize the role of Victor Chocquet during the course of the exhibition: “Il fallait le voir, il devenait une sorte d’apôtre. Il prenait les uns après les autres les visiteurs qu’il connaissait et s’insinuait auprès de beaucoup d’autres pour chercher à les pénétrer de sa conviction et leur faire partager son admiration et son plaisir.”

Théodore Duret, preface to the *Catalogue de vente après décès de Mme Chocquet, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 3-4 juillet 1899.*


**Exhibition reviews that mention Pissarro**
- Emile Blémont (pseudonym Emile Petitdidier), “Les impressionnistes”, *le Rappel,* April 9, 1876, partly reprinted in *le Moniteur universel.*
- Castagnary, “Salon”, *le Siècle,* May 6, 1876.
- Gène Mur (Eugène Murer), *la Correspondance française,* April 16, 1876.
- Emile Porcheron, “Promenades d’un flâneur: Les impressionnistes”, *le Soleil,* April 4, 1876.
- Alex(andre) Potheuy, “Chronique”, *la Presse,* March 31, 1876.
Baron Schop (pseudonym of Théodore de Banville), “La semaine parisienne: L’exposition des intransigeants. L’école des Batignolles. Impressionnistes et plein air”, le National, April 7, 1876.

Armand Silvestre, “Exposition de la rue Le Peletier”, l’Opinion nationale, April 2, 1876.


Albert Wolff, “Le calendrier parisien”, le Figaro, April 3, 1876.


[Shortly after April 15]
Having departed for Aix for at least two weeks now, Cézanne makes comments to Pissarro about some newspaper articles that Chocquet has sent him. “L’article de Blémont dans le Rappel [April 9], me semble bien mieux vu, malgré de trop nombreuses réticences, et un long préambule où il se perd un peu trop. Il me semble que vous y êtes accusé de Bleu à cause de votre effet de brouillard. [...] “J’allais oublier de vous faire part qu’on m’a envoyé une certaine lettre de refus [au Salon]. Ce n’est ni nouveau ni étonnant.”

[Beginning of April]
Pissarro gives a few directions to Murer for an article: “Je vous serais fort obligé de ne point faire de personnalité; n’ayez que ceci en vue: un groupe d’artistes se sont réunis pour faire voir leurs œuvres parce que les jurys les empêchaient systématiquement de montrer des tableaux aux amateurs et au public. En fait de principe, nous ne voulons pas d’école, nous aimons Delacroix, Courbet, Daumier et tous ceux qui ont quelque chose dans le ventre, et la nature, le plein air, les différentes impressions que nous éprouvons, toute notre préoccupation. Toutes théories factices, nous les répudions.”
Letter JBH 615, from Pissarro to Murer, dated Thursday.

July 2
Writing from L’Estaque where, after Aix, he has been staying for a month, Cézanne shares with Pissarro some reflections on the Société coopérative and the Union. “Si j’osais, je dirais que votre lettre est empreinte de tristesse. Les affaires picturales ne marchent pas, je crains bien que vous ne soyez moralement influencé un peu en gris, mais je suis convaincu que ce n’est que chose passagère. “Je voudrais bien ne pas parler de choses impossibles, et cependant je fais toujours les projets les plus improbables à réaliser. Je me figure que le pays où je suis vous serait à merveille. [...]
“Dès que je le pourrai, je passerai au moins un mois en ces lieux, car il faut faire des toiles de deux mètres au moins, comme celle par vous vendues [sic] à Fore [Faure, PV 58].

“Je souhaite que l’Exposition de notre coopérative soit un four, si nous devons exposer avec Monet. — Vous me trouverez canaille, c’est possible, mais d’abord son affaire propre avant tout. — Meyer, qui n’a pas en main les éléments de succès avec les coopératifs, me semble devenir un bâton merdeux, et cherchant, en devançant l’exposition impressionniste, à lui nuire. [...]”

“Ainsi le relief des impressionnistes pouvant m’aider, j’exposerai avec eux ce que j’aurai de mieux, et quelque chose de neutre chez les autres.

[...] Je peux retourner à Paris à la fin du mois.”


[September 2]
Guillaumin notifies Dr Gachet of the return of Cézanne to Paris: “Cézanne est de retour depuis 3 ou 4 jours. Je lui ai fait part de vos désirs à son égard; il ira vous voir, peut-être irons-nous ensemble; et vous, travaillez-vous ? [...] Si vous étiez ici lundi, après demain, le père Cézanne [Paul] m’a dit qu’il viendrait à 6 heures voir ma mère, et il dînera avec nous.”

Letter from Guillaumin to Dr Gachet, erroneously dated Saturday July 2, 1876; Lettres impressionnistes, 1957, p. 69-71.

According to Paul Gachet, Guillaumin’s letter is dated “samedi 2 juillet 1876”, in which case his statement on Cézanne’s return to Paris would contradict Cézanne’s own in his letter from July 2 (above) or from September 9 or 10 (below). Furthermore, July 2 was a Sunday and not a Saturday, while September 2, 1876, fell on a Saturday. Thus Paul Gachet must have made a mistake in transcribing the date, perhaps interpreting a 7 or a VII as designating the month of July instead of September.

[Saturday or Sunday, September 10]
Cézanne informs his parents that he went on Wednesday, September 6, to visit Guillaumin in Issy. “D’après ce que m’a dit Guillaumin, je suis un des trois nouveaux sociétaires qui doivent en faire partie [de la prochaine exposition], et j’ai été très chaudement défendu par Monet lorsqu’à un dîner-réunion, qui a eu lieu après l’exposition, un certain Lepic s’était élevé contre ma réception. [...]”

“Je n’ai pu encore aller voir Pissarro ni les autres personnes de ma connaissance, vu que je me suis mis à peindre de suite en arrivant le lendemain.”
He reports to them the financial outcome of the exhibition, which Guillaumin has shared with him: with the rental fee of the exhibition space at three thousand francs, the painters were able to cover their own expenses while receiving a dividend of three francs each.

Letter from Cézanne to his parents, dated Saturday, September 10, 1876; John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne, Correspondance*, 1878, p. 154-156.

For unknown reasons, Cézanne decided to abstain from the exhibition of 1876.

Georges Rivière, *le Maître Paul Cézanne*, 1923, p. 82.

October 4

Cézanne spends the day with Guillaumin at Issy.

Letter from Cézanne to Dr Gachet, dated Thursday morning, October 5; *Lettres impressionnistes*, 1957, p. 62.

November 3

Eight days after the death of his younger brother René, Gustave Caillebotte composes a will at the age of twenty-eight: “Je désire qu’il soit pris sur ma succession la somme nécessaire pour faire en 1878 [perhaps he does not believe in the possibility of an exhibition in 1877], dans les meilleures conditions possibles, l’exposition des peintres dits intransigeants ou impressionnistes. Il m’est assez difficile d’évaluer aujourd’hui cette somme, elle peut s’éléver à trente, quarante mille francs ou même plus. Les peintres qui figureront dans cette exposition sont: Degas, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Cézanne, Sisley, Mlle Morizot [sic]. Je nomme ceux-là sans exclure les autres. “Je donne à l’État les tableaux que je possède”.


Eighteen works by Pissarro and five works by Cézanne will appear in his collection (an asterisk indicates those which the State will accept for the musée du Luxembourg):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pissarro</th>
<th>Cézanne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Louvenciennes</em> 276</td>
<td><em>Baigneurs au repos</em> V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Le Lavoir</em> 222</td>
<td><em>Vase de fleurs</em> V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Paysage avec rochers</em> 326*</td>
<td><em>Cour de ferme à Auvers</em> V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Les Choux, coin de village</em> 232</td>
<td><em>Scène champêtre</em> V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>La Moisson</em> 428*</td>
<td><em>L’Estaque</em> V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Le LabourPV 340
Le Jardin fleuriPV 350
Sous-Bois avec personnagesPV 371
Les Toits rougesPV 384*
Potager, arbres en fleursPV 387*
Chemin sous bois en étéPV 416*
Vallée en étéPV 407
Les OrgesPV 406
ClairièrePV 455
Sous-BoisPV 505
Chemin montant à travers champsPV 493*
La BrouettePV 537*
Travailleurs des champs (éventail).PV 1625

List established by Martial Caillebotte of works passed on by his (or her?)
brother, family archives. Gustave Geffroy, “La collection Caillebotte”, le
contre-vérités.”, Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de l’Art français, 1983,

[December 1876 or January 1877]
Piette attempts to reassure Pissarro, who is under threat of confiscation and
recommends that Pissarro should produce works with strong commercial appeal: “Je
crois qu’avec votre habileté vous devez réussir aimablement à faire des faïences
décorées: rapidement, spirituellement, comme vos dessins rehaussés ou aquarelles,
cela ferait je crois merveilleusement. Ne perdez donc pas espoir.”

Letter from Piette to Pissarro, undated; JBH, Mon cher Pissarro, 1985, p. 132-
134.

In the course of the year
Renoir depicts Pissarro in his painting, l’Atelier du peintre, 35, rue Saint-Georges, no
date (Norton Simon Art Foundation, Los Angeles). From left to right: Franc-Lamy,
Rivière, Pissarro, Lestringuez and Cabaner.
1877

[January]
Caillebotte invites Pissarro to dine at his place with other painters so that they can entertain the possible idea of an exhibition. “Vous vous trouverez chez moi avec Degas, Monet, Renoir, Sisley et Manet. Je compte absolument sur vous.”

January 24
Caillebotte comes to the aid of Pissarro by buying a painting from him. “Je prends votre grand tableau [Louveciennes, PV 123, 110 x 160 cm] [after which Cézanne executed his own painting of the same motif] au prix que vous me demandez. Malheureusement je ne peux rien donner pour le petit, les fins d’année et commencements sont embêtants pour tout le monde. Voulez-vous que je le prenne en échange de celui de Paris. Comme cela nous serons complètement quittes, pour le moment bien entendu.”

[Around the end of January]
Piette writes to Pissarro: “J’ai appris avec plaisir que Monsieur Caillebotte vous avait acheté des tableaux, ce qui vous donnait quelque temps pour vous retourner. [...] Votre idée de faïence [cf. lettre de Piette à Pissarro de décembre 1876 ou janvier 1877] puisse-t-elle vous réussir sans trop d’emmagasinage et sans trop faire l’affaire du fabricant.”

Some thirty or forty ceramic tiles painted by Pissarro are known, and a few signed and dated 1877 or 1878.

[Around February]
Renoir and Caillebotte inform Berthe Morisot that they have just rented an apartment at 6, rue Le Peletier, for their exhibition. They invite her to a meeting at the dealer Legrand’s place, 22 bis, rue Laffitte.
Letter from Renoir and Caillebotte to Berthe Morisot, undated; *Correspondance de Berthe Morisot*, 1950, p. 98.

[Around February]
Degas confirms with Berthe Morisot the meeting scheduled at Legrand’s place, warning her: “Il va se discuter une grosse question: si l’on peut exposer au Salon et avec nous ? Très grave!”

Letter from E. Degas to Berthe Morisot, undated; Correspondance de Berthe Morisot, 1950, p. 98.

February 15
Opening of the exhibition held by the Union at the Grand Hôtel, rivaling against the impressionist exhibition. Pissarro and Cézanne, who had signed them as early members, do not participate.

February 24
Guillaumin notifies Dr Gachet that preparations for the planned exhibition are taking place at Renoir’s place. “Cézanne travaille toujours chez lui [à Paris] et beaucoup; il vous présente ses amitiés car il était là quand j’ai reçu votre lettre […]. He mentions the fiasco of the Union Exhibition plans. “Vous savez que l’Exposition de la Société l’Union est ouverte au Grand Hôtel. Nous devions y figurer, Pissarro, Cézanne et moi; au dernier moment, nous avons donné notre démission; je vous conterai cela.”


March 24
A sale of water-colors by Piette is held at the hôtel Drouot (Lugt 37265). Among the group members, only Cézanne and Guillaumin come to the exhibition from the day before, Pissarro being detained at Pontoise.

Vente Piette, hôtel Drouot, March 24, 1877. Experts Martin and Paschal; Commissaire-Priseur, Me Tual. Fifty entries.


[Beginning of April]
Piette mentions a dispute between Pissarro and Degas: “Après ce qui s’est passé entre vous et ce Monsieur, je regrette d’avoir même touché sa main.”

Letter from Piette, Paris, to Pissarro, undated; JBH, Mon cher Pissarro, 1985, p. 139.

[Beginning of April]
Monet invites Zola to a gathering of painters on April 5 at the café Riche, where, notably, Cézanne and Renoir will be present,.
April 4-30
Troisième Exposition de Peinture at 6, rue Le Peletier. The term “impressionniste” is posted at the entry. Two hundred forty-one works are listed in the catalogue. There are eighteen exhibitors, among whom Caillebotte, Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, Sisley, and Renoir.


Catalogue de la 3e Exposition de Peinture, 6, rue Le Peletier, Paris, avril 1877.

Georges Rivière:
“Le placement des tableaux avait été confié à Renoir, Monet, Pissarro et Caillebotte. Tous les quatre, d’un commun accord, réservèrent à Paul Cézanne le meilleur panneau du grand salon. Les tableaux de Cézanne voisinaient dans cette belle salle avec le Bal du Moulin de la Galette, de Renoir, un grand paysage de Pissarro, les jolies études de Mme Berthe Morisot et un ou deux paysages de Monet.”

Georges Rivière, Cézanne, le peintre solitaire, 1936, p. 120.

“CEZANNE (Paul)
67, rue de l’Ouest.
17 — Nature morte.
18 — Id. [V 196, 197 et 207]
19 — Id.
20 — Etude de fleurs. [V 181 et 182]
21 — Id.
22 — Paysage; Etude d’après nature.
23 — Id. [V 158, 168, 171, 173 ?]
24 — Id. Id.
25 — Id. Id.
26 — Les baigneurs; Etude, projet de tableau. [V 276]
27 — Tigre. [V 250]
28 — Figure de femme; Etude d’après nature.
29 — Tête d’homme; Etude. [V 283]
30 — Aquarelle; Impression d’après nature. [JR 10 ou 17]
31 — Id. Id. [JR 10 ou 17]
32 — Aquarelle; Fleurs. [JR 8]”
Not included in the catalogue: Scène fantastique, V 243 (according to the articles by Jacques, and by Georges Rivière, l’Impressionniste, n° 2).

“PISSARRO (Camille)
à Pontoise, rue de l’Hermitage.
163 — Côte Saint-Denis à Pontoise, appartient à M. C... [Caillebotte]. [PV 384]
164 — Le verger, côte Saint-Denis, à Pontoise. [PV 380]
165 — Sous bois, id. id. [PV 371 ?]
166 — Jardin des Mathurins, à Pontoise. [PV 349]
167 — Coin du Jardin des Mathurins, à Pontoise. [PV 394]
168 — Sentier près les Mathurins. id.
169 — Verger de Montbuisson [Maubuisson], à Pontoise. [PV 345]
170 — Vue de Saint-Ouen-l’Aumône, appartient à M. H... [Hoschedé] [PV 344]
171 — La plaine d’Épluches (Arc-en-ciel), appartient à M. H... [Hoschedé] [PV 409]
172 — Bord de l’Oise en automne, appartient à M. Ch...
173 — Bord de l’Oise, route d’Auvers.
174 — Place de l’hermitage à Pontoise.
175 — Grand poirier, à Montbuisson [Maubuisson], appartient à M. H... [Hoschedé] [PV 383 ou 387]
176 — Paysage avec ruine (Automne), appartient à M. H... [Hoschedé] [PV 237]
177 — Bord de l’Oise, marine.
178 — Basse-cour. Pluie. [PV 431]
179 — Vue de l’hermitage.
180 — La Moisson, appartient à M. C... [Caillebotte] [PV 364]
181 — Allée sous bois, à Montfoucault, appartient à M. C... [Caillebotte] [PV 282]
182 — Un [sic] friche, à Montfoucault.
183 — Paysage.
184 — La Plaine, à Pontoise.”

Catalogue de la 3e Exposition de Peinture, 6, rue Le Peletier, Paris, avril 1877.

The Ashmolean Museum of Oxford owns, from the same sketchbook, three sketches which Pissarro reproduced from three of his paintings. In giving them titles: “le Coup de vent” (PV 408), “le Verger – Montbuisson” (PV 315), and “basse cour” (PV 431),
Pissarro has given ground for the identification of two of his exhibited canvases. The latter two sketches’ titles resemble those of n° 169, *Verger de Montbuisson [Maubuisson], à Pontoise*, and of 178, *Basse-cour. Pluie*, and one may suppose that Pissarro completed the sketched reproductions for the exhibition.


Pissarro “sertit ses toiles dans des cadres blancs”.


Georges Rivière publishes four issues of *l’Impressionniste, Journal d’art* in the exhibition’s duration.

On the balance sheet, the profit will increase to about sixty francs per person.

Letter from Degas to Mme de Nittis, dated May 21, 1877; Mary Pittaluga and Enrico Piceni, *De Nittis*, Bramante Editrice, Milan, 1963, p. 368-369.

**Exhibition reviews that mention either Pissarro or Cézanne**

*Pissarro and Cézanne*

  “L’artiste le plus attaqué, le plus maltraité depuis quinze ans par la presse et par le public, c’est M. Cézanne. Il n’est pas d’épithète outrageuse qu’on n’accole à son nom, et ses œuvres ont obtenu un succès de fou rire qui dure encore. [...]”
  “Plaçons près de M. Cézanne un homme qu’on accuse de maladresses, mais qu’on encourage comme un jeune homme qui pourra avec l’âge arriver à quelque chose, je veux parler de M. Pissarro.”

• Paul Sébillot, “Exposition des impressionnistes”, le Bien public, April 7, 1877.
• (Emile Zola), “Notes parisiennes: une exposition des impressionnistes: les peintres impressionnistes”, le Sémaphore de Marseille, April 19, 1877.

Pissarro
• Anonymous (Georges Lafenestre), “Le jour et la nuit”, le Moniteur universel, April 8, 1877.
• Paul Mantz, “L’exposition des peintres impressionnistes”, le Temps, April 22, 1877.
• A.P., “Beaux-Arts”, le Petit Parisien, April 7, 1877.

Cézanne
• Anonymous, “Les impressionnistes”, la Petite Presse, April 9, 1877.

Georges Rivière:
“Cézanne rencontrera un ardent défenseur dans M. Chocquet dont la foi agissante était très efficace auprès des amateurs indécis: ceux qui achetaient à des prix bien modiques quelques toiles de Monet, de Renoir ou de Pissarro. Si ces amateurs n’allaient pas jusqu’à y joindre une nature morte ou un paysage de Cézanne, du moins s’abstenaient-ils de critiquer ouvertement ses œuvres; ils se contentaient d’avouer qu’ils ne les comprenaient pas. M. Chocquet expliquait à ses auditeurs les beautés qu’il trouvait en Cézanne et son éloquence les impressionnait si elle ne les convainquait pas.”

Georges Rivière, le Maître Paul Cézanne, 1923, p. 85-86.

April 5
Impressionists’ dinner at the café Riche, in which notably Pissarro, Caillebotte, Monet, and Piette participate. Zola, “un impressionniste de la plume,” presides over the dinner.

Un vieux Parisien, “L’indiscret, le dîner des impressionnistes”, l’Evénement, April 8, 1877.
In the course of the year
Cézanne makes occasional visits to Pontoise and Auvers.
   Georges Rivière, Cézanne, le peintre solitaire, 1936, p. 127.

From this year on Pissarro and, more rarely, Cézanne participate in the Wednesday dinners held by Murer at 95, boulevard Voltaire. Renoir will decorate the walls of the boutique with flowery garlands, Pissarro with Pontoise landscapes.
   Notes from Murer, cited by A. Tabarant, Pissarro, 1924, p. 34-35.

Murer purchases paintings from Pissarro and from Cézanne. Paul Alexis will draw up a list of the collection in 1887:
   “Paul Cézanne, né à Aix (Bouches-du-Rhône) en 1839.
1. Le Bataillon sacré, pommes en bataille sur une table. [V 212]
2. La Tentation de saint Antoine, superbe étude. [V 240]
3. Les Harengs-saurs, nature morte. [V 60]
4. Le Val-Fleury, paysage. [V 177 ?]
5. Enlèvement de femmes, sous-bois fantastique, aquarelle.
6. Vagabond de l’Estaque, mettant sa veste. [V 248]
7. Plat de pommes, nature morte. [V 210]
8. Desserts de table, magistral morceau peint.
   Camille Pissarro, né à Caracas, au Venezuela, en 1835.
9. Les Mathurins, propriété de Mlle Deraismes, à Pontoise. [PV 397]
10. Le Père Jean, étude d’automne.
11. Une cour, avec sapins, paysage breton. [PV 287]
13. La Mère Langlois, pauvresse.
14. Une Fileuse, intérieur breton. [PV 277]
15. Poules, dans une basse-cour. [PV 426, according to the letter JBH 52]
16. Route de Pontoise, joli paysage, manière blonde. [PV 404]
17. Les Amoureux, au bord de l’eau.
18. Une Meule, miniature.
21. L’Homme qui pisse sous les grands poiriers. [PV 345]
22. Portrait de Mlle Marie, pastel. [PV 1537]
23. L’Enfourneur, curieux pastel. [PV 1538]
24. Cour de ferme, chez Piette, l’aquarelliste. [PV 365 ou 369 ?]
26. Dans le maquis, portrait du collectionneur en bandit. [PV 469]
27. Batteurs de blé, chez Piette. [PV 367 or 413, according to the letter from Pissarro to Murer of January 29, 1897]
28. Un chemin d’Osny, paysage. [PV 208]
29. Femme à la cape, portrait en pied. [PV 373]
30. Bords d’étang, en Bretagne.
31. Chemin creux, environs de Pontoise.
32. Un casseur de pierres, effet d’automne.
33. Bateaux sur l’Oise, marine printanière. [PV 403]


The following works will eventually belong to Murer, and might be included in the list by Trublot: by Cézanne, JR 589; by Pissarro, PV 400, 402, 411, 419.

Short of money, Pissarro offers to sell to Murer, in an undated letter, “une forte paysanne à la figure brique, la tête couverte d’un capuchon jaunâtre. Toile sombre, terrible, ne manquant pas de caractère, du reste longuement étudiée [la mère Gaspard, PV 373].” He adds: “je regrette bien d’avoir détruit le berger”, and that he’s thinking of making a study on moonlight (PV 379).

Letter JBH 46, from Pissarro to Murer, dated Thursday.

Much later, Pissarro will ask Murer to return the painting he had entrusted Murer to show Laurent-Richard, “une toile de 15 représentant une Batterie mécanique ou moisson [PV 367 or 413].”


In 1877, Alphonse Legrand, a former employee of Durand-Ruel, exhibits works by the group of painters in his gallery, 22 bis, rue Laffitte.

Advertisement that appeared in l’Impressioniste, April 28, 1877, n° 4, p. 7.

August 24
Cézanne expresses first signs of disagreement with the impressionists. From then on, his painting sojourns with Pissarro will become intermittent. Both artists spend more time apart from each other. Cézanne discloses to Zola his disquietude: “Je vais tous les jours dans le parc d’Issy où je fais quelques études. Et je ne suis pas trop mal content, mais il paraît qu’une désolation profonde règne dans le camp impressionniste. Le Pactole ne coule pas précisément dans leur poche, et les études sèchent sur place. Nous vivons dans des temps bien troublés, et je ne sais quand la pauvre peinture reprendra un peu de son lustre.

[...] Sauf deux ou trois peintres je n’ai vu absolument personne.”
Pissarro can be counted among those into whose pockets money (pactole) did not flow. He knew then some serious financial difficulties.

[Around September]
The writer Duranty relates to Zola the following anecdote about Cézanne: “Si cela peut vous intéresser, Cézanne est apparu, il y a peu de temps, au petit café de la place Pigalle [la Nouvelle Athènes], dans un de ses costumes d’autrefois: cotte bleue, veste de toile blanche toute couverte de coups de pinceaux, vieux chapeau défoncé. Il a eu du succès! Mais ce sont des démonstrations dangereuses.”

Letter from Duranty to Zola, undated; Auriant, “Duranty et Zola”, *la Nef*, n° 20, July 1946, p. 50-51.

October 22
Murer reports in a letter to Dr Gachet a discussion that he had with Pissarro. It appears that Pissarro has left again for Pontoise to find some canvases, among which the doctor may select one for his brother. He requests 50 F, which Murer has already advanced to him. Pissarro and Murer also approached the subject of the quarrel with the doctor: Pissarro, unsatisfied with “un bord de l’eau avec des péniches et quelques maisons dans le fond”, wished to destroy it. He finally left it to the doctor. In so doing, he felt he had paid off his debt to the latter.

Murer points out that he[Pissarro?] has acquired “un dessin extraordinaire du maître Cézanne”.

Letter from E. Murer, Paris, to Dr Gachet, dated; *Lettres impressionnistes*, 1957, p. 164-166.

October 24
Dr Gachet writes to Murer to contest the interpretation of the argument by Pissarro. The painting, which he claims he truly saved from destruction, was not destined to free Pissarro of his debt to the doctor. Especially since Gachet had selected another painting that the artist had held on to for a year for retouching. The doctor concludes: “Je désire ne plus jamais entendre parler de cette juiverie.”

Letter from Dr Gachet to Murer, dated Wednesday, October 24, 1877; *Lettres impressionnistes*, 1957, p. 177-178.

November 8
Raffles organized by by Murer, who invites Pissarro, Sisley, Guillaumin and Dr Gachet over for lunch. The prize of the raffles is a painting by Pissarro.

A young servant named Adèle Silva wins the painting by Pissarro, but she prefers instead to leave it to Murer in exchange for a Saint-Honoré cake (cream-filled tart) from his pastry shop.


Tabarant, “Pissarro, la loterie et le ‘saint-honoré’”, *le Bulletin de la vie artistique*, March 1, 1921, 2e année, n° 5, p. 144.
1878

January
Duret wishes to meet Pissarro and request from him “une eau-forte pour une brochure que je rumine sur les impressionnistes: Monet, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir et Berthe Morizot [sic].”


January 28
Caillebotte sends Pissarro 750 F as payment for some paintings. At the moment, he cannot continue to send 50 F per month, probably because of his business dealings with Mac Lean cements.

Letter from Caillebotte to Pissarro, dated; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte, sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 8, p. 244.

February 25
Sale of the Gustave Arosa Collection, including three Pissarros from 1870, 1871 and 1872.


March 4
Paul Cézanne’s recognition of debt to M. and Mme Tanguy for 2 174,80 F’ worth of painting supplies. At this time, Cézanne is “demeurant à Paris, rue de l’Ouest, 67”.


Tanguy will recall this debt in a letter to Cézanne on August 31, 1885, his bill in the meanwhile having risen to 4 015,40 F after a deduction of 1442,50 F of payments and of returns for paintings.


[Around March]

Letter from Degas to Caillebotte, undated; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 10, p. 244.

[Around March]
Pissarro writes to Caillebotte. He also thinks that their exhibition could wait until June 1, since the Exposition universelle will open on May 1.

“M. Chocquet m’avait annoncé que Cézanne enverrait au Salon, faute d’exposition impressionniste. Dès le moment que Renoir manque à la parole donnée l’année dernière à propos de mon exposition avec la Société L’Union qui avait certes moins d’inconvénient, je ne vois pas pourquoi Cézanne serait tenu à se priver de l’Officiel ? Du reste cela ne servirait qu’à en démontrer l’inutilité.

“J’ai reçu un mot de Cézanne me priant d’envoyer certains tableaux de lui à notre exposition.”

Monet himself hesitates to exhibit, fearing that doing so would prevent him from selling.

Letter JBH 53, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Caillebotte, dated Saturday, March 23

Cézanne, writing from L’Estaque before returning that night to Aix, asks Zola to find him a place where he can “[se] caser”. His father finds out about Hortense and their son, and threatens to cut off all financial support.

“Je me vois bien près d’être obligé à me procurer des ressources par moi-même, si toutefois je puis en être capable. La situation se tend très fortement entre mon père et moi, et je suis menacé de perdre toute ma pension. Une lettre que monsieur Chocquet m’a écrite et dans laquelle il me parlait de madame Cézanne et du petit Paul a révélé définitivement ma position à mon père, lequel d’ailleurs était aux aguets, plein de soupçons”.


[March 28]

Cézanne fears that his father will reduce his pension to one hundred francs. If this were to occur, he would ask Zola to send money to Hortense Fiquet beginning the first week of April.

“Une exposition des impressionnistes aura probablement lieu; je te prierai alors d’y mettre la nature morte que tu as dans ta salle à manger [PV 69]. J’ai reçu à ce sujet une lettre de convocation pour le 25 du présent mois, rue Laffitte. — Je ne m’y suis pas trouvé, naturellement.”


April 4

Cézanne’s father having decided to allocate only one hundred francs to Paul as a pension, Paul Cézanne confirms his request to Zola to send sixty francs to Hortense, 183, rue de Rome, à Marseille.
April 14


April 14
Death of Piette at Montfoucault.

[Around April]
Pissarro hands over to the dealer Georges Petit a small painted panel for which he hopes to be paid 50 F. He addresses himself to Murer: “j’attends cette goutte d’eau comme un voyageur dans le désert, ne pourriez-vous m’avancer cette somme, à Pontoise on l’attend avec anxiété, rien à l’horizon n’apparaît, si vous y consentez le plus tôt ne serait que le mieux.”

Letter JBH 54, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Wednesday.

[Around May]
Pissarro mentions to Caillebotte that he met Degas, who claims that “faire une exposition à présent serait un four parce que toute la foule se porte vers le Champ-de-Mars [le Salon], mais il arrivera un moment où le Parisien finira par demander autre chose”. In Degas’s opinion, “l’automne serait une époque favorable.”

Letter JBH 55, from Pissarro, Paris, to Caillebotte, dated Wednesday.

[Beginning of May]
Cézanne asks Zola to send another sixty francs to Hortense, still at Marseille. He adds: “Si tu veux me parler de la situation artistique et littéraire, tu me feras bien plaisir. Je serai par là plus éloigné de la province, et plus près de Paris.”


May 8
Cézanne thanks Zola for his additional payment to Hortense.
“Je te remercie au sujet de la nouvelle de ma petite toile. Je comprends très bien que ce ne pouvait être reçu [au Salon] à cause de mon point de départ, qui est trop éloigné du but à atteindre, c’est-à-dire la représentation de la nature.”

1018
Letter from Paul Cézanne to Emile Zola, dated; John Rewald, Paul Cézanne, Correspondance, 1978, p. 166.

[May]
Pissarro writes to Murer. “J’ai vu Caillebotte ce matin. Il est enflammé de l’idée d’une exposition car sa visite à l’Universelle l’a persuadé que la nôtre ne pouvait que gagner à la comparaison. Je crois que jamais le moment n’a été plus propice, car il est honteux de ne pas voir un seul maître bien représenté.”
Letter JBH 60, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Tuesday.

May
Publication of a booklet by Théodore Duret, Les peintres impressionnistes: Claude Monet, Sisley, C. Pissarro, Renoir, Berthe Morisot. In it, Duret defends the five named painters and, partly due to Pissarro’s encouragements, mentions Cézanne among the artists “nouveaux venus, ils n’ont encore pu donner toute leur mesure, et ce n’est que plus tard qu’on pourra formuler un jugement définitif sur leur œuvre.” This booklet, despite the request made by Pissarro, does not include his etching.

[May 18]
In his atelier at 18, rue des Trois-Frères, Pissarro shows his etchings to Duret.
Letter JBH 56, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated May 13.

June 1
Cézanne asks Zola to send another sixty francs to Hortense. “Ma bonne famille, excellente d’ailleurs, pour un malheureux peintre qui n’a jamais rien su faire, est peut-être un peu avare, c’est un léger travers, bien excusable sans doute en province.”

[June 12?]
Pissarro asks for an additional loan of 50 F from Murer. “Voici huit jours que je cours tout Paris cherchant en vain l’homme type acheteur des tableaux d’impressionnistes. Je cherche encore; Chabrier ne s’est point décidé, il a reculé l’affaire à trois mois. J’avais fini par dénicher un enthousiaste [Chabrier] mais la vente Hoschedé m’a tué. Il se décidera pour quelques tableaux inférieurs de moi qu’il pourra se procurer à bas prix à l’Hôtel Drouot, me voilà encore sans le sou. “[...] Si vous voulez les Choux ils sont à votre disposition pour le premier prêt de cinquante francs [cf. lettre vers avril], quant au second, si vous voulez bien y consentir, je vous le rendrai en argent ou comme vous le voudrez.”
Letter JBH 57, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Wednesday.

[June, before the 23rd]
Pissarro, “dans le plus grand besoin d’argent”, asks Murer to pay in advance for his portrait, which is in the course of completion (PV 469). “Voudriez-vous me solder le compte du portrait, en déduisant bien entendu ce que je vous dois pour les différents articles fournis par vous. Je crois que le prix de cent cinquante francs pour tout le mal que je me suis donné est un prix doux”.

Letter JBH 58, from Pissarro to Murer, undated.

June 23
Murer’s response: “Votre compte est fait et se balance par une dizaine de francs en votre faveur, si toutefois vous me comptez le portrait cent cinquante francs.” Murer appears surprised by the requested price, since Renoir had only charged him one hundred francs for his portrait.

Letter from Murer to Pissarro, dated; notice PV 469.

[June, after the 23rd]
Pissarro points out to Murer that the price of the portrait was set in agreement with Renoir. “Cette petite affaire est minime, même pour moi qui suis bien misérable, mais une explication ne fait jamais de mal, je pensais faire une diminution et passer outre, mais je vous avoue que ma délicatesse en souffre.”

Letter JBH 59, from Pissarro to Murer, undated.

[June 27]
Pissarro, who has received 20 F from Murer, keeps him informed of his thoughts. “Je continuerai le portrait [...] bien entendu, mais pour le moment impossible. J’attends toujours celui qui doit me délivrer de mon enfer d’inaction. Mlle Cassatt m’a renvoyé sa visite. “J’ai eu la visite de Desboutin et l’homme de lettres italien [Diego Martelli], ce dernier est très enthousiaste de cette peinture, il a une si haute estime pour mon art que j’en suis confus et n’ose vraiment y croire. [...] Le Coteau a été acheté chez Monet par Duret il y a une quinzaine de jours et même plus. N’importe vous trouverez autre chose.”

Letter JBH 61, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Friday.

June 27
Murer settles on another painting by Pissarro. “Tant mieux si vous avez vendu le coteau sur lequel j’avais jeté mon dévolu. Vous me donnerez en place un tableau de figure, votre intérieur breton [PV 276], refusé par Faure pour cause d’excès de tristesse, moi cela ne m’effraye pas.”

Letter from Eugène Murer to Pissarro, dated; notice PV 277.
June 27
Murer informs Gachet that he bought “un nouveau tableau de Renoir assez joli, paraît-il, à ce que dit Pissarro. [...] C’est un déjeuner sous une tonnelle.”
Letter from E. Murer to Dr Gachet, dated; Lettres impressionnistes, 1957, p. 167-168.

July 2
Pissarro responds to Murer.
“Vous désirez avoir mon Intérieur breton [PV 276] à la place du Coteau, c’est un tableau auquel je tiens, il ne me reste plus guère de figures de la Bretagne, je ne le donnais à Faure que parce qu’ayant reçu 800 francs pour deux toiles de 10, je ne devais attacher d’importance à la grandeur ou à la qualité du tableau, je lui devais une compensation. Je vous le céderais, à condition que vous me paierez les deux petites toiles à mon prix ordinaire de cinquante francs chaque. C’est ainsi que je me suis arrangé avec Mme Latouche au prix de cent francs pour toutes les toiles jusqu’à 20. “[...] Impossible d’aller cette semaine chez le père Chocquet. J’attends Mlle Cassatt demain matin. Aujourd’hui je fais un essai de ciment chez Legrand. Je désire partir au plus tôt, si je fais affaire.”
The “essai de ciment” is that of Mac Lean cement.
Georges Rivière, Renoir et ses amis, 1921, p. 36-37.

[July 2]  
Again, Cézanne asks Zola to send sixty francs to Hortense at her new address, 12, Vieux Chemin de Rome, in Marseille.

[July 3]  
Pissarro affirms to Murer that he would like to sell him his Intérieur breton even though he is particularly fond of it. “Je pars probablement ce soir car j’attends la visite de Mlle Cassatt, qui doit m’acheter quelques toiles.”
Letter JBH 69, from Pissarro to Murer, dated Wednesday.

[July 3]  
Just before his departure to Pontoise, Pissarro responds to a letter by Murer that he received. He hopes that Murer will bring to him an amateur named Leroux. He then expresses his discouragement.
“Ce n’est pas tenable, tous les efforts que je fais finissent par manquer, je comptais sur une vente à peu près bonne de la Demoiselle américaine, mais peu de chose. Une
petite toile de cinquante francs, c’est tomber dans le gouffre comme une goutte d’eau dans un incendie! Quand donc sortirai-je de ce pétrin et pourrai me livrer tranquillement à mon travail! Mes études se font sans suite, sans gaieté, sans entrain, par suite de cette idée, qu’il me faudra abandonner l’art et chercher à faire autre chose, s’il m’est possible de faire un nouvel apprentissage! triste!”

Letter JBH 63, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Murer, dated Wednesday.

[July]
Diego Martelli relates to a friend his encounter with Pissarro. “Qui se ressemble s’assemble [en français dans le texte original], dit le proverbe, et je ne me suis intimement lié avec un sympathique impressionniste qui est l’un des meilleurs du groupe et qui s’appelle Pissarro. Je suis allé avec lui, il y a quelques jours, chez un pâtissier [Murer] qui a une collection de tableaux que je voudrais avoir pour la plus grande part.”

Letter from Diego Martelli to Matilde Gioli, undated (translated from Italian); Diego Martelli, les Impressionnistes et l’art moderne, texts assembled and annotated by Francesca Errico, Editions Vilo, Paris, 1979, p. 34-35.

July 16
Cézanne thanks Zola for his last payment to Hortense. “Je suis à l’Estaque depuis une huitaine de jours.”

Letter from Paul Cézanne to Emile Zola, dated; John Rewald, Paul Cézanne, Correspondance, 1978, p. 166.

[Around July]
Pissarro notifies Murer that he must pass by de Bellio’s to ask for medicine. He has “promis à Miss Cassatt d’aller chez elle savoir si un de mes tableaux a pu être vendu hier à un de ses visiteurs du dimanche”.

He shares with him his thoughts on Guillaumin: “un artiste qui a travaillé quinze ans ayant un autre état en main a perdu 7 ans. Il vaut cent fois mieux, n’ayant d’autre responsabilité que la sienne propre, envoyer la Ville à tous les diables. Il faut évidemment un peu de caractère, mais c’est inévitable, on ne doit pas louvoyer! “Etant à St-Thomas en 52 commis bien payé, je n’ai pu y tenir, sans plus de réflexion je quittais tout et filais à Caracas, afin de rompre le câble qui m’attachait à la vie bourgeoise. Ce que j’ai souffert est inouï, c’est évident, mais j’ai vécu, ce que je souffre actuellement est terrible, encore bien plus qu’étant jeune, plein d’enthousiasme et d’ardeur, convaincu que je suis d’être perdu comme avenir. Cependant il me semble que je n’hésiterais pas, s’il fallait recommencer, suivre la même voie.”

Letter JBH 66, from Pissarro to Murer, dated Monday morning.

[Around July]
Pissarro writes to Murer that “la panne [financière] continue et que je me dispose malgré tout à partir demain après-midi à Pontoise. [...] “Laissez pousser votre barbiche, à mon prochain voyage nous verrons à la greffer sur le portrait. Ce sera un attrait de plus, car j’entrevois de riches colorations à y ajouter.”

Letter JBH 68, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Friday.

July 29

Cézanne is living at L’Estaque with his mother, while Hortense remains in Marseille. He discloses his plans to Zola: he is searching for accommodations in Marseille, in order to spend the winter there before going to Paris around March, “à l’époque de l’Exposition de peinture.” Zola having purchased a property at Médan, Cézanne could settle in the area, “un an ou deux, comme je fis à Auvers”. If he can he will stay in Paris for a month, in September or October. Finally, he requests another payment of sixty francs for Hortense.


August 9

Paul Alexis relates to Zola the following anecdote: “Le soir, quelquefois, à la Nlle Athènes, je vois Manet, Duranty, etc. L’autre fois, grande discussion à propos du congrès artistique qu’on annonce. Manet déclarait vouloir y aller, prendre la parole et tomber l’école des Beaux-Arts. Pissarro qui écoutait cela était vaguement inquiet. Duranty, en sage Nestor, le rappelait aux moyens pratiques.”

Letter from Paul Alexis to Zola; “Naturalisme pas mort”, Lettres inédites de Paul Alexis à Emile Zola, 1871-1900, annotated by Bard H. Bakker, Toronto, 1971, University of Toronto Press.

George Moore will report that in 1878 Pissarro came even more frequently to the Nouvelle Athènes than Manet and Degas, and “lorsque ceux-ci étaient présents, il restait là, approuvant leurs idées, se joignant calmement à la discussion.”


[Around August]

Pissarro invites Murer to come see his canvases: “venez donc demain voir les toiles que j’ai rapportées.

“Je les crois exceptionnelles, et vous savez on est rarement content.”


August 27
Cézanne asks Zola once more to send sixty francs to Hortense. He is still searching for an affordable place in Marseille. If his father consents to give him some money, he will spend the winter there.


[End of August]
Pissarro, upon return “de mon long séjour à Pontoise, où je me suis livré à une débauche de peinture”, resumes contact with Murer. Pissarro’s troubles continue. “Inutile de compter sur notre exposition, ce serait un four. Chez Durand-Ruel, où il y a la réunion des chefs-d’œuvre de nos maîtres les plus illustres, pas un chat, l’indifférence la plus complète. [...] “On parle d’un congrès artistique, que de bêtises qui vont s’y débiter solennellement.”

Letter JBH 70, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Saturday.

[September 13 or 14]
Pissarro’s wife, Julie, forwards Duret’s letter to Camille, and expresses to him her great weariness on the back of the letter. “Voilà encore 15 jours de passé de rien et tu n’es pas plus riche, et pas de tableaux, pas de travail de fait, je ne compren pas que tu passes ton temps comme cela, je n’y comprends rien. Voilà l’hiver qui arrive et tu as passé tout l’été à Paris et tu me dis toi-même que tout le monde que tu connais est parti, mais alors que fais-tu donc, tu devrais au moins me le dire pour que je ne te traite pas de paresseux, je suis bien fatiguée de cette vie-là.”

Letter from Julie to Camille, written on the back of Duret’s letter from September 9 (transcribed with a few orthographical corrections); Frits Lugt Collection, Institut néerlandais, Paris, inv. 1978-A.18.

[September 14]
Pissarro must return immediately to Pontoise, writes Murer, for his wife is very desperate. He asks him to “tâcher de placer à Leroux mes deux tableaux faisant pendant”.

Letter JBH 65, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Saturday.

September 14
Cézanne remains at L’Estaque with his mother. His father has accepted to provided him again (“rendu”) with 300 F this month, he writes to Zola. It is probably the amount his father had allocated to him in the past.


September 24
Cézanne has finally decided to stay in L’Estaque for the winter. He is planning to spend the night in Marseille.


[October 6]
Pissarro has received notice of the death of Guillaumin’s father (which occurred on September 30, 1878). He would like to remain in Paris for only three or four days, before returning at around October 15. He proposes to show Murer some of his canvases: “J’ai rapporté quelques toiles nouvelles, entre autres deux de figures, voudriez-vous venir ici les voir, vous verrez aussi des paysages, des meules et autres paysages soignés. J’ai je crois bien travaillé. Si vous pouviez m’amener Leroux, ce serait l’instant de choisir quelque chose de bien — et cela me rendrait service.”

Letter JBH 72, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Saturday.

Charles Leroux will later own the canvases PV 353, 382 and 391 (according to the PV notes).

October 30
Duret recommends Pissarro go to his friend, Deudon: “J’espère que vous aurez pu conclure quelque opération commerciale avec l’ami Pissarro. Au prix où ses toiles sont quotées [sic], on peut lui aider à faire bouillir sa marmite sans s’exposer à n’avoir plus de quoi alimenter la sienne.”


October 30
Duret sends 100 F to Pissarro for the acquisition of a “petite femme qui lave son linge”. He saw Deudon before leaving Paris, and announced to him of the delivery of Pissarro’s paintings. He has also praised Pissarro to the dealer Martin, who seems to regard Pissarro favorably again. “Je crois qu’à vos prix actuels vous pourriez renouer des affaires avec lui.” Finally, he invites Pissarro to come stay free of charge at his place in Cognac, during the period when he himself is certain to be there, from February 15 to April 15, 1879.


[End of October or beginning of November]
Pissarro responds to Murer: “Vous me demandez si j’ai pensé au petit panneau, vous devez savoir que lorsque je promets une chose je tiens à ma parole, le panneau est fait.”

**November 4**
Cézanne asks Zola to send 100 F to Hortense, who had to return to Paris on an emergency. “Je pense toujours retourner à Paris pendant quelques mois l’an prochain, vers février ou mars.”


**[Beginning of November, before the 5th]**
Pissarro writes to Murer: “Penser que ma femme accouche vers la fin de ce mois, et il faut déménager; pour l’effectuer j’ai cent francs d’une toile vendue. Je dois liquider à Pontoise ma situation le plus tôt possible, vous voyez par cet exposé que le moment est grave. “J'ai votre petit panneau à votre disposition”.

Letter JBH 73, from Pissarro, Paris, to Murer, dated Friday.

**November 5**
The whole Pissarro family leaves Pontoise to settle in Paris at 18, rue des Trois-Frères, the place that Camille has been occupying since the beginning of the year. They will reside there until May 1879.

**November 8**
Pissarro informs Murer of his family’s new residence in Montmartre.

Letter JBH 75, from Pissarro, Paris, 18, rue des Trois-Frères, to Murer, dated.

**November 13**
Cézanne sends Caillebotte his condolences for the death of his mother. It has been “environ neuf mois” that he has left Paris.


**[November]**
Diego Martelli persuades Pissarro to send two paintings to the exhibition of the Società Promotrice di Belle Arti de Florence, PV 405 and 451. He entrusts his painter friends of la Macchiaiola with their care. Needless to say, Pissarro, given his abyssmal poverty and his humble temperament, is ready to let his paintings go at very low prices.

Letter from Diego Martelli to Francesco Gioli, undated (translated from Italian); *Diego Martelli, les Impressionnistes et l’art moderne*, texts
assembled and annotated by Francesca Errico, Editions Vilo, Paris, 1979, p. 35-36.

[November 20]
Cézanne has known for a week that Zola sent Hortense 100 F, but he has no other news of her.

Letter from Paul Cézanne, L’Estaque, to Emile Zola, dated; John Rewald, 

November 21
Birth of Ludovic Rodolphe Pissarro in Paris, rue des Trois-Frères.

Ludovic Rodo Pissarro, Arbre généalogique de la famille de Camille Pissarro, 1939; unpublished, association des Amis de Pissarro, Pontoise.

November 25
Pissarro announces the birth of his child to Murer. Then: “Mauvaise nouvelle d’Amérique, Legrand m’écrit qu’on a trouvé mes tableaux tellement mauvais qu’on renvoie toute la bande des impressionnistes avec les cornes, il ne nous manquait plus que cette dernière humiliation, bafoué par les Américains! Je ne perds cependant pas courage, j’ai envoyé en Italie deux toiles.”


December 19
Cézanne points out to Zola that Hortense has settled down at 32, rue Ferrari, Marseille, since September. He himself is still at L’Estaque. He thinks that he will return to Paris at the beginning of March. “Comme tu le dis, il y a ici quelques aspects fort beaux. Ce serait de les rendre, ce n’est guère mon fait, j’ai commencé à voir la nature un peu tard, ce qui ne laisse pas que d’être plein d’intérêt cependant.”

Letter from Paul Cézanne to Emile Zola, dated; John Rewald, Paul Cézanne, Correspondance, 1978, p. 177-178.
1879

[January 28]
Cézanne asks Chocquet on behalf of a friend (most likely Monticelli) for information about the conditions of participation at the Salon. “Ce n’est pas pour moi, car je me rendrai avec ma petite caravane à Paris vers les premiers jours de mars de la présente année.”


Hypothesis on Monticelli put forth by John Rewald, Cézanne, 1986, p. 146.

February 7
Cézanne thanks Chocquet for the requested information.


February
Cézanne writes to Zola: “Je pense ne plus devoir passer qu’une quinzaine de jours à l’Estaque, après quoi j’irai à Aix d’où je partirai pour Paris.”


[March]
Degas informs Caillebotte that Pisarro found a space for their next group exhibition.

Letter from Degas to Caillebotte, dated Tuesday; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte, sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 14, p. 244.

March 10
Monet announces to de Bellio his plan to not participate in the exhibition, “n’ayant rien fait qui vaille la peine d’être exposé.”


March 14
Sisley explains to Duret that he has decided to go to the Salon, so as not to “végéter” anymore.

Letter from A. Sisley to Duret, dated; Théodore Duret, “Quelques Lettres inédites de Manet et de Sisley”, Revue blanche, March 15, 1899, p. 436.

[March 16]
Degas tallies the possible participants of the exhibition: “Sisley renonce. J’ai vu Pissarro ce matin, Cézanne va arriver dans quelques jours, Guillaumin le verra de suite. Monet ne sait encore qu’une chose, c’est qu’il n’envoie pas au Salon. […] Mlle Cassatt voit demain Mlle [sic] Morisot et saura sa résolution.”


The roster of possible participants that he draws up is almost identical to the one he jots on a notebook, on some exhibition room maps, and on posters drafts.


**March 25**

Monet explains to Murer that he has finally decided to participate in the exhibition, “à contrecœur et pour ne pas passer pour un lâcheur”.


[End of March or beginning of April]

Diego Martelli informs an Italian friend of preparations for the exhibition. This year, the group is taking on an independent designation. “La condition de ne pas exposer au Salon a provoqué de nombreux déserteurs, parmi lesquels Renoir, Desboutin…”


**April 1**

Cézanne explains to Pissarro his decision not to participate in the exhibition. “Je pense qu’au milieu des difficultés soulevées par mon envoi au Salon, il serait très convenable pour moi de ne pas prendre part à l’Exposition des impressionnistes. “D’un autre côté, je m’éviterai le tracas occasionné par les dérangements du transport de mes quelques toiles. D’ailleurs je quitte Paris dans quelques jours.”


**April 3**

Gauguin writes to Pissarro: “J’accepte avec plaisir l’invitation que vous et Mr Degas avaient [sic] bien voulu me faire, et naturellement dans ce cas je me dois à toutes les règles qui régissent votre société.”
“En me décidant je tiens à votre disposition les frais de cotisation; je vous verrai il est probable chez Mme. Latouche et nous nous entendrons à ce sujet.”

April 10
Diego Martelli informs Giovanni Fattori that the exhibition of the independents has been open to guests since the day before. “Parmi nos exposants d’ici, les plus en pointe sont Monet, Caillebotte et Pissarro.”
Letter from Diego Martelli, 52, rue de Douai, Paris, to Giovanni Fattori, dated (translated from Italian); Diego Martelli, les Impressionnistes et l’art moderne, 1979, p. 41.

April 10-May 11
Quatrième Exposition de Peinture, 28, avenue de l’Opéra. There are two hundred forty-six entries in the catalogue and fifteen exhibitors listed on the endpaper of the catalogue, among whom Caillebotte, Cassatt, Degas, Monet, Pissarro. Twelve works by Piette are not mentioned. Gauguin is also not mentioned, even though he exhibits at least one sculpture.
Catalogue de la 4me Exposition de Peinture, du 10 avril au 11 mai 1879, 28, avenue de l’Opéra, Paris.

April 17
Caillebotte thanks a journalist for his article which appeared in the morning: “Je regrette que vous ayez oublié Miss Cassatt et un mot pour les absents de cette année: Cézanne, Renoir, Sisley, Mademoiselle Morisot.”
Letter from Caillebotte, dated; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte, sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 17, p. 245.

[Around April]
Degas writes to Bracquemond about a journal of engravings that they are planning to design with Pissarro. “Pissarro vient d’envoyer par le messager de Pontoise des essais de vernis mou — comme c’est embêtant que vous soyez si loin... quand nous reverrons-nous ? [...] “Pissarro est ravissant d’ardeur et de foi. [...] Vous pourrez emporter vos gravures après avoir parlé du Journal.”
Letter from Degas to Bracquemond, undated; Lettres de Degas, 1945, letter XIX, p. 46-47.

[May 13]
Ernest May and Caillebotte are the cited “capitalistes.”
[End of May]
Caillebotte informs Monet that the profits from the exhibition, with some 15 400 entries, amount to 439,50 F.

June 3
Cézanne, who is staying in Melun, tells Zola that he tried to see him at his place in Paris on May 10. He will come back to Paris on June 8. “Peut-être as-tu su que j’ai fait une petite visite insinuative auprès de l’amí Guillemet, qui m’a, dit-on, patronné auprès du jury [du Salon], hélas, sans retour de la part de ces juges au cœur dur.”

June 5
Cézanne confirms with Zola their appointment for Tuesday, June 10, at the Zola’s place, 23, rue de Boulogne. He intends to arrive the day before in Paris.

[July 7]
Pissarro informs Gauguin that he had a dispute with Mme Latouche, an art dealer, about a painting belonging to Gauguin, it appears. She wanted to keep 100 F of commission, charged to the account of Pissarro. In consequence, he decides “[de ne] plus rien avoir à faire avec des gens pareils.”

July 8
The response by Gauguin is as unclear as the letter by Pissarro. “En outre de la vente de mon tableau que je garde je mets à votre disposition 150f pour une toile de 10”.
Letter V. M. n° 7, from Gauguin, Paris, to Pisarro (sic), dated, on commercial headed writing paper.

[Second half of July]
Gauguin, unable to find Pissarro at the Nouvelle Athènes, offers to pay him in advance for the painting he would like to purchase, and invites Pissarro to come by his office to fulfill the transaction.
Letter V. M. n° 8, from Gauguin to Pissarro, undated.

July 29
Gauguin is mandated by a stock-broker to buy two paintings for 300 F. So he asks Pissarro to bring him two canvases of 6 or of 8.

Letter V. M. n° 10, from Gauguin, Paris, to Pissarro, dated, on commercial headed writing paper.

**September 5**
Monet informs de Bellio of the death of his wife Camille that same morning, and asks him “annoncer la fatale nouvelle à ceux qu’elle intéresse.”


**In September**
Pissarro receives Gauguin at Pontoise. Both of them depict the same view from the côte des Grouettes during the summer: Pissarro, PV 493, dated 79; Gauguin, W 31, dated 1879, and W 31, 32 and 33.

Confirmed by the letter V. M. n° 11, from Gauguin, Paris, to Pissarro, dated September 26, 1879, on commercial headed writing paper.

**[Last quarter of the year]**
Degas solicits Bracquemond: “Que j’ai besoin de vous voir, Bracquemond et que je vous manque de fois! [...]”

“Il faut causer du journal. On a fait avec Pissarro quelques essais dont l’un de Pissarro est un résultat. Mlle Cassatt y est en plein en ce moment. Impossible, pour moi, avec ma vie à gagner, de me livrer encore à cela tout à fait, arrangeons-nous donc pour passer toute une journée ensemble, soit ici, soit chez vous. — Avez-vous une presse chez vous ?”


**September 24**
Cézanne sends the following reflection: “Je m’ingénie toujours à trouver ma voie picturale. La nature m’offre les plus grandes difficultés.”


**September 26**
Monet expresses gratitude to Pissarro for the condolences he has sent him.

Gauguin sends to Pissarro “l’argent des 2 petits tableaux et vos couleurs” from Tanguy’s. “Je n’ai pas encore vu Mr Palley […] mais aussitôt que je le verrai je tâcherai de lui faire acheter une toile de vous pour 300f. […] 
“On expose en ce moment au journal de l’Evénement plusieurs toiles de vous Sisley et Ce Monet; je crois que vous n’en savez rien. (Epoque 72) 
“Madame Latouche a vendu un éventail de vous.”
Letter V. M. n° 11, from Gauguin, Paris, to Pissarro, dated, on commercial headed writing paper.

September 27
Cézanne writes to Zola: “Je ne vais à Paris que le 6 au matin. 
“J’accepte très volontiers ton invitation pour Médan. Surtout pour cette époque où la campagne est vraiment étonnante. — Il semble qu’il y a plus de silence. Voici des sensations que je ne peux exprimer, il vaut mieux les ressentir.”

November 8
Pissarro thanks F. Rousille for his invitation to the exhibition of Pau, but “je me décide à ne rien envoyer pour éviter au comité un refus probable.”
Letter JBH 80, from Pissarro, Paris, to Rousille, dated.

December 18
From Melun, Cézanne announces to Zola: “Probablement samedi [20 décembre] je n’aurai plus de charbon, et je serai obligé de me réfugier à Paris.”

[Around December]
Degas sends to Pissarro proofs of his zinc plates and explains to him some useful techniques. “Je vous félicite de votre ardeur; j’ai couru chez Mademoiselle Cassatt avec votre paquet. Elle vous fait les mêmes compliment que moi à ce sujet. 
“[…] Pour la couleur, je vous ferai tirer avec une encre de couleur votre prochain envoi. J’ai aussi d’autres idées pour les planches en couleur. 
“Essayez donc aussi quelque chose de plus fini. Ça serait ravissant de voir des contours de choux très suivis [MM 29 et 30]. Pensez qu’il faut débuter par une ou deux très belles planches de vous. […] 
“Pas besoin de vous complimenter sur la qualité d’art de vos potagers.”
Letter from Degas to Pissarro, undated; Lettres de Degas, 1945, letter n° XXV p. 52-55.
Some years later, Pissarro will write to his son Lucien: “J’ai d’un autre côté retrouvé mes plaques perdues, la Masure [MM 20], le Père Melon [MM 24], tout un paquet se trouvait chez Degas, en mettant de l’ordre dans son atelier il les a trouvées et les met à ma disposition, je n’en connais pas encore le nombre.”

Letter J BH 651, from Pissarro, Paris, to Lucien, dated April 8, 1891.

A handwritten note by Pissarro on some proofs attests that Degas made the prints, or at least MM 15 à 22, 24, 31. Some proofs will be found within the atelier of Degas, from MM 16 to 19, 21, 22, 25, 31, 39.


Vente Atelier Degas, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, December 11-13, 1918, n° 300 to 306, 308 to 311.
1880

[January]
Degas writes to Pissarro: “Mademoiselle Cassatt fait des essais délicieux de gravure. Tâchez de revenir bientôt. Je commence à annoncer le journal de différents côtés. Avec nos livraisons avant la lettre nous allons couvrir nos frais.”

Letter from Degas to Pissarro, undated; Lettres de Degas, 1945, letter XXVI, p. 55.

January 24

An article in the Gaulois, signed “Tout-Paris,” announces the publication of a journal of engravings: “Dans quelques jours — le 1er février — paraîtra ‘le Jour et la Nuit’, organe de l’impressionnisme, dont les rédacteurs — je veux dire les dessinateurs — sont: Miss Cassatt; MM. Degas, Caillebotte, Raffaelli, Forain, Bracquemond, Pissaro [sic], Rouard [sic], etc. Ces artistes sont les propriétaires et les éditeurs de leur feuille.”

The article includes a box in the form of an announcement, which declares in the name of the painters already cited, the loss for the impressionist school of Claude Monet, whose funeral will take place upon opening of the Salon. The article itself predicts that Monet, two years after Renoir, will desert the impressionist camp. The anonymous writer then attacks Hoschedé and Murer.


January 29

In response to Monet’s protest against the article, Le Gaulois contents itself with retracting the statement that Hoschedé lives “aux frais du peintre”.


January 30

De Bellio defends himself from the accusation that he originated the article.


February 2

Monet interrogates Pissarro in order to find out the author of the article.

[February 5]
Pissarro declares to Monet “toute l’indignation que nous avons contre ces sortes d’écrits”. “Je ne vois pas jusqu’ici quel a pu être le but de l’individu en attaquant Hoschedé avec tant d’animoisité.” On the possible defection of Monet, he seems more reserved: “J’avais appris par Durandy, quelques jours avant [la parution] de l’article, que vous aviez l’intention d’exposer au Salon; j’en parlai à Caillebotte lequel me rassurait complètement.” Concluding prematurely, he declares: “Je suis heureux d’apprendre que vous êtes toujours dans les mêmes idées, et que tous ces cancans sont absurdes. J’aurais été bien malheureux de voir un de nos vieux et vaillants nous quitter après avoir perdu des artistes tels que Renoir, Cézanne, Sisley, etc…”


[Around February]
Degas has visited a space suggested by Eugène Manet for the next exhibition. It doesn’t suit him, and he proposes a different space.

Letter from Degas to (Eugène) Manet, dated Tuesday morning; Lettres de Degas, 1945, letter XXVII, p. 55-56.

[End of March]
Georges Lecomte: “En 1880, il [Pissarro] teinte ses châssis des complémentaires de la couleur dominante du tableau: pour un soleil couchant à la dominante rouge, un cadre vert, pour une toile violacée, un cadre de ton jaune mat; un printemps d’aspect vert s’enchâsse dans du rose: la lumière resplendit plus congrue et plus harmonique.”


April 1-30
Cinquième Exposition de Peinture at 10, rue des Pyramides. Two hundred thirty-two entries appear in the catalogue from eighteen contributors, among whom Caillebotte, Mlle Cassatt, Degas, Gauguin, Guillaumin, Mme Berthe Morisot, and Pissarro. The exhibition poster publicizes the title: “5me Exposition faite par un groupe d’artistes indépendants”.

April 1
Cézanne reports to Zola upon his return to Paris: “Après avoir reçu ta lettre ce matin, 1er avril, renfermant celle de Guillemet, je tombe à Paris [il était à Melun jusqu’àlors], j’apprends chez Guillaumin que les “Impressionnistes” sont ouverts. — J’y cours. Alexis me tombe sur les bras, le docteur Gachet nous invite à dîner, j’empêche Alexis de te rendre ses devoirs. Puis-je me permettre de nous inviter à
dîner pour samedi soir [3 avril] ? Si le contraire avait lieu, aie l’obligance de m’en informer. Je réside rue de l’Ouest, 32, Plaisance [XIVe arrondissement].”

**April 9**


**May 10**
Renoir and Monet have decided to write to the minister of the Beaux-Arts in order, according to Cézanne, to “protester contre leur mauvais placement et réclamer une exposition pour l’an prochain du groupe des impressionnistes purs.” Cézanne transmits the following request in their name to Zola: that he have the letter published in *le Voltaire* while accompanying it with a few words on “l’importance des impressionnistes”.

**In 1880**
Renoir draws in pastels the *Portrait de Cézanne* (Graff collection, London), which he will probably copy in 1881 (V 372, musée de l’Ermitage, Saint Petersburg, former Pissarro collection).

*[Between May and July]*
Gauguin notifies Pissarro that someone from the stock exchange would like to acquire the painting of millstones that Gaugin had bought from Pissarro. “Je l’ai prévenu que vous vendiez maintenant 250f que je ne pourrais donc le lui laisser qu’à ce prix.” Pissarro will be paid the money immediately and will replace the painting with a new one. Gauguin would like him to get to know the amateur. “Autre chose, dans la position nouvelle que je dois occuper il me sera nécessaire d’habiter du côté de Montmartre vous voyez que ce sera commode pour nos travaux communs. J’aurais alors un atelier dans lequel vous pourriez travailler.”
Letter V. M. n° 12, from Gauguin to Pissarro, undated.

**June 19**
Cézanne provides Zola with his new address at 32, rue de l’Ouest, and thanks him for the articles he wrote for *le Voltaire*. “Je ne sais pas trop si des chaleurs vraies viendront, mais dès que je ne te dérangerai pas, écris-moi, j’irai à Médan avec plaisir.
Et si tu n’es pas effrayé par le long temps que je risque d’y mettre, je me permettrai de porter une petite toile et d’y faire un motif, le tout si tu n’y vois pas d’inconvénient.

“[…J]e vais tous les jours à la campagne peindre un peu.”


**July 4**

Not having heard from Zola, Cézanne reminds him of his wish to go to Médan.


**July 15**

Cézanne, who is staying with Zola in Médan, spends the day with Guillemet, who has just arrived the day before. Guillemet will say to Zola: “Vous avez dû être étonné de ne pas le voir rentrer pour déjeuner. Nous avons déjeuné, comme il a dû vous le dire, à l’Esturgeon, les coudes sur la table, comme au bon vieux temps, et cela m’a rajeuni de pas mal d’années.”


**August 16**

Gauguin announces to Pissarro that he has found accommodations with a studio at Montmartre (8, rue Carcel).

Letter V. M. n° 13, from Gauguin to Pissarro, dated August 16.

**August 22**

Zola responds to Guillemet: “Paul est toujours ici avec moi [à Médan]. Il travaille beaucoup, et il compte toujours sur vous pour ce que vous savez [son admission au Salon]. Il m’a conté l’excellente matinée que vous avez passée ensemble.”


**October 28**

Cézanne explains to Zola that having learned of the death of his mother through the newspaper (on October 17, in Médan), he is going to abstain from disturbing him.

December 23
Pissarro explains to Duret that he has been living since November in Paris at 18, rue des Trois-Frères, “très mal logé, mal à mon aise pour travailler et surtout pour montrer mes tableaux aux amateurs rares”. [...] J’ai recours à Portier pour battre les alentours, il n’y met certes pas une bien grande activité […], les affaires sont piteuses, bientôt je serai vieux, ma vue affaiblie, je me verrai aussi avancé qu’il y a vingt ans. Degas a mis le siège devant Beugniet [Adrien Beugniet, marchand, 10, rue Laffitte], j’ai fait une aquarelle sérieuse pour le tenter […]. Vous me parlez avec enthousiasme de Whistler, je comprends cela, et en pensant à la grande valeur de cet artiste incomparable, je n’aurais jamais pu croire que des essais d’eaux-fortes aussi informes que les miennes puissent se vendre à Londres. Je crois que les gouaches seraient plus appréciées, c’est aussi plus dans mes moyens, j’en ai fait dont j’étais satisfait. Quant à l’eau-forte, je n’ai pas eu le temps et les moyens de poursuivre les essais, il m’aurait fallu deux ou trois ans de travail acharné. Nous nous sommes arrêtés brusquement! Le besoin de vendre me pousse à l’aquarelle, l’eau-forte est délaissée pour le moment.”


End of the year
As a result of the collapse of the bank, l’Union générale, Feder (who used to support Durand-Ruel) withdraws his aid. Durand-Ruel is able to resume his impressionist acquisitions.

January 24
More discussions arise among the impressionists. In a long letter, Caillebotte explains to Pissarro that he finds unacceptable, in the name of the “question d’art”, that Degas continue to impose talentless painters upon their exhibitions while he rejects Renoir, Monet, Sisley and Cézanne. “Je demande donc qu’une exposition soit faite avec tous ceux qui ont apporté ou apporteront un intérêt réel dans la question. C’est-à-dire vous, Monet, Renoir, Sisley, Mlle Morisot, Mlle Cassatt, Cézanne, Guillaumin, si vous voulez Gauguin, peut-être Cordey et moi. C’est tout puisque Degas refusera une exposition ainsi faite. [...] “Je me résume, voulez-vous faire une exposition uniquement artistique ? Je ne sais pas ce que nous ferons dans un an. Voyons auparavant ce que nous ferons dans deux mois. Si Degas veut en être, qu’il vienne, mais sans tous ces gens qu’il traîne après lui. Les seuls de ses amis qui aient des droits sont Rouart et Tillot.”

Letter from Caillebotte to Pissarro, dated; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte, sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 22, p. 245.

January 27
Pissarro himself, more opened, wished to adapt a conciliatory position. Pissarro declares himself completely opposed to the proposition of Caillebotte, which has been justified by the opposition of Degas to “la demande de rentrée de Renoir et Monet à notre exposition. [...] Le seul principe possible, aussi juste que faire se peut, est celui de ne pas lâcher des confrères que l’on a, à tort ou à raison, acceptés, et que l’on ne peut jeter dehors sans façon; c’est aussi une question d’honnêteté. [...] Rappelez-vous qu’il [Degas] nous a amené Mlle Cassatt, Forain et vous; il lui sera beaucoup pardonné! [...] Je n’ai montré votre lettre qu’à Mlle Cassatt qui est de mon avis. J’en parlerai demain à Gauguin et Guillaumin.”

Letter JBH 86, from Pissarro, Paris, to Caillebotte, dated. The last two phrases were added, compared with the rough draft of the letter; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte, sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 23, p. 246.

January 28
Caillebotte regrets that Pissarro has adopted the position of Degas. In these conditions, he doesn’t know whether he will participate in the next exhibition.

Letter from Caillebotte to Pissarro, dated; Marie Berhaut, Caillebotte, sa vie et son œuvre, 1978, letter n° 24, p. 246.

[March]
Degas informs Bracquemond that their exhibition space was found eight days ago. It will open on the 15 [?]. “Vous savez que la condition de n’avoir pas envoyé au Salon reste imposée. [...] Monet, Renoir, Caillebotte et Sisley n’ont pas répondu à l’appel.”
April 2-May 1
Sixième Exposition de Peinture at 35, boulevard des Capucines. One hundred and seven works are included in the catalogue and there are thirteen exhibitors, among whom Mlle Mary Cassatt, Degas, Gauguin, Guillaumin, Mme Berthe Morisot, Pissarro.

April 12
Cézanne asks Zola to write a notice for a sale on behalf of Cabaner, who is sick. “Voici un aperçu de quelques noms des artistes qui ont offert des œuvres:

April 16
Zola agrees to write the notice, but he requests more details from Cézanne.

Cézanne sends the letter of Zola probably to Franc-Lamy so that the latter may provide information on Cabaner. Franc-Lamy will respond to Zola on April 22.

May 7

May 13
Sale at the hôtel Drouot on behalf of Cabaner. There are thirty-eight numbered entries, among them two water-colors by Pissarro, *Cour de ferme et Route*, and some Cézannes.

**May 16**
Cézanne meets Gauguin at the Pissarros. Cézanne has learned of the acquisition by Chocquet, at Tanguy’s, of one of his toiles de 40 (V 552), without frame. “Monsieur Chocquet, nous sommes tous en bon état et depuis notre arrivée nous jouissons de toutes les variabilités atmosphériques que le ciel veut bien nous départir. Monsieur Pissarro, que nous avons vu hier, nous a donné de vos nouvelles, et sommes heureux de vous savoir en bonne santé.”


**May 20**
Cézanne thanks Zola for his preface to the catalogue of the Cabaner sale. “Bien sûr que comme tu le dis, mon séjour à Pontoise ne m’empêchera pas d’aller te voir, au contraire, j’ai complété d’aller à Médan par voie de terre et aux frais de mes jambes. Je pense ne devoir pas être au-dessous de cette tâche.

“Je vois assez souvent Pissarro, je lui ai prêté le volume de Huysmans [En Ménage], qu’il gobe beaucoup.

“J’ai mis plusieurs études en train par temps gris et par temps de soleil.”


**May 20**
Pissarro indicates to Duret: “Je ferai mon possible d’aller à Paris pendant que vous y êtes, pour le moment ce n’est pas possible, ayant commencé quelques études que je désire terminer.”

Letter JBH 89, from Pissarro, Pontoise, to Duret, dated.

**June**
Cézanne thanks Zola for sending him his last “volume”, which includes a study “très belle” on Stendhal (one of a series of ten articles that appeared in *le Globe*, from March 31 to April 9). He passed by his residence in Paris, where he waited for a book that Rod sent him (*Palmyre Veulard*).

“Ma sœur et mon beau-frère sont venus passer quelques jours à Paris. Dimanche matin, ma sœur étant malade, j’ai été obligé de les rembarquer pour Aix. Le premier dimanche du mois, je les avais accompagnés à Versailles, la ville du grand roi, voir les grandes eaux. […]

“Je travaille un peu, mais avec beaucoup de ramollissement.”

[July]
Gauguin, having spent time with Cézanne at Pissarro’s, ends up fighting with him. Gauguin writes to Pissarro: “Mon cher Professeur
“Il y a une théorie que je vous ai entendu discuter; il fallait absolument vivre à Paris pour faire de la peinture afin de s’entretenir les idées — On ne le dirait guère en ce moment où nous autres pauvres malheureux allons à la Nlle-Athènes nous faire rôtir sans qu’un seul moment vous soyez préoccupé d’autre chose que de vivre en ermite vivant dans son hermitage. J’espère vous voir arriver un de ces jours ici.
“[…] Mr Césanne [sic] a-t-il trouvé la formule exacte d’une œuvre admise par tout le monde ? S’il trouvait la recette pour comprimer l’expression outrée de toutes ses sensations dans un seul et unique procédé je vous en prie tâchez de le faire causer pendant son sommeil en lui administrant une de ces drogues mystérieuses et homéopathiques et venez au plus tôt à Paris nous en faire part.
“Au revoir heureux campagnard.”
Letter V. M. n° 16, from Gauguin to Pissarro, undated.

August 2
Cézanne goes to see Alexis in the morning. “J’ai vu mon compatriote complètement rétabli” (letter of August 5).

August 5
Cézanne writes to Zola: “Quelques petits embarras ne m’ont pas facilité ma visite à Médan, mais j’irai pour sûr à la fin d’octobre. Je dois à cette époque quitter Pontoise, et peut-être que j’irai passer quelque temps à Aix.”

[August, before the 27th]
Gauguin shares with Pissarro a long discussion that he had the day before with Degas. The latter thinks that it is Durand-Ruel who is pushing Renoir to “rentrer” in the exhibition of independents. Gauguin adds: “c’est-à-dire que c’est Renoir qui fait la loi […]Il faut se faire respecter notre mouvement y gagnera, et ce n’est pas avec une conduite continuelle de gens sans foi ni loi que nous réussirons, même pour la question d’argent.” Among these “gens”, Gauguin counts Monet and Sisley.
Letter V. M. n° 17, de Gauguin to Pissarro, undated.

August 27
Birth of Jeanne Marguerite Eva Pissarro, quai du Pothuis. She will be nicknamed Cocotte.
Birth certificate n° 113, mairie de Pontoise.

**October 15**
Cézanne is preparing to leave Pontoise, announces Zola. “Le temps approche où je dois partir pour Aix. Avant de m’en aller je voudrais aller te souhaiter le bonjour. Comme le mauvais temps est venu, je t’écris à Médan, conjecturant que tu dois être de retour de Grandcamp [il est rentré le 15 septembre]. Alors si tu n’y vois pas de difficulté, j’irai te voir vers le 24 ou le 25 de ce mois.”


**November 5**
Zola indicates to Numa Coste: “J’ai eu Paul [Cézanne] ici pendant huit jours. Il est parti pour Aix”.


**November 8**
Pissarro suggests to Tanguy that he go to Durand-Ruel’s place, 1, rue de la Paix, to collect 100 F.

Letters JBH 92 and 93, from Pissarro, Pontoise, respectively, to Tanguy and to Durand-Ruel, dated.

**End of November or beginning of December**
Gauguin invites Pissarro, in the name of the “Société dite des Indépendants”, to attend the signing at Durand-Ruel’s place of a lease for an exhibition space at 251, rue Saint-Honoré.

“J’ai nettement posé la question à Mr Rouart au sujet de Raffaeli et il a fini par être d’accord avec moi [pour ne plus l’accepter]—

“On aurait bien besoin de vous pour mettre d’accord bien des gens; il faut voir Miss Cassatt sur qui vous avez de l’influence; Degas me paraît maintenant très radouci et plus facilement abordable pour Claude Monet et même Renoir. Si par un coup de maître vous pouviez amender Caillebotte on arriverait je crois à faire dans Paris un très joli coup.”

Letter V. M. n° 19, from P. Gauguin to Pissarro, undated.

**December 14**
Gauguin sends to Pissarro his resignation from the Société: “Hier soir Degas m’a dit avec colère qu’il donnerait plutôt sa démission que de renvoyer Raffaeli.”

1044
“[...] Malgré toute ma bonne volonté je ne puis continuer plus longtemps à servir de bouffon à Mrs Raffaelli & Cie, veuillez donc accepter ma démission; à partir d’aujourd’hui je reste dans mon coin. [...]”

“Je crois que Guillaumin est dans les mêmes intentions que moi mais je ne veux nullement peser sur sa décision, chacun est libre.”

Letter V. M. n° 20, from P. Gauguin to Pissarro, dated.
After 1881

[Around February 24, 1882]
Letter from Pissarro to Monet: “Cézanne m’a écrit qu’il n’avait rien [pour l’exposition de cette année]!”

May 13, 1883
Letter from Pissarro to Huysmans: “D’où vient que vous ne dites pas un mot de Cézanne, que pas un de nous n’admette comme un des tempéraments les plus étonnants et le plus curieux de notre époque et qui a eu une influence très grande sur l’art moderne ?...”
Letter JBH 149, from Pissarro, Osny près Pontoise, to Huysmans.

[Beginning of March 1884]
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Quand on est trop près, on ne voit rien, c’est comme un tableau de Cézanne que tu te fourrerais sous le nez. A propos de Cézanne, je me suis payé quatre de ses études, très curieuses.”
Letter JBH 224, from Pissarro, Paris, to Lucien, undated.

[End of August 1885]
Letter from Pissarro to Monet: “On m’a dit que Cézanne était reparti pour Marseille.”
Letter JBH 286, from Pissarro, Eragny-sur-Epte by Gisors (Eure), to Monet, undated.

[December 3, 1890]
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “J’ai reçu une lettre de Murer me disant qu’il avait rencontré Guillaumin qui lui dit que Cézanne était dans une maison de fous!... tous donc!... c’est navrant!...”
Letter JBH 605, from Pissarro, Eragny-sur-Epte by Gisors, Eure, to Lucien, dated.

May 2, 1891
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “En même temps que les épreuves, je t’envoie les Hommes du jour: Paul Cézanne; on n’a pas daigné m’envoyer un exemplaire!...”
Letter JBH 657, from Pissarro, Eragny by Gisors, Eure, to Lucien, dated.

May 7, 1891
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Je t’ai envoyé avec les eaux-fortes un numéro de l’Homme du jour, avec le portrait de Cézanne par moi et notice de Bernard. Ce pauvre ignorant prétend que Cézanne a été un moment sous l’influence de Monet, un comble, qu’en dis-tu ?...”
May 26, 1895
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Je suis très emballé par cette maîtrise extraordinaire. Cézanne, que j’ai rencontré hier chez Durand, est bien de mon avis que c’est l’œuvre d’un volontaire [les Cathédrale de Rouen par Monet], bien pondéré, poursuivant l’insaisissable nuance des effets que je ne vois réalisée par aucun autre artiste.”


[November 1895]
Letter from Pissarro to his son George: “Vollard fait une exposition de Cézanne; c’est vraiment épatant; il y a des natures mortes, des paysages d’une très grande allure, des baigneurs très étranges et très peintre, d’une sobriété extraordinaire. On dirait que c’est fait en deux tons; c’est d’un effet!!”


Vollard recounts that he had solicited Pissarro for this exhibition: “Pissarro, qui possédait quelques-unes des plus belles toiles du maître, s’offrit aussitôt à me les prêter, sous la seule réserve du consentement de l’auteur. [...] Je dois ajouter que Pissarro, au dernier moment, ne put se résoudre à se séparer de ses tableaux”.


November 13, 1895
Letter from Pissarro to his sister-in-law Esther, wife of Lucien: “Chez Vollard il y a une exposition de Cézanne très complète. Des natures mortes d’un fini étonnant, des choses inachevées, mais vraiment extraordinaires de sauvagerie et de caractère, je crois que ce sera peu compris.”

Letter JBH 1169, from Pissarro, Paris, 111, rue Saint-Lazare, to Esther, dated.

[November 1895]
Letter from Pissarro to Georges: “Les amateurs sont ahuris; ils n’y comprennent rien, c’est cependant un peintre de premier ordre [Cézanne], d’une finesse, d’un vrai, d’un classique épatant.”


November 19, 1895
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “T’ai-je dit qu’il y avait [galerie Vollard] une très belle et intéressante exposition de Cézanne; Degas et Monet ont acheté des choses épatantes, moi j’ai fait un échange de quelques toiles admirables, Baigneurs et d’un portrait de Cézanne pour une mauvaise esquisse de Louveciennes!”

Vollard writes in his account book, at the date of November 19, 1895:
"Doit Monsieur C. Pissarro
3 esquisses de Cézanne “petit portrait” [V 371] 400
“baigneurs” et “scène champêtre” [V 272, et V 115 ?] 400
Avoir le même
1 ancien paysage daté (1870) 400”

Agenda commercial (préciser) 1895, Archives Vollard, Bibliothèque centrale et archives des musées nationaux, musée du Louvre, Paris.

November 21, 1895
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Je pensais aussi à l’exposition de Cézanne où il y a des choses exquises, des Natures mortes d’un achevé irréprochable, d’autres très travaillées et cependant laissées en plan, cependant encore plus belles que les autres, des paysages, des nus, des têtes inachevées et cependant vraiment grandioses, et si peintre, si souples... pourquoi ?? la sensation y est!... [...] Ce qu’il y a de curieux pendant que j’étais à admirer le côté curieux, déconcertant de Cézanne que je ressens depuis nombre d’années, arrive Renoir. Mais mon enthousiasme n’est que de la Saint-Jean à côté de celui de Renoir, Degas lui-même qui subit le charme de cette nature de sauvage raffiné, Monet, tous... sommes-nous dans l’erreur ?... je ne le crois pas...”


November 22, 1895
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien (already cited): “Ils [les critiques] ne se doutent pas que Cézanne a subi des influences comme nous tous et que cela en somme ne retire rien de ses qualités; ils ne savent pas que Cézanne a subi d’abord l’influence de Delacroix, Courbet, Manet et même Legros, comme nous tous; il a subi mon influence à Pontoise et moi la sienne. Tu te rappelles les sorties de Zola et Béliard à ce propos; ils croyaient qu’on inventait la peinture de toute pièce et que l’on était original quand on ne ressemblait à personne. Ce qu’il y a de curieux c’est que dans cette exposition de Cézanne chez Vollard on voit la parenté qu’il y a dans certains paysages d’Auvers, Pontoise et les miens. Parbleu, nous étions toujours ensemble! mais ce qu’il y a de certain, chacun gardait la seule chose qui compte, ‘sa sensation’... ce qui serait facile à démontrer... sont-ils assez niais!...”

Letter JBH 1175, from Pissarro, Paris, to Lucien, dated.

November 29, 1895
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “J’ai fait un échange pour des petites choses de Cézanne”. Cf. the exchange of November 19, 1895.

Letter JBH 1175, from Pissarro, Paris, to Lucien, dated.

December 4, 1895

1048
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Veux-tu croire qu’Heymann le toupet de pousser cette absurdité que Cézanne a été tout le temps influencé par Guillaumín, comment veux-tu que le profane ne s’y blouse pas... c’est un comble et c’est chez Vollard que cela se passait. Vollard en était bleu... ah! bah! laissons pisser le mérinos comme on dit à Montfoucault; — n’est-ce pas amusant tous ces potins ? Tu ne saurais croire combien j’ai de mal à faire comprendre à certains amateurs, amis des impressionnistes, tout ce qu’il y a de grandes qualités rares dans Cézanne, je crois qu’il se passera des siècles avant qu’on ne s’en rende compte.”

Letter JBH 1181, from Pissarro, Paris, to Lucien, dated December 12, 1895

Pissarro buys a painting by Cézanne from Vollard: “une peinture femme nue debout en hauteur de Cézanne, 200 francs” (V 114 ?).

Business agenda/Agenda commercial 1895, Archives Vollard, Bibliothèque centrale and archives des musées nationaux, musée du Louvre, Paris.

January 20, 1896
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Il paraît qu’il [Cézanne] est furieux contre nous tous: “Pissarro est une vieille bête, Monet un finaud, ils n’ont rien dans le ventre... il n’y a que moi qui ai du tempérament, il n’y a que moi qui sais faire un rouge!!...”

Letter JBH 1203, from Pissarro, Rouen, to Lucien, dated.

January 31, 1896
Letter from Pissarro to Lucien: “Lecomte m’a dit à propos de Cézanne qu’il s’était mis à me bêcher ferme auprès de Geffroy, dont il fait le portrait, en ce moment, comme c’est gentil; moi, qui depuis trente ans le défend avec tant d’énergie et conviction d’ailleurs, ce serait trop long à te raconter, mais c’est de là que vient cette espèce de silence et de doute... ah bah!... Travaillons ferme et tâchons de faire des gris épatants! ce sera mieux que de bêcher les autres...”

Letter JBH 1175, from Pissarro, Rouen, to Lucien, dated.

[1905]
Letter from Cézanne to Emile Bernard: “Vous me comprendrez mieux quand nous reverrons; l’étude modifie notre vision à tel point que l’humble et colossal Pissarro se trouve justifié de ses théories anarchistes.”


July [20], 1906
Letter from Cézanne to his son Paul: “Bonjour à Madame Pissarro, — comme tout est déjà lointain et pourtant si rapproché.”

[Summer 1906?]
In the supplement to the catalogue of the fifth exhibition of the Société des amis des arts d’Aix-en-Provence, Cézanne appears under the heading: “Paul Cézanne, élève de Pissarro”.

August 3, 1906
Letter by Cézanne to his son Paul: “Il est malheureux de ne pouvoir faire beaucoup de spécimens de mes idées et sensations, vivent les Goncourt, Pissarro, et tous ceux qui ont des propensions vers la couleur, représentative de lumière et d’air.”

September 26, 1906
Letter by Cézanne to his son Paul: “Pissarro ne se trompait donc pas, il allait un peu trop loin cependant, lorsqu’il disait qu’il fallait brûler les nécropoles de l’art.”

No date
“Un jour, il [Félicien Champsaur] sortit de sa poche une toile non montée qu’il avait pliée en quatre et me la tendant:
— ‘Blot, si vous me dites de qui est cette toile, je vous la donne.
— Merci, lui dis-je, c’est de Cézanne, et je la trouve très belle.
— Vous blaquez... répondit-il... cela ne vaut rien... Pas encore pour le moment.’
“Il ne put croire que j’admirais réellement et me la laissa.
“Le soir même, j’allais la montrer à Vollard chez lequel se trouvait Pissarro. ‘La belle chose! me dit ce dernier. Et comme il regrettait de n’avoir presque rien de Cézanne, lui qui avait peint si souvent à ses côtés à Auvers, je la lui offris. Il en fut tellement heureux que le lendemain il m’envoyait une de ses plus belles gouaches que j’ai, depuis, donnée à un de mes enfants.
“J’ai su plus tard que, par l’entremise de Mirbeau, le Cézanne avait été vendu un gros prix à A. Pellerin, et j’en suis bien heureux pour Pissarro, pour le talent et le caractère duquel j’avais la plus vive admiration.”

Works by Cézanne that belonged to Pissarro
Incomplete list.

Watercolors: Rewald 20, 38.

Drawings: Chappuis 143, 159, 181, 201, 202, 203, 204, 298, 300, 301, 758.
Appendix 2: Chronology of Johns and Rauschenberg

1925
**October 22**: Birth of Milton Ernest Rauschenberg in Port Arthur, Texas, an oil-refinery town on the Gulf of Mexico near the Louisiana border. The only son of Dora Carolina Matson and Ernest Rauschenberg, an employee of Gulf State Utilities, a local light and power company, he is of Dutch, Swedish, German, and Cherokee descent. (RR)

1930
**May 15**: Birth of Jasper Johns, Jr., in August, Georgia. Only child of William Jasper Johns (1901-57), a farmer and former lawyer, and Jean Riley Johns (1905-92), born Meta Jeanette Riley, in Barnwell, South Carolina), who live in an apartment on School Street in Allendale, South Carolina. (JJ)

1944
**Spring 1944-spring 1945**: Rauschenberg drafted into United States navy. Enters boot camp at Farragut, Idaho, where he draws portraits for fellow GIs to send home. After proclaiming to Navy that he does not want to kill anyone, is assigned post as a neuropsychiatric technician in Navy Hospital Corps, San Diego, while stationed at Camp Pendleton. Experiences with traumatized sailors strengthen his antiwar convictions. While stationed in San Diego, visits the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino—his first visit to an art museum—where he experiences original oil paintings, including Thomas Gainsborough’s *The Blue Boy* (1770) and Thomas Lawrence’s *Pinkie* (1795), previously seen only as reproductions in books and on playing cards. Even though he has enjoyed drawing all his life, Rauschenberg now realizes for the first time that he himself can become an artist. Buys art supplies and begins painting. (RR)

1948
**February**: After three days in New York, Rauschenberg departs for Paris. On the GI Bill, enrolls in the Académie Julian. (RR)

**Summer**: In Paris, Rauschenberg meets Susan Weil, who also attends the Académie Julian and lives in the same rooming house on Rue Stanislas. Dissatisfied with the instruction and the apathy of his fellow students, Rauschenberg spends most of his time with Weil visiting galleries where he first sees works by such European modernists as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. Paints passionately, often dispensing with brushes and using his hands. (RR)
October-December: Rauschenberg enrolls in Black Mountain College, near Asheville, North Carolina, after reading an article in the August issue of Time on the disciplined approach of Joseph Albers, formerly an instructor at the Bauhaus; a professor at Black Mountain College since 1940s, Albers becomes rector in 1948. Although they are often at odds, Rauschenberg will later regard Albers as his most important teacher. Studies the basic methods of Werklehre, Albers’s practice, which he had developed at the Bauhaus, of working with the inherent properties of materials and developing “combination” techniques of “structure, texture, and facture.” (RR)

December: Johns moves to New York, living off the sale of some land inherited from his grandfather. His first address is at 126th Street and Riverside Drive in Manhattan. Not long after, he moves to Long Island, then back to Manhattan—first to a hotel near Columbus Circle, then to the West 60s. (JJ)

1949
Rauschenberg creates *This is the First Half of a Print Designed to Exist in Passing Time*; one of the few works, along with photographs, still extant from this period, it is a woodcut for which the block of wood is progressively cut with lines, the image emerging from back to white over fourteen stages. (RR)

Johns visits the annual exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art (then at 10 West 8th Street), and for the first time sees works by Jackson Pollock, Isamu Noguchi, and Hans Hofmann. (JJ)

Summer: Rauschenberg passes summer at Susan Weil’s family home on Outer Island, Connecticut, where Weil introduces Rauschenberg to the method of exposing blueprint paper. (RR)

Late summer-fall: Rauschenberg moves to New York, renting a room on East Eight-seventh Street. Enrolls in the Art Students League, New York, on the GI Bill, where he studies under Vaclav Vytlacil and Morris Kantor. Rauschenberg receives very little positive feedback for his work, which differs markedly from that of his fellow students such as Knox Martin and Julius Hatofsky, but the League’s education is less important to Rauschenberg than its offering of studio space and a milieu for artists. Creates on work, no longer extant, by collecting imprints of students’ feet as they walk through a doorway of the school. Moves to a studio on Willett Street, near the Williamsburg Bridge in downtown Manhattan, with a group of fellow students. Rauschenberg and Weil frequent the vanguard galleries of Charles Egan, Samuel Kootz, and Betty Parsons, viewing the first generation of American postwar art and admiring in particular the freedom of expression of the Abstract Expressionists. (RR)

1950
Fall: Rauschenberg and Weil rent an apartment on West Ninety-sixth Street, New York, which also serves as their studio. (RR)

June: Rauschenberg marries Susan Weil and, after honeymooning in Bermuda, spends summer at the Weils’ home on Outer Island, Connecticut. (RR)

Fall: Rauschenberg and Weil rent an apartment on West Ninety-sixth Street, New York, which also serves as their studio. Painter Jack Tworkov visits apartment.

Late fall: Rauschenberg approaches gallery owner Betty Parsons for a critique of his work. Parsons, who represents such major artists as Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still, unexpectedly offers Rauschenberg a show in spring 1951. Accompanied by Still, Parsons visits Rauschenberg’s apartment/studio to select works for the exhibition. (RR)

Between November 28 and December 16: Johns visits a Jackson Pollock exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery (15 East 57th Street), New York. (JJ)

1951
Gene Moore, chief window designer for Bonwit Teller and later Tiffany & Co., includes blueprints by Rauschenberg and Susan Weil in one of his window displays at Bonwit Teller, New York. Work for Moore will provide critical economic support for several years. (RR)

February-May: Rauschenberg meets fellow student Cy Twombly while enrolled at the Art Students League, New York. (RR)

April 9: “Speaking of Pictures,” a three-page article in Life magazine, features Rauschenberg and Weil making blueprints, which are no longer extant. (RR)

Between April 23 and May 12: Johns visits Barnett Newman’s one-person show at Betty Parsons Gallery, New York. (JJ)

May 2-July 4: Rauschenberg and Weil’s Blueprint: Photograph for Mural Decoration (now entitled Female Figure, ca. 1950) exhibited in Abstraction in Photography, organized by Edward Steichen, Director of the Department of Photography, the Museum of Modern Art, New York. (RR)

May 14-June 2: Rauschenberg’s first solo exhibition, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York. To Parson’s surprise, Rauschenberg has attempted to improve some of the works originally selected for the show by repainting them. The exhibition, which is held in the smaller gallery, includes seventeen artworks; the larger main room
exhibits works by Walter Tandy Murch, an artist known for his realistic depictions of mechanical objects and illustrations for such magazines as Forbes and Scientific American. None of Rauschenberg’s paintings are sold. Jack Tworkov brings art dealer Charles Egan to the exhibition. Meets for the first time Leo Castelli and composer John Cage, which whom he discusses Black Mountain College, where Cage taught in summer 1948 (prior to Rauschenberg’s arrival), and gives him a painting, Number 1 (1951). The friendship between Rauschenberg and Cage will solidify the following summer, which they will both spend at Black Mountain College, near Asheville, North Carolina. (RR)

May 24-June 10: Upon invitation by Castelli and Tworkov, Rauschenberg participates in Today’s Self-Styled School of New York, the first Artists’ Annual exhibition at the Ninth Street Gallery, New York, also known as the Ninth Street Show. Exhibits 22 the Lily White (ca. 1950), which he removes from the exhibition at Parsons’s gallery, and an unidentified painting. The exhibition, which is conceived by members of the Club—a loosely organized group of intellectuals, artists, dealers, writers, and musicians—presents vanguard works by sixty-one artists who have been overlooked by museums and marks the first time that the group exhibits together, consolidating a movement that comes to be known as the New York School. (RR)

May 25: Johns drafted into the army. Is inducted in Columbia, South Carolina, and is later transferred to nearby Fort Jackson, where he will remain stationed for about a year and a half. Here he develops an art exhibition program for the soldiers. Visits New York whenever possible. (JJ)

Summer-fall: Rauschenberg returns to Black mountain College, where Weil and Christopher join him briefly until Rauschenberg and Weil decide to separate. Fellow students include Dorothea Rockburne and Twombly. Faculty members include Hazel Larsen Archer, with whom Rauschenberg first studies photography. Also in residence during the summer session are photographers Harry Callahan and Siskind and painters Ben Shahn and Robert Motherwell. Rauschenberg conceives a project in which he will photograph the United States “inch by inch.” Begins several groups of paintings, most of which he will complete by summer 1952. The Night Blooming series consists of approximately eighteen large, predominantly black canvases. Siskind takes some of these works for an exhibition at Seven Stairs Gallery, Chicago; the exhibition, however, is never held, and the works are now believed to be lost. The White Painting series consists of modular canvases on which white paint, applied with a roller, reflect changes in light and such chance effects as viewers’ shadows. In a letter to Parson, trying to convince her to exhibit White Paintings, he writes that he “will forfeit all right to ever show again for their being gien a chance to be considered for this year’s calendar.” Also begins extended period of work that will last until
spring 1953 on a variety of black paintings in which newspaper is frequently used as the ground. (RR)

**Fall:** Rauschenberg illustrates Joel Oppenheimer’s “The Dancer,” a poem commemorating a performance by Black Mountain College dance instructor Katherine Litz (whose students include Viola Farber, a future Rauschenberg collaborator), published in an edition of 150. For the photo-offset reproduction, Rauschenberg creates abstract drawings of arrows that simulate the dancelike energy of movement. (RR)

**Between November 26 and December 15:** Rauschenberg sees Jackson Pollock exhibition, Betty Parsons Gallery. (RR)

**December:** The Columbia Museum of Art creates a Fort Jackson gallery, dedicated to the display of art produced by Fort Jackson personnel: “As the first instance of this type of a city museum making available to members of the armed forces an art gallery devoted to their sole use, your Museum has marked another milestone and established a national precedent. The small blue room to the right at the top of the staircase has been freshly lighted, and bi-weekly exhibits of the art work of Fort Jackson’s soldiers will be shown there.” Major General Harold John Collins, commander of the Eighth Infantry Division at Fort Jackson, asks Johns to run this gallery. During his time here, Johns will organize numerous exhibitions of painting, architecture, ceramics, sculpture, photography, landscape, architecture, and theater design. (JJ)

1952

Johns produces his earliest recorded works, of which two drawings survive: *Idiot* (now in the Columbia Museum of Art) and *Tattooed Torso* (now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art). (JJ)

**January:** Edward Steichen acquires for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, two photographs made at Black Mountain College, *Untitled (Interior of an Old Carriage)* (1949) and *Untitled (Cy on Bench)* (1951); these are the first Rauschenberg works acquired by a museum. (RR)

**Spring-summer:** Rauschenberg continues at Black Mountain College, near Asheville, North Carolina, studying with visiting faculty Jack Tworkov and Frank Kline. Also studies with John Cage and Merce Cunningham, collaborators since 1942, who allow movement and music to coexist without any predetermined relationship except for time length. Friendship with Cage and Cunningham solidifies over the course of the summer. (RR)
Spring break: Rauschenberg travels with Cy Twombly to Charleston, South Carolina, New Orleans, Key West, and Cuba. While in Cuba, Rauschenberg experiments with transfer drawing, rubbing the back of a printed image to transfer images to another sheet of paper, a technique he will fully develop in 1958. (RR)

Between April 4 and May 18: Johns visits the exhibition “Cézanne: Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings,” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (JJ)

Summer: Rauschenberg participates in an untitled event (later referred to as Theater Piece #1, now considered the first Happening) organized by Cage, in the dining hall of Black Mountain College. Varying accounts of the unscripted event describe activities occurring simultaneously: Cunningham improvises a dance around and through the audience, Cage delivers a lecture, M. C. Richards recites poetry from a ladder, David Tudor plays piano, and Rauschenberg plays old records by Edith Piaf and others on a handwound Edison horn record player. Charles Olson also participates, most likely reading his own poetry. Slides and flickering eight-millimeter film, possibly by Nick (Nicola) Cernovich, may have been projected on the walls and ceiling. Panels of Rauschenberg’s White Paintings are hung from the rafters overhead. (RR)

August: Cage creates his silent piece 4'33”, a work in three movements in which Tudor, seated quietly at a piano, signals the beginning and end of each movement by opening and closing the keyboard cover. Cage acknowledges that Rauschenberg’s White Paintings and a visit to the Harvard University’s anechoic chamber, a soundproof and reverberation-free environment, inspired the work. (RR)

August 10: Robert Rauschenberg Paintings opens at Black Mountain College. (RR)

August 20: Rauschenberg departs by ship to Palermo, Italy, with Twombly, who has won a travel fellowship from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Rauschenberg had photographed Twombly’s paintings for the application portfolio. (RR)

September: Rauschenberg and and Twombly settle in Rome near Piazza di Spagna. (RR)

September 1952-February 1953: Rauschenberg takes numerous photographs and accumulates a collection of objects from which he creates three significant groups of work: (1) Collages on shirtboards from Italian laundries using local printed papers and old engravings found in bookstalls and flea markets. (2) Feticci Personali, hanging “fetish” assemblages of wood, rope, animal fur, and various small objects, which may be inspired by ritual artifacts of North African tribes that he sees during
his travles. These are Rauschenberg’s first works to involve suspension. (3) *Scatole Personali*, wood or metal boxes containing found objects and materials such as pebbles, sticks, dirt, engravings, and beads. These three groups reveal the influence of Joseph Cornell, with whom Rauschenberg was familiar through exhibitions at Egan Gallery, New York (for example, a December 1949 exhibition from which Susan Weil’s parents bought three works) and having visited Cornell’s home on Utopia Parkway, Queens, New York, to transport works to the Egan Gallery. (RR)

**October:** Rauschenberg and Weil are divorced. (RR)

**[December 1952-May 1953]:** While based in Sendai, Japan, during the Korean War, Johns visits a Tokyo exhibition of works by Dada- and Surrealist-inspired Japanese artists. *It was very entertaining. One work I remember was a woman’s glove hanging from a pedestal, held in place by a preserved elephant’s foot that rested on one finger of the glove.* (JJ)

1953

**January 11-February 7:** Rauschenberg participates in *Second Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*, successor to the *Ninth Street Show* of 1951, the Stable Gallery, New York. One of Rauschenberg’s black paintings, submitted by Jack Tworkov, who had been storing it, is exhibited. (RR)

**March:** In Rome, Rauschenberg visits artist Alberto Burri, who is ill, and offers him a healing fetish, a small box construction, as a get-well gift. Burri gives a small work to Rauschenberg. (RR)

**March 3-10:** Rauschenberg’s first solo exhibition in Europe, *Scatole e Feticci Personnali*, Galleria dell’Obelisco, Rome, a gallery that exhibits works by such contemporary Italian artists as Afro and Burri. To both Rauschenberg’s and the gallery owner’s amazement, some of the boxes and hanging wall pieces are sold, and Rauschenberg earns enough money to travel back to New York. In a statement for the exhibition, Rauschenberg writes, “Many of the boxes are a third dimensional poem of one work: White.” The show travels as *Scatole e Costruzioni Contemplative di Bob Rauschenberg* to Galleria d’Arte Contemporanea, Florence, where Twombly’s exhibition *Mostra de Arazzi di Cy Twombly* opens on the same day. (RR)

**April:** Rauschenberg returns to New York and moves into a loft at 61 Fulton Street in downtown Manhattan. Rauschenberg is one of the first New York artists to establish a studio loft in a formerly industrial building. Cage, Cunningham, Morton Feldman, and Philip Guston live in a nearby loft building. Photographs document that Twombly occasionally worked in Rauschenberg’s studio. (RR)
**Spring-summer:** Rauschenberg completes the last of the series of black paintings begun at Black Mountain College in 1951, and begins *Elemental Sculptures* of wood, stones, twine, steel spikes, and other materials found in the Fulton Street neighborhood. Cage brings Feldman to Rauschenberg’s studio, where he buys a black painting for the amount of money in his pocket—sixteen dollars and some change. Continues freelance window designs for Gene Moore at Bonwit Teller, New York. (RR)

**Between April 15 and May 9:** Rauschenberg visits *Dada 1916-1923*, Sidney Janis Gallery, New York. Marcel Duchamp designed exhibition and poster. (RR)

**Summer:** Merce Cunningham Dance Company is formed during summer residency at Black Mountain College, near Asheville, North Carolina. The original dancers of the small company are Carolyn Brown, Remy Charlip, Judith Dunn, Viola Farber, Jo Anne Melsher, Steve Paxton, Marianne Preger, and Paul Taylor. Cage is musical director. (RR)

[**Summer**]: Johns moves back to Manhattan, where he lives on East 83rd Street in a tiny railroad apartment… painted egg-yolk yellow.

Meets the artist Sari Dienes, who has a studio at 57 West 57th Street. He occasionally helps Dienes with her work of “urban frottage”: *She went around making rubbings of the streets in the early hours of the morning with sheets of paper twelve feet or longer. They were rubbings of manhole covers and things like that.* (JJ)

**September 15-October 3:** Concurrent exhibition of works by Rauschenberg and Twombly, the Stable Gallery. Rauschenberg exhibits two *White Paintings* and a selection of black paintings as well as *Elemental Sculptures*. Cage writes a statement on the *White Paintings* for the exhibition:

To whom/No subject/No image/No taste/No object/No beauty/No message/No talent/No technique (no why)/No idea/No intention/No art/No object/No feeling/No black/No white (no and)/After careful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in these paintings that could not be changed, that they can be seen in any light and are not destroyed by the action of shadows./Hallelujah! The blind can see again; the water’s fine. (RR)

**Fall:** Rauschenberg makes *Elemental Paintings* out of tissue paper, dirt, and gold leaf. While working on the *Elemental Sculptures* and *Elemental Paintings*, creates *White Lead Painting*, a large work so heavy that it cannot be moved from the Fulton Street studio; Rauschenberg realizes this while creating the work, but decides to complete it anyway. When he moves out in 1955, he will abandon the work in the studio. (RR)
Rauschenberg also creates *Automobile Tire Print* and *Erased de Kooning Drawing*. The first work is made with the collaboration of Cage and his Model A Ford on a quiet Sunday morning outside the Fulton Street studio. Cage slowly drives the car while Rauschenberg applies black ink to the rear tire, which rolls down a long strip of paper approximately twenty-two feet in length, which Rauschenberg has made by gluing together twenty sheets of paper. The work can be displayed partially rolled like a Japanese scroll. To create *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, Rauschenberg asks Willem de Kooning for a drawing to be erased and presented as Rauschenberg’s own work; de Kooning offers him a drawing of pencil, crayon, and possibly ink that will present a serious challenge. Spends almost a month erasing the work on which traces of de Kooning’s original marks still remain. (RR)

**[Fall]:** Johns works as a night-shift clerk at Marboro Books, on West 57th Street near Carnegie Hall.

**Late fall:** Rauschenberg begins work on *Red Paintings*, which he will continue to work on until early summer 1954. Rauschenberg welcomes the challenge to explore what he regards to be “the most difficult color” with which to work. Like the black paintings completed at Fulton Street, the early *Red Paintings* are painted on canvases that incorporate newspapers and patterned fabrics as grounds. Inspired by Abstract Expressionism, Rauschenberg uses different types of brushstrokes—drips, heavy areas of impasto, paint applied directly from the tube—into a single work. As he continues to develop the series into the following summer, he will begin to incorporate found objects into the works. (RR)

**Late fall, or early January 1954:** Just after work one night, on the corner of Madison Avenue and 57th Street at around ten or midnight, Johns runs into the writer Suzi Gablik, one of the few people he then knows in New York, with another writer and Robert Rauschenberg, whom Gablik had met at Black Mountain College, in North Carolina. For Johns, Rauschenberg is to become the first person I knew who was a real artist. (JJ)

**1954**

**Winter:** Rauschenberg meets Jasper Johns again at Sari Dienes’s New York Studio, where informal salons for young artists frequently take place. Johns begins to work with Rauschenberg on window displays; in the summer, Johns will quit his job at Marboro Books and support himself with display work. (RR)

Johns moves from East 83rd Street to East 8th Street and Avenue C. Meets Rauschenberg again, and for the first time the composer John Cage and Morton Feldman, during parties at Dienes’s studio. While still working at Marboro Books, continues to paint in his spare time, and starts to help Rauschenberg make objects for use in store-window displays. (JJ)
January 20: Johns attends a performance of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The program consists of Christian Wolff’s *Suite by Chance*, Pierre Boulez’s *Fragments*, Erik Satie’s *Septet*, Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s *Banjo*, and David Tudor’s *Dime a Dance*, a selection of nineteenth-century piano music. After the performance, meets Cunningham for the first time. (JJ)


After January: Johns meets Rachel Rosenthal, a student of Cunningham’s who has recently arrived from Paris. Rosenthal will recall, “We did all kinds of things together—meetings in John [Cage]’s studio or in Sari [Dienes]’s large studio…trips to the country to visit Fance Stevenson and her husband.” At East 8th Street, using a cast of Rosenthal’s face, Johns makes *Untitled*, the first time he has employed a cast body-fragment in his work. (JJ)

Between January 27 and February 20: While tending to *Growing Painting* at the Stable Gallery, Rauschenberg meets dancer/choreographer Paul Taylor, who has recently left Merce Cunningham Dance Company to form his own company. Rauschenberg will begin work as set and costume designer with Paul Taylor Dance Company later this year. Taylor will assist Rauschenberg and Johns on window displays and rescue *Pink Clay Painting (To Pete)* (1953), one of Rauschenberg’s clay paintings (the only extant example), from the garbage. (RR)

Between March 1 and 20: Johns visits “Magritte: Word vs. Image,” an exhibition including twenty-one paintings of 1928-30, at the Sidney Janis Gallery (15 East 57th Street), New York. In the 1960s, Johns will collect Magritte’s work. Johns also sees works by Joseph Cornell at about this time. (JJ)

May 30: Premiere of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Henry Street Playhouse, New York, for which Rauschenberg designed the set. It includes an illuminated golden egg and a beanstalk suspended by gas-filled balloons. (RR)

Summer: Jasper Johns moves to a loft at 278 Peral Street, one floor below Rachel Rosenthal’s. Robert Rauschenberg is living nearby, on Fulton Street. Rosenthal will recall, “That summer… Jap and Sari [Dienes] and I decided to get lofts downtown. Almost nobody had them then, except for Bob [Rauschenberg]… So we spent that summer looking for lofts, and found an incredible brick building on Pearl Street. It had been condemned by the city. It had only two lofts, and I’m sorry to say that Jap and I cut Sari out and took those two. I had the top floor, Jap had one below… There
were four or maybe five floors, and a huge old pulley to pull stuff in and out of the windows of the printers on the second floor, and holes in the floors for the ropes to go through. The rent was something like $50 a month for mine. I spent some money and put in a tub and hot water. Bob’s loft on Fulton was just a block away.”

Rosenthal will also recall, “Jap was an artist but he didn’t yet consider himself a serious artist. He had hardly any time to paint, and had been living in a tiny apartment. What he’d been doing were collages that he would totally paint over in enamel paint. Also a lot of drawings. So when he moved into the loft he felt he was going to open up and really work.”

Around this time, Johns leaves his job at Marboro Books to devote himself to painting. To support himself, he does freelance window-display work with Rauschenberg. According to Rosenthal, “Bob at that time was earning his living making window displays. He talked Jap into quitting his job and going in with him on the displays. At first, Jap was very apprehensive. But the two of them started to go around to the stores. Bob did the talking, and he could always talk anybody into anything, so they got plenty of jobs. For every job, they would use Jap’s loft to work in—Bob was for serious work.”

It is around this time that Johns probably makes Construction with Toy Piano.

**Mid-summer:** Rauschenberg works again on Red Painting series. Begins to reveal more of the newspaper surfaces and incorporate found objects, art reproductions, and constructed appendages, resulting in works such as Untitled, Collection, and ultimately Charlene, which are considered to be the first Combine paintings, although still predominantly red in color. Coins the term “Combine” to refer to a series of works combining aspects of painting and sculpture; the works that hang on walls will be called “Combine paintings” and those that are freestanding will be called “Combines.” (RR)

**[Fall]:** Rauschenberg makes Untitled, a Combine, that includes a stuffed Plymouth Rock hen, a black painting, several autobiographical references, including photographs and drawings by Cy Twombly and Jack Tworkov, and a pair of white shoes like those that a man wears in one of the photographs. Rauschenberg later describes this work as the “first real combine.” (RR)

**[Fall]:** Johns destroys all the work of his that remains in his possession. According to Rosenthal, “One day he destroyed everything, all the old work. It seemed as if his whole new conception was created in his mind—it was not a work process. As soon as he got a handle on his esthetic he destroyed everything. Right after that, he started working with encaustic. He had a book from Marboro’s on artist’s techniques, and he got it out of that. It was as though the whole thing were already created in his head before he did it.”
In the early fifties I was going to be an artist, and I kept meeting people who were artists, and I thought, “Here I am, still going to be an artist.” What was different? What needed to be changed, so that I would be, rather than going to be? It was than I decided I would only allow myself to do what I couldn’t not do, and whatever I did would have to represent myself as an artist. There was a change in my spirit, in my thought and my work, as well as some doubt and terror. (JJ)

Late Fall: Sometime toward the end of the year, prompted by a dream, Johns begins his first Flag.

One night I dreamed that I painted a large American flag, and the next morning I got up and I went out and bought the materials to begin it. And I did. I worked on that painting a long time. It’s a very rotten painting—physically rotten—because I began it in enamel paint, which you paint furniture with, and it wouldn’t dry quickly enough. And then I had in my head this idea of something I had read or had heard about: wax encaustic. In the middle of the painting I changed to that, because encaustic just has to cool and then it’s hard and you don’t blur it again; with enamel you have to wait eight hours. If you do this, you have to wait eight hours before you do that. With encaustic you can just keep on. (JJ)

November: Tworkov brings Charles Egan to the Fulton Street studio to view Red Paintings, Combines, and Combine paintings. (RR)

December 8: First performance of Merce Cunningham’s Minutiae, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, New York, with music by John Cage (Music for Piano I through 20) and set and costume design by Robert Rauschenberg. Johns helps Rauschenberg construct the set. (JJ) Rauschenberg instructed by Cunningham to make a self-contained set through which dancers can move, created Minutiae, a Combine, applying paint and various collage elements to fabric on a wooden structure. (RR)

December 20, 1954-January 20, 1955. Rauschenberg and Johns participate in a group show that includes eighty-one painters and sculptors, among them Rachel Rosenthal at the Tanager Gallery (90 East 10th Street), New York. Johns exhibits Construction with Toy Piano. In his review of the show, Fairfield Porter spots Johns among the newcomers: “Exhibitors who are new to this reviewer are: Johns, showing something like a music box ..” (JJ) Rauschenberg exhibits Paint Cans (1954), a small Combine. (RR)

December 1954-January 18, 1955: Exhibition of Red Paintings and Combines, Egan Gallery, New York. Works exhibited include Collection, Untitled [red Combine painting], Untitled (Red Painting), and Yoicks. One visitor, John Blair Goodwin, half
brother of sculptor David Hare, buys two works for $50 total. Mainly negative reception appears in the press except for a review by poet and critic Frank O’Hara in *Artnews*, perhaps the first enthusiastically positive review of Rauschenberg’s career to date. (RR)

1955

Rauschenberg continues to work on Combines: *Bed* is composed of a quilt, acquired at Black Mountain College from artist Dorothea Rockburne, that he stretches over a board and paints (at the time, he does not have enough money to buy canvas). Rauschenberg also applies red fingernail polish and striped toothpaste to the work. *Odalisk* (1955/1958), in which female imagery is prevalent, is a counterpart to the earlier *Untitled*. Elements include a miniature blueprint of the full-size blueprint *Female Figure* (ca. 1950) as well as photographs of pinup girls and a reproduction of a figure in Titian’s *Pastoral Concert* (ca. 1510-11). Rather than the Plymouth Rock hen of *Untitled*, a stuffed Plymouth Rock rooster sits atop the work. Rauschenberg will return to *Odalisk* in 1958 to adjust the electric-light elements. *Monogram* will evolve through three states, documented in drawings and photographs, before its completion in 1959. The work originates with a stuff Angora goat that Rauschenberg purchases from a used furniture store. In its first state (1955-56), the goat stands on a shelf attached to a Combine painting that is later reworked and entitled *Rhyme*. (RR)

January 9: First performance of James Waring’s *Little Kootch Piece*, at Henry Street Playhouse (466 Grand Street), New York, performed by Marian Sarach and Sheldon Ossosky, with music by Olivier Messiaen and costumes designed by Johns. (JJ)

[Winter-spring]: Johns completes *Flag*. Also paints *Target with Plaster Casts*, his first target painting, and *White Flag*. (JJ)

March 15: Premier of Paul Taylor’s solo dance performance *Circus Polka* (the work will be enlarged into *Little Circus*, which will premiere in June), Master Institute Theater, New York, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes and set. The costumes include a necklace of cow bones for the ringmaster and a two-man horse outfit. (RR)

March 15-16: Performances at Marian Sarach’s dance *Naskhi*, at the Master Institute Theater, New York, with sixteenth-century music; set and costume design are by Johns. The set includes a plaster object, harplike but without strings, and the costume features a bird-head piece. *Naskhi* will also be performed on June 5, 1955, at the Master Institute Theater. (JJ)

April 26-May 21: For the *Fourth Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*, the Stable Gallery, New York, Rauschenberg enters *Short Circuit*, a work protesting the
absence of artists whom he had recommended for inclusion and who had never exhibited in the previous annuals (the policy of the annual series is for past participants to suggest new artists). Rauschenberg asks four artists—Jasper Johns, Ray Johnson, Stan VanDerBeek, and Susan Weil—for works to be added to the larger painting, but only two paintings were ready for inclusion, an oil painting by Weil and a small encaustic flag painting by Johns (13 \frac{3}{4} \times 17 \frac{1}{2}”). Rauschenberg also incorporates a program from an early John Cage concert and Judy Garland’s autograph. Wooden doors marked “do not open” conceal Weil’s and Johns’s works. The Johns’s painting will be stolen from the work in 1965, and Rauschenberg will replace it with a facsimile created by Elaine Sturtevant. (RR)

May 24: Premiere of Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s Springweather and People, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Rauschenberg collaborated with Remy Charlip, Johnson, and Vera Williams on the costume designs, which he will redesign in 1957. (RR)

Summer: Having gone to California to attend her father’s funeral, Rachel Rosenthal decides to stay there, and Rauschenberg rents her studio. Over the next six years, he and Johns see each other on a daily basis, exchanging ideas about their work. Rauschenberg will later say of Johns, “He and I were each other’s first critics. Actually, he was the first painter I ever shared ideas with, or had discussions with about painting. No, not the first. Cy Twombly was the first… But Jasper and I literally traded ideas. He would say, ‘I’ve got a terrific idea for you,’ and then I’d have to find one for him.”

It’s true that I painted a Rauschenberg. Actually, I made two Rauschenbergs. I made the gold leaf painting and I made a later-period Rauschenberg, because I thought I understood them so well that I could make them. But they were missing something. So they were turned over to Bob, who completed them. I believe they were both sold, as Rauschenbergs.

With Rosenthal away in California, Johns makes Target with Four Faces, using casts of the face of his friend the potter and poet Fance Stevenson. Other works probably produced at Pearl Street around this time are Flag above White and Flag above White with Collage. (JJ)

Summer: Rauschenberg creates Rebus, a Combine painting, on drop cloths (later remounted on canvas), which incorporates magazine illustrations, comic strips, and political posters to refer to a contemporary urban world dominated by mass media. As Rauschenberg later explains, the work is intended to be “a concentration of that particular week in that particular neighborhood.” It is painted with what he calls “pedestrian color,” whereby no color stands out or is determined by his own personal taste but rather resembles the blur of colors one encounters on the street. The lighter, more open ground will be common in works of 1956-58. (RR)
[After Summer or Fall]: Johns and Rauschenberg create Matson Jones, the commercial name by which their window-display business becomes known. “Matson” comes from the maiden name of Rauschenberg’s mother, and “Jones” is a near homophone of “Johns.” Rauschenberg writes to Rosenthal in Los Angeles, “Our ideas are beginning to meet the insipid needs of the business [so] that our shame has forced us to assume the name of Matson Jones—Custom Display.” (JJ)

September: Rauschenberg moves from Fulton Street to top-floor studio at 278 Pearl Street, where artist Rachel Rosenthal had lived. Johns’s studio is one floor below Rauschenberg’s in the same building. Rauschenberg and Johns see each other daily, exchanging ideas and discussing work. (RR)

[Fall]: At Pearl Street, Johns creates the first four paintings of individual numbers, all in the same size and in encaustic and collage on canvas: Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 5, and Figure 7. Also paints Green Target and Tango. (JJ)

October 15: Johns and Rauschenberg [separate or together?] attend performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and of John Cage, Harold Coletta, and David Tudor, at Clarkstown High School in New City, Rockland County, New York. Here they meets Lois Long and Emile de Antonio, chairman of the Rockland Foundation and the event’s producer. The program includes Cunningham’s Solo Suite in Space and Time, Minutiae, and Springweather and People, and Cage’s 34’46.776” for 2 Pianists and a String Player. (JJ)

Johns and Rauschenberg become close to Cage and Cunningham, and the group gathers frequently at the Cedar Tavern or in other downtown bars. Cage will remember, “We called Bob and Jasper ‘the Southern Renaissance.’ Bob was outgoing and ebullient, whereas Jasper was quiet and reflective. Each seemed to pick up where the other left off. The four-way exchanges were quite marvelous. It was the climate of being together that would suggest work to be done for each of us. Each had absolute confidence in our work, each had agreement with the other.” (JJ)

November 29-December 25: Rauschenberg participates in U.S. Paintings: Some Recent Directions, the Stable Gallery, New York, organized by Thomas B. Hess, editor of Artnews. Exhibits Untitled (ca. 1954) and ----(1950-55). The latter work, originally designated simply with four dashes, is later referred to as Self-Made Retrospective; it is a shallow cabinet inside of which hang miniature versions of Rauschenberg’s 1950-54 paintings: a red painting, a white lead painting, a dirt painting, a gold painting, a black painting, and a work modeled on paintings exhibited at the Betty Parson Gallery, New York, in 1951. The work will be dismantled in the late 1950s, and only two of the original pieces will survive: Untitled [small white lead painting] (ca. 1953) and the Parsons-related work, Untitled (1954). (RR)
**December 19, 1955-January 4, 1956:** *Flag*, 1955, is included in a group exhibition of drawings at the Poindexter Gallery (46 Easty 57th Street), New York.

**1956**

At Pearl Street, Johns makes his first alphabet painting, *Gray Alphabets*.

*Paints Canvas*, the first work in which he attaches stretcher bars to the painting’s surface, as he will in many later works, including *Fool’s House*, 1962, *According to What*, 1964, *Portrait—Viola Farber*, 1961-62, and *Slow Field*, 1962. *Canvas* is also Johns’s first monochromatic gray painting: *The encaustic paintings were done in gray because to me this suggested a different kind of literal quality that was unmoved or unmovable by coloration and thus avoided all the emotional and dramatic quality of color. Black and white is very leading. It tells you what to say or do. The gray encaustic paintings seemed to me to allow the literal qualities of the painting to predominate over any of the others.*

Other paintings completed at Pearl Street include the small-scale *Flag* and *Green Target*.

**January 31-February 7:** *Untitled* [red Combine painting] (1954) is shown in one of Gene Moore’s window displays at Bonwit Teller, New York. The painting, which has been altered since the 1954 exhibition of *Red Paintings* at Egan Gallery, New York, is missing the two left panels as well as the far right panel. Within the year, Rauschenberg will further dismantle the work by cutting it into sections to make several smaller red Combine paintings. (RR)

*White Flag*, 1955-58, is shown in its first state in the window of the Bonwit Teller department store (721 Fifth Avenue at 56th Street) as part of a display created by Gene Moore. In his work as display director for Bonwit Teller and, later, for Tiffany’s, Moore frequently uses props built by Matson Jones: “I’d tell them what I wanted, and they’d go off and make it. I never knew which one of them did what, they worked so closely together, even sharing the same joint pseudonym, Matson Jones…They started using that name when they began to get recognition as artists—they didn’t want their commercial work confused with what they considered their real art.” Once a year, Moore includes in his windows artworks by the artists he has hired, in order to give them visibility.

Over the year, Matson Jones will create windows showing, respectively, a mushroom field (February 14, Bonwit Teller); tilted paint-cans appearing to pour paint on the floor (August 7, Bonwit Teller); “Cave scenes” (August 30, Tiffany’s); a moon in the background (November 5, Bonwit Teller); “Recreations in dimension of eighteenth-century still lifes” (November 9, Tiffany’s); and “Christmas… forest with trees” (Tiffany’s, November 29). (JJ)
February-November: In New York, Matson Jones-Custom Display creates six window displays, three for Bonwit Teller and three for Tiffany & Co. The displays present tableaux of a mushroom field, cans pouring paint, caves, a night scene, eighteenth-century still lifes, and a Christmas forest. (RR)

March 27: Premiere of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s *Three Epitaphs*, Master Insitute Theater, New York, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes. (RR)

May 6: Premieres of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s *Four Epitaphs*, a revised version of *Three Epitaphs* (the work will assume its original title the following year); *The Least Flycatcher*, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes and created a score consisting of recorded kitchen sounds; and *Untitled Duet*, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes (which incorporate noise-making elements), Henry Street Playhouse, New York. (RR)

May 18: Premiere of Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s *Suite for Five in Space and Time*, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes. The dance is one of Cunningham’s first to abandon meter, causing the dancers to rely on their own sense of timing within a designated time length. (RR)

May 30: Performance of Marian Sarach’s *Triglyphos*, at the Master Institute Theater, New York, with music by John Cooper and set and costume design by Johns. (JJ)

July 11: Premiere of Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s *Nocturnes*, Jacobs Pillow, Lee, Massachusetts, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes and set. The set includes a scrim of transparent white netting that partially obscures some dancers. (RR)

December 4: Premiere of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s *Tropes*, Master Institute Theater, New York, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes. (RR)

1957
At Pearl Street, Johns creates his first painting of a series of numbers, *White Numbers*, and paints *Gray Numbers, Gray Rectangles, Drawer, Gray Flag, Flag* (LC # 30), *Study for Painting with Two Balls, Book, Flag* (LC #1), *Numbers, Gray Target, Target, Figure 4, Newspaper, Flag on Orange Field, The*, and *White Target*. Sometime this year, Johns meets the poet Frank O’Hara. *Flag on Orange Field*, 1957, is shown in Bonwit’s window, as *White Flag* was in 1956.
In _Drawer, Book, and Newspaper_, Johns continues to incorporate objects into his paintings, as he did with a toy piano, a music box, and stretcher bars in earlier works.

Johns invites the art dealer Betty Parson to visit his studio. She declines the invitation, saying that she already works with more artists than she can show. (JJ)

[Winter]: The artist Allan Kaprow brings Horace Richter, who sits on the Administrative Committee of the Jewish Museum, New York, to Johns’s and Robert Rauschenberg’s studios: _Allan Kaprow came to see us, saying that he was guiding Horace Richter around studios in New York to select an exhibition for the Jewish Museum. Bob and I thought wrongly that he was the Dadaist Hans Richter._ (JJ)

**January-October**: Matson Jones-Custom Display designs three window displays for Tiffany & Co., New York, that present tableaux of desert landscapes, cobwebs, and falling leaves. (RR)

**January 12**: Performance of Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s _Nocturnes_ (1956), Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York. When the original set is deemed unsafe by fire inspectors, Rauschenberg must quickly improvise a new set design, reminiscent of his sculpture _Greenhouse_ (ca. 1950), consisting of wire screening interwoven with green branches from nearby Prospect Park. (RR)

**January 31**: Tiffany’s window: “Valentine’s Day.” Later in the year Matson Jones will do three more windows for Tiffany’s: “Landscapes” (June 20), “Webs” (August 29), and “Piles of leaves and falling leaves” (October 10). (JJ)

**February-March**: _Target with Four Faces_, 1955, is reproduced in an issue of _Print_ magazine conceived and designed by Bob Cato. This is the first time a Johns work appears in a periodical. (JJ)

**February 1**: Leo Catelli opens a gallery in New York devoted to the work of young American and European abstractionists. (RR)

**February 7**: Premiere of John Cage’s _Winter Music_, Hobart and William Smith College, Geneva, New York. Composed for one to twenty pianists, _Winter Music_ is dedicated to Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. The composition marks Cage’s first significant foray into indeterminacy, or music based on unrepeatability. (JJ)

**February 10**: First performance of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s _The Tower_, at Kaufmann Concert Hall, New York, with choreography by Taylor, set design by Rauschenberg, music by John Cooper, and costumes by Johns. (JJ) The set consists of a Combine, _The Tower_. The performance includes _Tropes, The Least Flycatcher_,
Three Epitaphs, and Untitled Duet (all 1956), for which Rauschenberg had created set, costumes, or sound. (RR)

March 7: “Artists of the New York School: Second Generation,” a twenty-three-artist exhibition opening shortly at the Jewish Museum (March 10-April 28), receives a preview. There is a catalogue with an introduction by Leo Steinberg. After initially sending Target with Plaster Casts, 1955, White Flag, 1955, and possibly Tango, 1955, to be included in this exhibition, Johns has ended up exhibiting Green Target, 1955.

Attending this preview, the art dealer Leo Castelli sees a work by Johns for the first time. Just a month or so earlier, on February 1, Castelli has opened a gallery, on the fourth floor of 4 East 77th Street, New York, with an exhibition of well-known European and American artists. (JJ)

During the exhibition, Rauschenberg exhibits Red Import (1954) and three collages: Opportunity #2, Opportunity #7, and Opportunity #9 (all 1956). (RR)

March 8: At 9 PM, Morton Feldman brings Castelli, his wife, Ileana (later Ileana Sonnabend), and Ilse Getz, a young friend who is working at the gallery, to Rauschenberg’s studio to look at recent work. When Rauschenberg mentions that he has to go downstairs to get ice for drinks (he and Johns share a refrigerator), Castelli connects Johns’s name with the Green Target at the Jewish Museum, and asks to meet him.

In Johns’s studio, the Castellis see Flag, 1954-55, Target with Plaster Casts, 1955, White Flag, 1955, Gray Alphabets, 1956, and other works. Ileana Castelli buys Figure 1, 1955, and Leo Castelli offers Johns an exhibition at his gallery. (JJ)

[Late spring]: Rauschenberg continues work on Monogram. Now in its second state, the goat is encircled by an automobile tire and set on a platform in front of a vertical canvas, a single repainted panel from the dismantled five-panel White Painting (1951). (RR)

May 6-25 (-29?): Johns and Rauschenberg participate in New Work: Bluhm, Budd, Dzubas, Johns, Leslie, Louis, Marisol, Ortman, Rauschenberg, Savelli, at the Leo Castelli Gallery. Rauschenberg exhibits Gloria (1956). Johns exhibits Flag (1954-55). (JJ & RR) Referring to Johns in a review of this show, Robert Rosenblum uses the term “Neo-Dada,” which later gains widespread usage: “Take Jasper Johns’s work, which is easily described as an accurate replica of the American flag but which is as hard to explain in its unsettling power as the reasonable illogicalities of a Duchamp ready-made. Is it blasphemous or respectful, simple-minded or recondite? One suspects here a vital Neo-Dada spirit.”
Possibly prompted by this review, Johns reads Robert Motherwell’s *The Dada Pianters and Poets: An Anthology*, and shortly thereafter visits the Philadelphia Museum of Art with Rauschenberg to see Marcel Duchamp’s works in the Arensberg collection. (JJ)

**October 20:** First performance of Paul Taylor’s *Seven New Dances (Epic, Events I, Resemblance, Panorama, Duet, Events II, Opportunity)*, at Kaufmann Concert Hall, New York, with music by John Cage and costume and set design by Johns and Rauschenberg, who are listed in the program as artistic collaborators. (JJ)

**November 30:** Premiere of Merce Cunningham Dance Company’s *Changeling* and *Labyrinthian Dances*, Brooklyn Academy of Music. Rauschenberg designed the costumes for both works and the set for *Labyrinthian Dances. Springweather and People* (1955), for which he designed new costumes, is also performed. (RR) Johns attends the performance with Leo Castelli. (JJ)


**1958**

Johns is given a copy of Duchamp’s *Box in a Valise* by collectors Donald and Harriet Peters, at about the time they acquire the painting *Tennyson*, 1958. Over the years, Johns will collect several other Duchamp works.

Johns produces his first sculptures, *Flashlight I* and *Light Bulb I*, in Sculp-metal, a material made of vinyl resin mixed with aluminum powder, which he also uses in the painting *Target* of the same year. (JJ)

**[Winter]:** At Pearl Street, before he moves to Front Street in March, Johns paints his first 0-9, in white, along with *Gray Target*, a *Target* in red, yellow, and blue, a *White Target*, and probably a small *Green Target*.

Other paintings completed this year, either at Pearl Street or at Johns’ subsequent studio, at Front Street, are a Sculp-metal *Target, Flag on Orange Field II, Gray Numbers, White Numbers, Flag,* and *White Flag*, 1955-58. (JJ)

**January:** *Target with Four Faces*, 1955, is published on the cover of *Artnews* magazine.

*Fairfield Porter came to my studio before the show opened, and told a criticism for Artnews. Tom Hess, who was then the editor, decided on the basis of that, I believe, to put a painting of mine on the cover. That again was something quite unprecedented, that someone no one had ever heard of had a*
picture on the cover of Artnews. Especially as Tom’s primary interest was Abstract Expressionist painting.

Makes the drawing Target with Four Faces by tracing the reproduction on the magazine cover, a process he will employ repeatedly from the 1970s onward using his own works and works by Matthias Grunewald, Paul Cezanne, and other artists. (JJ)

**January 20-February 8:** Johns’s first solo exhibition, “Jasper Johns: Paintings,” is held at the Leo Castelli Gallery, where his new work will be exhibited from this date on. Included in the show are the paintings Flag, 1954-55, Target with Plaster Casts, 1955, White Flag, 1955, Target with Four Faces, 1955, Figure I, 1955, Figure 5, 1955, Green Target, 1955, Figure 7, 1955, Canvas, 1956, White Target, 1957, White Numbers, 1957, Drawer, 1957, Flag, 1957, Book, 1957, Flag on Orange Field, 1957, Gray Target, 1957, Numbers, 1957, and Green Target, 1958, and Sketch for Numbers, 1957.

The exhibition receives much attention from the press. By the time it closes, only two paintings remain unsold: Target with Plaster Casts (which Castelli acquires) and White Flag (kept by the artist).

Willem de Kooning comes to see the exhibition, and is introduced to Johns. (JJ)

[January 25]: On this Saturday morning, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., of The Museum of Modern Art, visits the Leo Castelli Gallery. From there he calls curator Dorothy Miller, asking her to come down right away. They spend an hour discussing which paintings to buy for the Museum, settling on Flag, 1954-55, Target with Four Faces, 1955, Green Target, 1955, and White Numbers, 1956. Miller will remember, “It wasn’t a question of one picture, we chose four pictures. They were inexpensive and they were just so remarkable.” Barr is also interested in Target with Plaster Casts, but is worried about the possible reaction to the box containing a cast of a penis. He asks Johns, who happens to be at the gallery, if the work can be displayed with the box closed. Johns replies that the lid can be kept closed “some of the time, but not all of the time.”

Johns’s former teacher Catharine Remburt has a dinner date with Johns that evening, and he is late. But on arriving, “he picked her up and danced her around the room.” (JJ)

[Late winter]: Rauschenberg begins using solvent-transfer techniques, using photographs from magazines to make drawings. Solvents, such as turpentine, are applied to the printed image, which when rubbed with the tip of a pen or other implement is transferred to the paper. He later uses lighter fluid in place of turpentine. The resulting image is a reversal of the original and reveals the artist’s use of the pen, the effect of which resembles hatching. Rauschenberg finds that glossy magazine
illustrations work best and frequently selects images from *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Life*. (RR)

**February 27-April 6:** Rauschenberg and Johns participate in *Collage International: From Picasso to the Present*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. Rauschenberg exhibits *Collage with Letter* (1957). Johns exhibits *Figure I* (1955). (JJ & RR)

**[March]**: With the Pearl Street building slated for demolition, Johns and Rauschenberg move to the third and second floors, respectively, of 128 Front Street. An author has described Johns’s studio here: “Johns paints in a large studio with a relatively low ceiling. His paintings are never higher than the height of the room whose ceiling the painter, with outstretched arms, can just reach with his fingertips. The studio is located on the third floor of a three-story house. On the street floor is a coffee shop… with counter, jukebox, cigarette slot machine, a few tables and chairs.”

At Front Street, Johns paints another *Target*, his first major painting in oil. He has previously used oil only in occasional small-format works: *Untitled*, two *Flag* works of 1957, and *Numbers*, 1957. Other paintings completed later in the year at Front Street are *Three Flags*, *Tennyson*, *Painting with a Ball*, *Alley Oop*, and probably *White Numbers*. (JJ & RR)

**March 4-29:** *Robert Rauschenberg*, Leo Castelli, New York. Rauschenberg exhibits approximately twenty Combines. Castelli buys *Bed* (1955), the only artwork sold. (RR)

**March 18:** Premiere of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s *Rebus*, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes and set. (RR)

**March 27:** Rauschenberg participates in panel discussion “Patriotism and the American Home,” Eighth Street Club, moderated by Frederick Kiesler, who becomes a champion of Rauschenberg’s work. Other participants include Allan Kaprow, George Ortman, and Richard Stankiewicz. (RR)

**March 31:** *Newsweek* announces that “both [Johns] and Rauschenberg now live on their sales.” But the artists continue to do display work for Gene Moore: “Dimensional cutouts of birds” (September 8, Tiffany’s) and “Forests with tree stumps, rakes, squirrel, tree” (September 25, Tiffany’s), probably Matson Jones’s last window-display project. (JJ)

**May 15:** A “25-Year Retrospective Concert of the Music of John Cage,” conceived and produced by Impresarios Inc.—Emile de Antonio, Rauschenberg, and Johns—is held at Town Hall, New York. The date coincides with Johns’s twenty-eighth
birthday. In conjunction with the concert, some of Cage’s scores are exhibited at the Stable Gallery, New York. (JJ & RR)

[Late spring]: Rauschenberg begins work on a series of drawings based on the thirty-four cantos of Dante’s *Inferno*, which he has never previously read. The project had been suggested earlier to Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Knox Martin by Theresa Egan, the wife of Charles Egan. Rauschenberg will spend two and a half years on the project, finishing in late 1960. Using John Ciardi’s translation of the poem, works with Michael Sonnabend, a Dante scholar (and future husband of Ileana Castelli), to develop compositions, one for each canto (which he reads one at a time), that combine his own drawings and watercolors with reproductions from magazines using the solvent-transfer technique. (RR)

**June 8-29**: Rauschenberg’s *Bed* (1955) is included in *Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture—First Selection of Young American and Italian Artists*, an exhibition selected by *Artnews* editors Alfred Frankfurter, Thomas B. Hess, and Irving Sandler, Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto, Italy. Officials refuse to show the painting in the main gallery and place it in a storage room. (RR)

**June 14-September 30**: Johns’s work is shown in Europe for the first time at the XXIX Venice Biennale, an exhibition organized by the International Program of The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Works included are *Flag*, 1954-55, *Green Target*, 1955, and *Gray Alphabets*, 1956. (JJ)

[July]: Rauschenberg participates in *The Newport Jazz Festival Exhibition*, Newport, Rhode Island. Exhibits *Satellite* (1955). (RR)

[Early August]: Johns and Rauschenberg attend a series of Merce Cunningham Dance Company performances at the Eleventh American Dance Festival, Connecticut College, New London. On August 14, Cunningham premieres his *Antic Meet*, 1958, with music by Cage and set and costume design by Rauschenberg, which include a door on wheels and an umbrella lined with tiny Christmas lights Johns has helped Rauschenberg with the costumes. Cunningham’s *Summerspace*, performed for the first time on August 17, with music by Morton Feldman (*Ixion*), also has set and costume design by Rauschenberg; Johns has helped Rauschenberg paint the backdrop. The costumes are covered with pointillist dots, so that they blend in with a similarly painted backdrop. (JJ & RR)

**September**: Matson Jones-Custom Display design two window displays for Tiffany & Co., New York, that present tableaux of birds and a forest; the latter is the company’s last project. (RR)
Before September 20: Johns paints Tennyson. (JJ)

Fall: After completing six Dante drawings, Rauschenberg applies for, but does not receive, a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation grant to complete remaining twenty-eight drawings. Discouraged, Rauschenberg sets the project aside until mid-1959, when he will resume in earnest. (RR)

October 21-November 20: A drawing by Johns is shown in the exhibition “Le Desssin dans l’art magique,” at the Galerie Rive Droite (23, Faubourg Saint-Honoré), Paris. There is a catalogue, with poems by André Verdet and Henri Michaux. (JJ)


[Late fall]: With Johns, Rauschenberg visits the Philadelphia Museum of Art to see works by Marcel Duchamp in the permanent installation of the Walter and Louise Arensberg Collection. (RR)

December 5, 1958-February 8, 1959: Johns and Rauschenberg participate in The 1958 Bicentennial International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, Carnegie Institute. On December 3, Johns receives a telegram from Gordon Washburn, director of the Carnegie Institute, that his Gray Numbers, 1958, has been awarded the “Anonymous Donation to Foster Good Will through the Arts.” It is the only painting by an American artist to receive an award. The jury is composed of Duchamp, Vincent Price, James Johnson Sweeney, Raoul Ubac, and Lionello Venturi. (JJ & RR)

December 20: Premiere of Paul Taylor Dance Company’s Images and Reflections, Kaufmann Hall, Ninety-second Street YW-YMHA, New York, for which Rauschenberg designed the costumes and set. The costumes include a white mane worn by Taylor, transparent veils worn by three female dancers, and a brown and green shawl. (RR)


1959
Rauschenberg makes Broadcast, a painting in which three radios are concealed behind the canvas. Viewers are invited to manipulate dials that adjust the volume and
change the stations. The work anticipates Rauschenberg’s technology works of the 1960s.

Alan Solomon, Director of the Andrew Dickson White Museum (subsequently the Herbert F. Johnson Museum), Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, purchases Migration (1959) for the institution’s collection; this is the first museum purchase of a Rauschenberg painting. (RR)

At Front Street, Johns paints Numbers in Color, 1958-59; Colored Alphabet; a small number of small works of single figures—Figure 4, Figure 8, Figure 8, Figure 0, Figure 4, Figure 7, and Figure 0; 0-9; Device Circle; Reconstruction, False Start; Jubilee; Highway; Out the Window; Thermometer; Shade; Small Numbers in Color; Two Flags; Coat Hangar; White Numbers, and Black Target.

Device Circle is the first painting to incorporate a “device,” usually a ruler or stretcher bar used to trace a semicircle on the painting’s surface. It also foreshadows Johns’s references to studio activity.

Johns includes the names of colors in some paintings: False Start, Jubilee, and Out the Window. The latter work is the first in which he divides the painting into three horizontal bands; each bears the name of a primary color.

Working in Sculp-metal, Johns makes his first sculpture of the theme of the critic, The Critic Smiles.

Begins the drawing Study for “0 through 9”, 1959-60, his first work featuring stenciled superimposed numbers. In the course of 1960 and 1961, Johns will execute a number of paintings and drawings employing this motif.

Johns uses acrylic for the first time in Two Flags, which is also the first work in which Johns employs a double motif. (JJ)

[Winter]: Rauschenberg completes Monogram. For its final state, following Johns’s suggestion that the animal be set within a picture on the floor, Rauschenberg place the goat in the center of a collaged and painted square platform mounted on wheels. The title results from the union of the goat and tire, which reminds Raushcenberg of the interweaving letters of a monogram. (RR)


January 16-[March]: Johns’s first solo show in Paris, “Jasper Johns,” at the Galerie Rive Droite (23, Faubourg Saint-Honoré), features nine paintings of flags, numbers, and targets, including Flag on Orange Field, 1957, White Numbers, 1958, and 0-9, 1958. It goes virtually unnoticed except for a few short reviews.
[Around January 30]: Poet and critic Nicolas Calas brings Duchamp to visit Johns’s and Robert Rauschenberg’s studios. Not long after, Johns reads Robert Lebel’s *Marcel Duchamp*, the first major monograph on the artist, published the same year.


**March:** *Arts* magazine publishes a letter to the editor by Johns, protesting critic Hilton Kramer’s February review of “Beyond Painting, the exhibition at the Alan Gallery.

**May 4:** *Time* magazine announces, “Jasper Johns, 29, is the brand-new darling of the art world’s bright, brittle avant-garde. A year ago he was practically unknown; since then he has had a sellout show in Manhattan, has exhibited in Paris and Milan, was the only American to win a painting prize at the Carnegie International, and has seen three of his paintings bought for Manhattan’s Museum of Modern Art.

**[Summer]:** At this house in Southampton, the artist Larry Rivers introduces Johns to Tatyana Grosman, director of the print workshop Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), in Bayshore (now West Islip), New York, an hour’s drive from New York City.

**May:** Leo Castelli introduces Rauschenberg and Johns to Yoshiaki Tono, whose writings bring their work to the attention of a Japanese audience. (RR)

**May 30:** Rauschenberg’s solo exhibition of solvent-transfer drawing opens, Galleria la Tartaruga, Rome.

**June:** Robert Rosenblum, then teaching at Princeton University, introduces Johns and Rauschenberg to Frank Stella. (JJ)

**[Late summer]:** Rauschenberg makes *Trophy I (for Merce Cunningham)*, the first work in a series of six “trophies” dedicated to his peers; the subsequent works are dedicated to Marcel and Teeny Duchamp (1961), Jean Tinguely (1961), John Cage (1961), Johns (1962), and Darryl Pottorf (1994). Only *Trophy I* contains a literal portrait, a photograph, of the subject.

**October 4 and 6-10:** At 8:30 PM, artist Allan Kaprow’s *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* takes place at the Reuben Gallery (61 Fourth Avenue), New York. Johns and Rauschenberg participate for one night, substituting for Red Grooms and Lester
Johnson. Their role is to leave their seats in the audience and paint onstage, each using a single color on opposite sides of the same unprimed canvas.

Kaprow picked Bob Rauschenberg and me from his audience and asked that we work on opposite sides of a suspended piece of muslin. One of us was told to paint circles and the other straight lines. With a brush, I nervously drew unsteady verticals on my side of the cloth and, as Bob’s circles bled through the material, I was again impressed by his brilliance. He, having discarded his brush, simply dipped the top of a jar into paint and then printed it onto the fabric.

October 6-17: Rauschenberg and Johns participate in a group show inaugurating new space of Leo Castelli, New York. Rauschenberg exhibits Inlet. Johns exhibits Black Target, 1959. Other artists shown include Norman Bluhm, Paul Brach, Nassos Daphnis, Gabriel Kohn, Ludwig Sander, Sal Scarpitta, Stella, and Cy Twombly.

November 26-December 27: “Out of the Ordinary: The Audience as Subject,” an exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, includes Johns’s painting Flag, 1958, and Rauschenberg’s Interview (1955) and Inlet.


Urban, and Jack Youngerman. The exhibition catalogue includes Rauschenberg’s statement: “Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in the gap between the two).”

[December 25]: Duchamp and his wife, Teeny Duchamp, visit Johns and Rauschenberg on Front Street, and they have dinner together in Chinatown. We went out to dinner in Chinatown and Duchamp had, either that day, or the day before, come from taping an interview. He said he was not happy with the way he had dealt with the questions that this man had raised. And he said, “Well, this man wanted to know why I stopped painting.” And he had said [it was] because of dealers and money and various reasons. Largely moralistic reasons. And then he looked up and said, “But you know, it wasn’t like that. It’s like you break a leg, you didn’t mean to do it.” And I thought that was an incredible answer, and probably very correct. It probably wasn’t a decision, it was probably something that happened to him.

1960

Rauschenberg gives Johns a group of small mimeographed maps of the United States showing the boundaries between the states. Johns uses one of these as the support for Map. In 1961, Johns will paint a second Map, much larger and more colorful than the first one, but based on it.

Johns makes cast-bronze sculptures, among them two entitled Painted Bronze—one a cast of a Savarin coffee can filled with brushes, the other of two Ballantine ale cans. Both images will recur in numerous drawings and prints.

Collectors Robert and Ethel Scull commission a Figure 5 painting from Johns, picking the number five for luck.

Johns makes the drawing From False Start for an auction to benefit the Living Theater.

[Winter]: At Front Street, Johns makes Painting with Two Balls, initiating his practice of stenciling a painting’s title, his signature, and the date on the front of the canvas.
February 15-March 5: “Jasper Johns,” at the Leo Castelli Gallery, includes paintings executed during the previous year: False Start, Device Circle, Thermometer, Shade, Jubilee, Out the Window, Highway, and Reconstruction. Castelli will recall that False Start is perceived as a radical departure from earlier works: “Alfred Barr almost blanched… he was so disappointed. He said he didn’t understand it at all.”


We had the idea to do it, and we made all the arrangements, dealt with the problems of getting a theatre, covering the costs of it, and ensuring that there was an audience.

By March 1: Johns is in Sarasota, Florida.


[Spring]: At Front Street, Johns paints Painting with Ruler and “Gray.”

April 21: Johns and Rauschenberg participate in a symposium moderated by Robert Goldwater at New York University’s Eisner and Lubin Auditorium, on Washington Square South, Manhattan. Called “Art 1960,” it features artists whose work had been included in “Sixteen Americans”: Alfred Leslie, Robert Mallary, Louise Nevelson, Richard Stankiewicz, and Frank Stella.

April 22-May 30: Rauschenberg exhibits solvent-transfer drawings along with works by Cy Twombly in Zwei amerikanische Maler, Galerie 22, Düsseldorf.


[Summer]: In Nags Head, North Carolina, paints a Sculp-metal Flag, 0 through 9, and Figure 5. While in North Carolina, obtains a driver’s licence.

July 15: Leo Castelli writes to Johns announcing his arrival at Nags Head on the 25th.
Fall: Rauschenberg retreats to Treasure Island, a small fishing village near Saint Petersburg, Florida, to complete illustrations for *Dante’s Inferno* (1958-60). Ileana Castelli and Johns visit on separate occasions. (RR)

[Late October-late November]: Johns visits Rauschenberg in Treasure Island, Florida. On October 27, Johns writes to tell Tatyana Grosman that he expects to return to New York on December 10.


December 23: In *Scrap*, a New York journal edited by Sidney Geist, Johns publishes a review of George Heard Hamilton’s translation of *The Bride Stirpped Bare by her Bachelors, Even: A Typographic Version by Richard Hamilton of Marcel Duchamp’s Green Box*. Around this time he also buys a copy of the 1934 edition of the *Green Box* from Duchamp, who brings it to Front Street and inscribes on it “To Jasper Johns, Sybille des cibles, Affectueusement, Marcel 1960.”

1961

Rauschenberg makes Combine paintings such as *Pantomime* and *Reservoir* that incorporate working electric fans, clocks, and other elements to create a sense of motion and real time. The works, which “perform,” have a theatrical dimension. (RR)

[Winter]: Robert Rauschenberg moves from 128 Front Street to a studio on Broadway. The Swedish artist Öyvind Fahlström takes over Rauschenberg’s studio. (JJ) (look in notes p. 388)

[July]: Rauschenberg moves from Front Street into a studio at 809 Broadway, a commercial building in which residential occupation is illegal. Painter Öyvind Fahlström moves into the Front Street studio.

[c. January 15]: Buys a house in Edisto Beach, on Edisto Island, south of Charleston, South Carolina, where except during the resort season, there are only four families living… My place is on the beach… forty miles to the nearest movie.

It was I guess December or January… It was very cold. And I went inside this house, which had been locked up all winter…. The house was not very attractive; everything was pink inside. And I went to the kitchen and opened the cabinet below the sink and there was half a bottle of bourbon, and I said, “I’ll buy the house.”
Until 1966, Johns will live mostly in Edisto Beach from spring to fall of each year, then spend the winter in New York. He will later allow that this departure from New York working conditions, especially in terms of the light, has probably affected the texture and color quality of my work. His working habits also change: Before, I used to work on a picture at a time… Since [1964], I work on a couple of pictures at once, because of living here [Edisto Beach] and frequently being in New York. (JJ)

**Before February 18:** Johns meets artist Andy Warhol and Ted Carey at the Leo Castelli Gallery, probably through Ivan C. Karp, the gallery’s director. Warhol acquires the drawing *Light Bulb*, 1958, and Carey acquires the drawing *Numbers*, 1960. Johns will later describe this first meeting with Warhol: We were introduced, and I said, “Oh, I know your work.” … I was talking about his commercial work, which was what I knew, because at that time I did display work. Bob Rauschenberg and I were working together, and one of the jobs that we had gotten was to interpret some of Andy’s shoe drawings in a kind of three-dimensional window display. It was at I. Miller, I think. And so I told Andy this, and he said, “Why didn’t they ask me to do it?” (JJ)

**March 10-April 17:** At Billy Klüver’s invitation, Rauschenberg creates the Combine painting *Black Market* for the exhibition *Bewogen/Bewing* (art in motion), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. *Black Market*, which consists of a painting, a rope, and a valise, invites the viewer to exchange small objects with it, taking items from the valise and replacing them with messages or drawings. The drawings thus record the work’s development over time. When objects and drawings are taken from the work and are replaced, Rauschenberg withdraws the invitation for viewer participation. The exhibition will travel to Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. (RR)

**May:** Interview conducted by André Parinaud, “Un ‘Misfit’ de la peinture new-yorkaise se confesse,” published in *Arts*, a Parisian weekly newspaper. The interview establishes Rauschenberg’s reputation in Europe, where he becomes popular with European critics. (RR)

**May:** The short-lived but widely circulated Italian journal *Metro* publishes three significant articles on Rauschenberg (by John Cage, critic Dore Ashton, and artist Gillo Dorfles). (RR)

**May 18:** At Marcel Duchamp’s request, Johns contributes a *Flag* drawing to a sale to benefit the American Chess Foundation, held at Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York. (JJ)
May 23: Rauschenberg participates in creation of a Niki de Saint Phalle “tir” in Staket sandpit near Vårnö, Sweden. During a “tir,” participants create explosions of color by shooting rifles at a prepared canvas or assemblage (often white) to which small sacks of colored paint have been attached and then covered with plaster.

June 20: At 9 PM, David Tudor plays John Cage’s Variations II at the Théâtre de l’Ambassade des États-Unis (41, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré), Paris. Rauschenberg and the artists Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely participate in the performance. Johns contributes a large target made of flowers (documented in Floral Design, a drawing with collage that includes the program of the event, the bill for the flowers, and the florist’s card) and a sign/painting, Entr’acte, which he has made at the Paris studio of his friend Fance Franck (formerly Stevenson). The event has been arranged by Darthea Speyer, who is highly criticized for it by U.S. Information Service officials and is forbidden to organize anything similar again under any circumstance. (JJ)

During simultaneous events staged by Rauschenberg, de Saint Phalle, Jasper Johns, Jean Tinguely, and David Tudor, each artist performs spontaneous acts of their own choosing within a set amount of time. Rauschenberg creates First Time Painting on stage, amplifying the sound of its construction with contact microphones attached to the canvas; the back of the canvas faces the audience throughout the performance. When an alarm clock attached to the painting rings, Rauschenberg wraps the work in brown paper and gives it to a bellhop from Hôtel du Pont Royale (where Rauschenberg is staying), who carries it offstage. The audience never actually sees the work. (RR)

June 21: At dawn, Tudor sends a telegram to Cage at Wesleyan University, Connecticut: “You had a wonderful concert tonight with me Jasper Johns Niki de Saint Phalle Robert Rauschenberg Jean Tinguely at the American Embassy, David.” (JJ)


*[Late summer]: Johns goes to Connecticut to attend performances of Merce Cunningham’s. Around this time, his relationship with Rauschenberg breaks up. (JJ)

[October-December]: While preparing his essay “Jasper Johns: The First Seven Years of His Art,” Leo Steinberg pays several visits to Johns’s Front Street studio: “There were several long meetings with Jasper, talking hours on end; because, whenever one of my questions got an elliptical answer, and I felt unsure of its meaning, I would keep questioning his answer and not let go until that answer was clarified. Didn’t matter to either of us how long it took.” (JJ)

October 2-November 12: Rauschenberg and Johns participate in “The Art of Assemblage,” an exhibition organized by William C. Steitz at The Museum of Modern Art. Johns exhibits Book, 1957. Rauschenberg exhibits Talisman (1958) and Canyon (1959). The show will travel to Dallas and San Francisco. The exhibition, which includes works from the fifteenth century to the present with examples from non-Western cultures, marks the first museum recognition of assemblage as an art form. (JJ and RR)


October 19: Rauschenberg participates in symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in conjunction with The Art of Assemblage. Panelists include Lawrence Alloway, Marcel Duchamp, Richard Huelsenbeck, Seitz (who moderates), and Roger Shattuck. Rauschenberg, selected to represent the younger generation of artists, assumes the role of provocateur in the discussion. During the symposium, Rauschenberg notices Duchamp taking many notes. When Rauschenberg asks Duchamp what he found so interesting, Duchamp reveals a page of doodles, which he signs and gives to Rauschenberg. (RR)

October 20: Issue of Art International with cover designed by Rauschenberg is published. The issue of the magazine includes Françoise Choay’s “Dada, Néo-Dada, et Robert Rauschenberg,” an article on Rauschenberg’s Combines. (RR)


November 7-December 5, 1961: Rauschenberg, Leo Castelli, New York. For the installation, Rauschenberg gradually replaces works in the previous exhibition with
his own paintings and sculptures. The show ends as he replaces his works with works by other artists. Rauschenberg’s works, which are assembled from tires, signs, and other materials found on city streets, include the Combines Empire I, Empire II, and Trophy IV (for John Cage); and the Combine paintings Magician (1959), Aenfloga, Co-existence, Fist Landing Jump, Pantomime, and Reservoir. Rauschenberg’s announcement/poster design for the exhibition consists of his photograph of exhibition information given on papers that he added to a junk heap. (RR)

**December 8, 1961-January 10, 1962:** Johns exhibits *In Memory of My Feelings—Frank O’Hara, No, Good Time Charley*, and *Liar* in a group exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery.
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Books


[ADDITION/CORRECTION: Bernstein was under Steinberg and Bernstein]


Habermas, Jurgen. *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*.


Peirce, Charles. Collected Papers


[ Addison ]


[ Addition ]


Periodicals


Vita

Joachim Stéphane Isaac Pissarro was born in Caen, Normandy, (France), on April 6, 1959, the son of Hugues Claude Émile Pissarro and Yvonne (Katia) Pissarro. After graduating from the Lycée Saint-Exupéry in Mantes-la-Jolie, in 1976, he entered the Sorbonne (Paris IV) where he received the degree of “Licence de philosophie” in 1980. He then entered the Courtauld Institute, University of London, and obtained a Master of Philosophy degree in history of art in 1982. For the past twenty years he worked as a museum curator in London, Fort Worth, New Haven, published several books and organized exhibitions on impressionism and post-WWII American art, and taught at Yale from 1997 to 2000. In September 2000 he entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas.

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