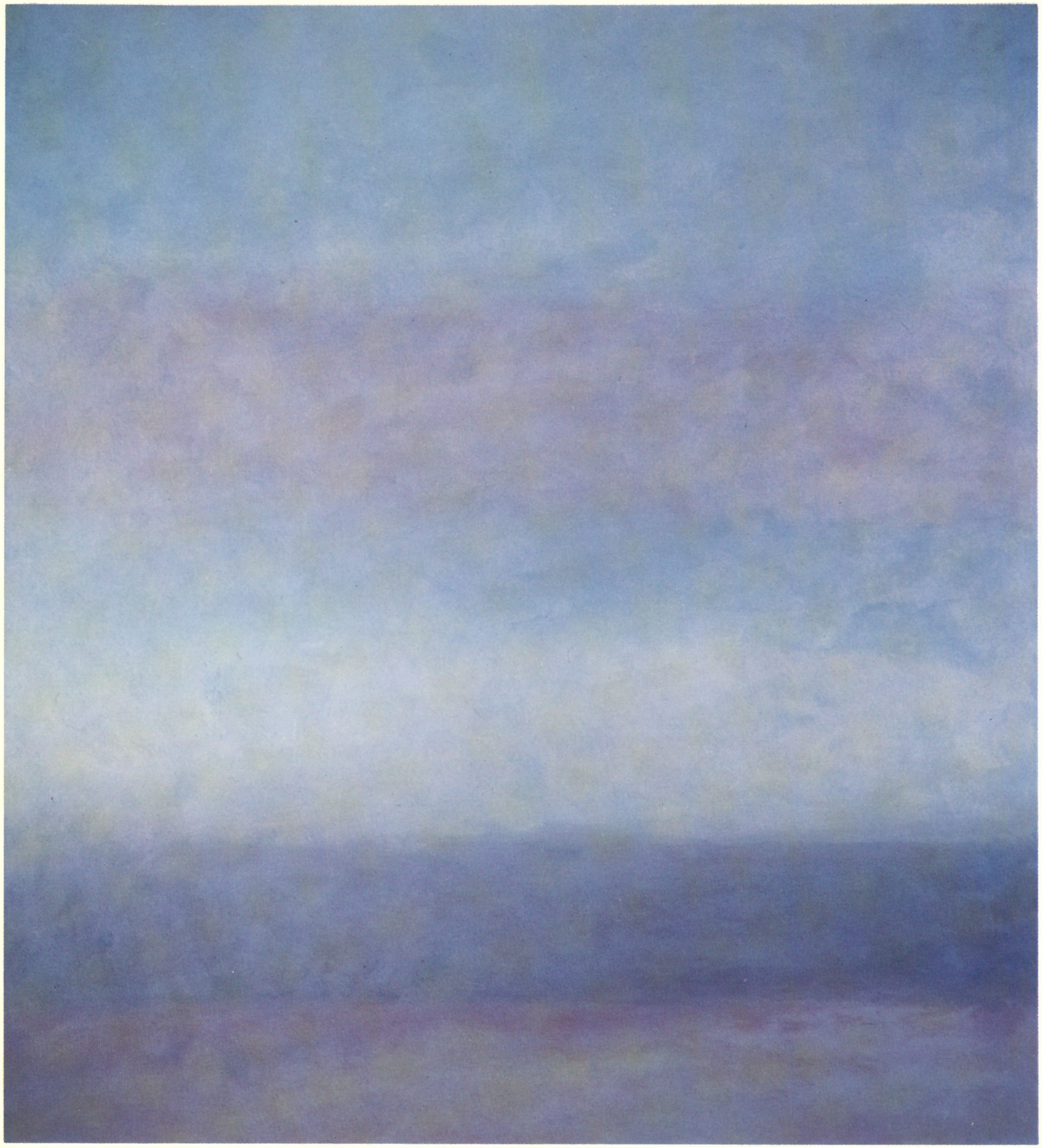

Landscapes, Interior and Exterior: Avery, Rothko, and Schueler

Landscapes, Interior and Exterior: Avery, Rothko, and Schueler

An Exhibition of Paintings by

Milton Avery

Mark Rothko

Jon Schueler

The Cleveland Museum of Art

July 9—August 31, 1975

Preface

When Cézanne, Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Monet painted the landscape of Provence in southeastern France, they produced canvases that vary enormously in style. Yet all of these artists had been Impressionists at some time during their careers, and their Provencal paintings were all done within a few years of one another. Does Provence vary that much in its appearance from place to place and season to season? Or did each artist's temperament and personality condition the final result? The latter seems to point to the obvious answer. So we conclude that works of art provide insight into the artist's inner state of being and the character of his subjective experience in response to the world. Thus, we are brought face to face with a problem that man has pondered for more than two millennia: the relationship between inner experience and the outer world; even more precisely, how accurately does the former reflect the latter? Philosophy, science, and the arts have all tried to deal with this question. This exhibition will attempt to demonstrate three replies to the question in the form of paintings by three modern artists: Milton Avery, Mark Rothko, and Jon Schueler (with some references to an earlier artist, Joseph Mallord William Turner).

If the exhibition succeeds, it should not only be a pleasure to view but should also indicate that Avery (like Matisse) responded to nature largely in terms of aesthetic considerations; that Rothko (like Miró) was concerned with the character and quality of his singular inner experiences; and that Schueler (like Turner) is concerned with the interaction between the *appearance* of outer nature and his inner responses to it. This being said, it must also be recognized that there can be no easy compartmentalization of artists in the terms outlined above. All painting, no matter how "realistic" or how "abstract," is the result of the interrelations of the outer and inner world; the question is really one of emphasis. Our hope is that this exhibition will do a little to help clarify the question rather than to provide answers.

We are indebted to Ben Heller, who has been extraordinarily helpful in making the exhibition possible. In addition to lending his own Rothkos, he also lent or made possible loans of paintings by Schueler. Others who kindly lent paintings by Schueler are John C. Stoller, Mrs. David Oreck, and Mr. and Mrs. Joel Ehrenkranz. We are further indebted to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Brooklyn Museum, the Larivière Collection in Montreal, Eugene M. Schwartz, and Mrs. Milton Avery for generously lending major paintings by Avery. I am especially grateful to Sherman E. Lee, the Director of this Museum, and to the Trustees, for their support in making this exhibition possible.

Last, and of utmost importance, I wish to thank the members of the staff of this Museum for their generous spirit and willing help in mounting the exhibition and creating this catalog. Although everyone who contributed cannot be listed, I would be remiss not to mention Merald Wrolstad and the Department of Publications; William Ward, the Museum Designer; Delbert Gutridge and the Registrar's Department; the Department of Buildings and Grounds (which installed the show); Tom Hinson, Assistant Curator of Modern Art, for his help with research and installation; and Margaret Wilson, secretary of this Department, who has done endless typing, filing, and keeping of records.

E.B.H.

Introduction

When Odysseus passed the lair of the Sirens, he had his warriors tie him to the mast of his ship so that he could hear their song without becoming their victim. His men plugged their own ears with wax and so rowed safely by. Consumed by a similar curiosity, the British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner had himself lashed to the mast of a ship for four hours during a snowstorm at sea so that he could experience it as directly and fully as possible. One hundred years later the Surrealists bound themselves fast to Freudian theories and techniques while they attempted to explore the fearful and enchanting domain of the subconscious.

In each of these instances—in an heroic tale; in the direct, sensory experience of nature; and in subjective experience—it is the unknown, coupled with terrible danger, that holds extreme fascination for men. With insatiable curiosity they risked death and madness to experience what few people—or none—had safely experienced before. Odysseus was simply a curious adventurer and was satisfied to hear the sweet and deadly song of the Sirens. Turner and the Surrealists, however, were artists, and the experience alone was not enough; it was imperative that they create forms to express its character in terms potentially comprehensible to others.[1]

In the second half of the twentieth century the American Abstract Expressionists—influenced by Surrealism—created abstract paintings that in purely formal terms (e.g., colors, shapes, lines, and the character of the paint surface) suggested the quality of particular subjective experiences. Among these artists, Mark Rothko was one of the most successful in creating visual analogues of profound, ineffable inner experience. The most familiar of his mature works involve no more than three or four soft-edged, colored, horizontal rectangles hovering one above the other. Yet the range of experience implied by this simple format—repeated with variations—can only be inadequately referred to as "joyful," on the one extreme, to "somber" or "ominous" on the other. Words are not precise enough to describe fully the character and quality of visual forms created to refer to inner experiences (stimulated by the events of his life) which transcend the relatively simple emotions and moods to which we too easily attach names.

Rothko arrived at this particular mode of expression by learning not only from nature but also from other artists. Despite certain differences in their aims, Rothko learned some things about color and simplifying shapes and compositions from an artist ten years his senior, Milton Avery. It was not until the late 1940s that Rothko's paintings assumed their typical compositional device of horizontal rectangles of subtle, deeply glowing colors. The works which immediately precede them are composed of soft, thinly painted irregular shapes, while his works of the early '40s are inspired by Surrealist imagery. Rothko himself wrote about Avery:

> I cannot tell you what it meant for us during those early years to be made welcome in those memorable studios on Broadway, 72nd Street, and Columbus Avenue. We were, there, both the subjects of his paintings and his idolatrous audience. The walls were always covered with an endless and changing array of poetry and light.
>
> The instruction, the example, the nearness in the flesh of this marvelous man—all this was a significant fact—one which I shall never forget.[2]

Rothko referred to Avery's work as "poetry of sheer loveliness, of sheer beauty."[3] And while Rothko's major works express profound and complex inner feelings (he said about them that they were "nothing but content") they, like Avery's (and Matisse's), are also "poetry of sheer loveliness."

Rothko, in turn, inspired some younger artists. While his influence on painting is evident, very few (and no major) painters have emulated his style and methods, for they were too personal. His paintings are composed with a visual vocabulary which he *invented* as the appropriate means to provide insight into his own inner experiences. Avery's "repertoire," by contrast, consisted of the everyday settings and staffage of his life and the people who passed through it. From these he fashioned simple and elegant formal arrangements of shapes, colors, and patterns.

Jon Schueler is one of the few younger artists who knew Mark Rothko well. History seems to demonstrate that when a weak or insecure young artist is subjected to the powerful personality of a strong and highly creative one, he often produces nothing but weak imitations of the master's work, while a strong and gifted younger artist usually gains by the association (which is influential largely in the sense that the younger man is challenged by problems he discovers in the older master's work). Jon Schueler clearly belongs to the latter group.

Schueler seems to have learned something about painting by the challenge of trying to overcome what he believed to be the *too* seductive and *too* subjective canvases by Rothko. As one surveys Schueler's works from the 1960s and '70s, there appears to be a greater affinity to certain works by Turner than to those of any other artist. Yet, despite the several influences on his art, it is obvious that his paintings refer to nothing but his own personal vision. What at first appear to be abstractions emerge before our eyes as landscapes and seascapes. Not that they *describe* the appearance of a meadow, a mountain, clouds, or a beach as a photograph would; rather, like the finest Chinese landscape paintings, they *evoke* the subtle and fleeting moods of the landscape and weather. Schueler is responsive to both the appearance of nature (e.g., various kinds of snow, rain, fog, sunlight, clouds, layers of atmosphere, and above all, to the infinitely varied sky) and to the singular feelings it evokes within himself. Thus, Avery created exquisitely composed, unpretentious images based on a variety of landscapes; Rothko used a simple format to provide glimpses of the vast range of his inner experiences; while Schueler's paintings refer to both the appearance of the outer world *and* the ineffable inner experiences it evokes in him. An essay on painting attributed to the tenth-century Chinese landscape painter Ching Hao contains a passage particularly appropriate to the paintings of Schueler: "Resemblance reproduces the formal aspects of objects, but neglects their spirit; truth shows the spirit and subject in like perfection. He who tries to transmit the spirit by means of formal aspect and ends by merely obtaining the outward appearance, will produce a dead thing."[4]

Schueler was born in Milwaukee in 1916 (ten years after Rothko and twenty years after Avery). He did not begin to paint until 1945, but matured steadily during the next twelve or fifteen years. In recent years he has found the landscape, the light, and the climate that he always wanted to paint at Mallaig on the west coast of Scotland. There, the great towering sky and the ever-changing northern light and weather have found in him a passionate and sympathetic observer who strives to find the means to "reproduce the formal aspects" of this landscape while showing its "spirit" (his inner experience in response to it) "in like perfection."

Schueler does not pretend that he wasn't influenced by other artists. He clearly recalls an incident early in his studies with Clyfford Still in California; Still left a portfolio of reproductions of late Turner paintings in the classroom, and Schueler reports:

> I was absolutely fascinated. . . .I looked at the images and the painting of them with the thrill of recognition—as though in some way I recognized the place and the manner. That was all—but I never forgot them. Or I never forgot *the sensation of seeing them* [my italics] . . . .about 1955—I painted some pictures I titled *Landscape After Turner*. These were painted as much as anything to admit to myself that I was truly contending with an influence. (. . . in those days no one wanted to be influenced by anyone—and it could be a complicated admission to make.) Painting and titling these paintings did a lot to free me from the current restrictions, and to make me feel that I could accept or reject the impact of other artists' minds and visions as my own response seemed to warrant.[5]

At a time when many artists were denying the influence of the external world on their work and insisting on the purely subjective stimuli for their paintings, Schueler recognized the complex integration of sensory perceptions of the external world, the relatively simple emotional responses which we can identify in response to these perceptions, and the infinitely more subtle and complex ineffable feelings about the world for which the artist strives to create an appropriate visual form as a kind of metaphor. Philosophers have long been aware that the only experiences we can be *certain* of are *inner* experiences. Pain, pleasure, sensory perceptions, and every nuance of feeling that we experience occurs *inside* the sensitive skin that separates us from whatever is outside. Yet common sense tells us that if our senses are stimulated in certain ways there must be a cause. We may not be able to *prove*, in an absolute sense, what the outer cause is, but we are surely justified in assuming that there is one. Pragmatically, we would deny or ignore the evidence of our senses to our great peril. We refer glibly to such things as the "terrible beauty of a storm at sea" or the "romantic poetry of a forest at sunset" when we are obviously referring to our own inner feelings in response to certain objective, sensory stimuli. The terror is not *in* the storm, and the romantic and poetic feelings are not *in* the forest or the sunset—they are in us. The storm, the sea, and the forest simply exist; it is how they affect us inwardly that accounts for our characterizing them in various ways. Furthermore, it is the artist who has made it possible for us to have these peculiarly human experiences.

Prehistoric man, seated before his cave as night descended, was not moved to admire the "romantic and poetic" character of the setting sun and the darkening forest. He was filled with fear of the real and imagined dangers of the night. And while he surely knew the terror inspired by a storm, he surely did not—like Turner—admire its beauty. It has always been artists and poets who have responded to such phenomena in personal ways (finding what used to be called "beauty" in them), and have invented forms to provide insight into their own feelings. Thus, they expanded the range of human experience.

Avery, for example, has shown us that a natural landscape can stimulate within us sensitivity to simple yet subtle and elegant relations among colored shapes and patterns; Rothko has demonstrated that profound subjective experiences can be formulated in appropriate, aesthetic visual forms; and Schueler, like Turner, shows us the infinitely varied appearances of light, atmosphere, clouds, sea, mist, snow, and other vagaries of nature *as well as* suggesting his inner feelings in response to them.

Thus, the peculiarly capricious light that illuminates the land and sea around the Sound of Sleat, opposite the Isle of Skye, on the West Highland coast, awakened a special kind of experience within Jon Schueler. And as other artists have revealed their experiences of the fantastic American wilderness; the clarity and order of the Italian Campagna; the intimate poetry of the forest around Barbizon; and the gentle atmosphere of the Ile de France, Schueler has provided an "image" of his *experience* of the restless light, mutable atmosphere, and the tough, "moody" northern land where he lives and works.

To speculate upon more profound meanings than individual inner experience referred to by works of art is to invite skepticism and even ridicule. Yet, as respected a philosopher as Etienne Gilson has written:

> He who sincerely exposes himself to creative art and agrees to share in its ventures will often be rewarded by the discovery, made in joy, that an endlessly increasing accumulation of beauty is, even now, in progress on this man-inhabited planet. On a still higher level, he will know the exhilarating feeling of finding himself in contact with the closest analogue there is in human experience, to the creative power from which all the beauties of art as well as those of nature ultimately proceed. Its name is Being.[6]

And one of history's great scientists, Albert Einstein, wrote about the creative act in the sciences in words which might apply equally to the arts:

> The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be "voluntarily" reproduced and combined.
>
> There is, of course, a certain connection between those elements and relevant logical concepts. It is also clear that the desire to arrive finally at logically connected concepts is the emotional basis of this rather vague play with the above mentioned elements. But taken from a psychological viewpoint, this combinatory play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought—before there is any connection with logical construction in words or other kinds of signs which can be communicated to others.
>
> The above mentioned elements are, in my case, of visual and some muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be reproduced at will. . . .
>
> It seems to me that what you call full consciousness is a limit case which can never be fully accomplished. This seems to me to be connected with the fact called the narrowness of consciousness.[7]

Edward B. Henning
Curator of Modern Art

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1. Turner wrote, "I did not expect to escape, but I felt bound to record it [his observations of the storm] if I did."
2. Mark Rothko, "Commemorative Essay," 1965. Quoted in Adelyn Breeskin, *Milton Avery* (Washington, D.C., 1969), p. 14.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Ching Hao, "Note on Brushwork," translated by S. Sakanishi, *The Spirit of the Brush*. Quoted by Lawrence Sickman in Sickman and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China* (Baltimore and Harmondsworth, England, 1956), p. 104.
5. From Schueler's letter to Ben Heller, dated 26 March 1975.
6. Etienne Gilson, *Painting and Reality* (New York, 1959), p. 275.
7. Albert Einstein (in a letter to Jacques Hadamond), reproduced by Brewster Ghiselin in *The Creative Process* (Berkeley and New York), p. 43.

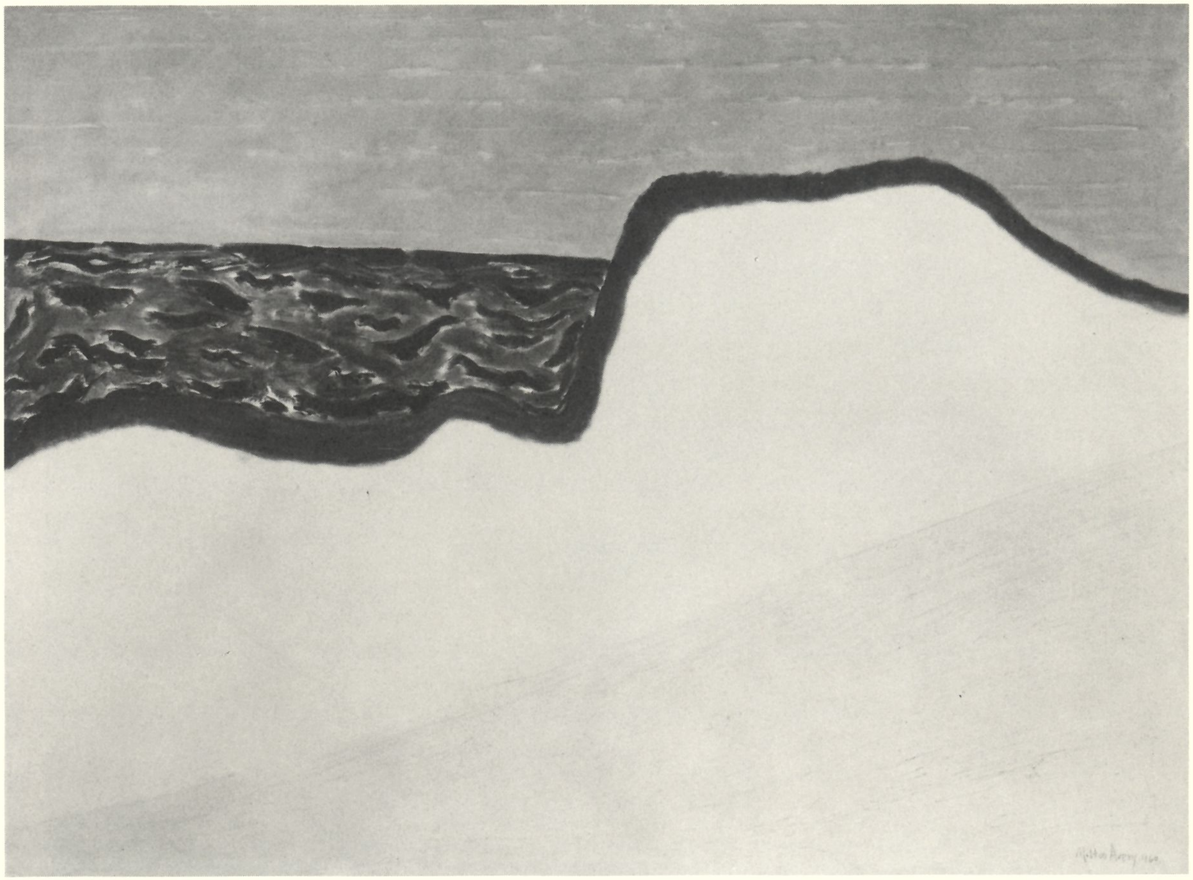
Milton Avery

Milton Avery was a unique modern American artist. Reaching maturity as a painter during the 1930s, he was one of the very few modernists of his generation to be relatively untouched by the Cubist influence from France. Avery understood the proper connection between personal temperament and experience on the one hand and the development of a style to appropriately express these on the other. Unlike so many American modernist artists he never aped the "isms" emanating from Paris.

His temperament was good-humored, subtle, sophisticated, given to elegance, and totally honest. His mature paintings—particularly from the 1950s and '60s—reflect his ease of manner in formulating delicate shades of feeling; they have more in common with the art of Matisse than the Cubists or Expressionists.

His canvases are tightly composed with a lean, spare look which dispenses with elaboration. His oils (like Cézanne's) were influenced by his water-color technique. The pigment is applied thin and dry. The finished works are far from the kind of intellectual games suggested by much modern French art, nor do they have the "high serious," even imperious, quality of some American Abstract Expressionism.

His landscapes and seascapes come closer to abstraction than his figure paintings. They are formal organizations that are spare, yet firmly structured, and suggest delight taken by the artist in the environment depicted. They are strong yet subtle, providing insight to feelings which supersede pure visual sensations, but are far from bombastic expressionism. Like Matisse's paintings they are elegant and subtle in the best sense. As Hilton Kramer remarks, "His imaginative integrity is large enough and pure enough to encompass both the limits of art and the limits of experience without violating either."[1]



1 Milton Avery. *Dunes and Sea, II.* Oil on canvas.

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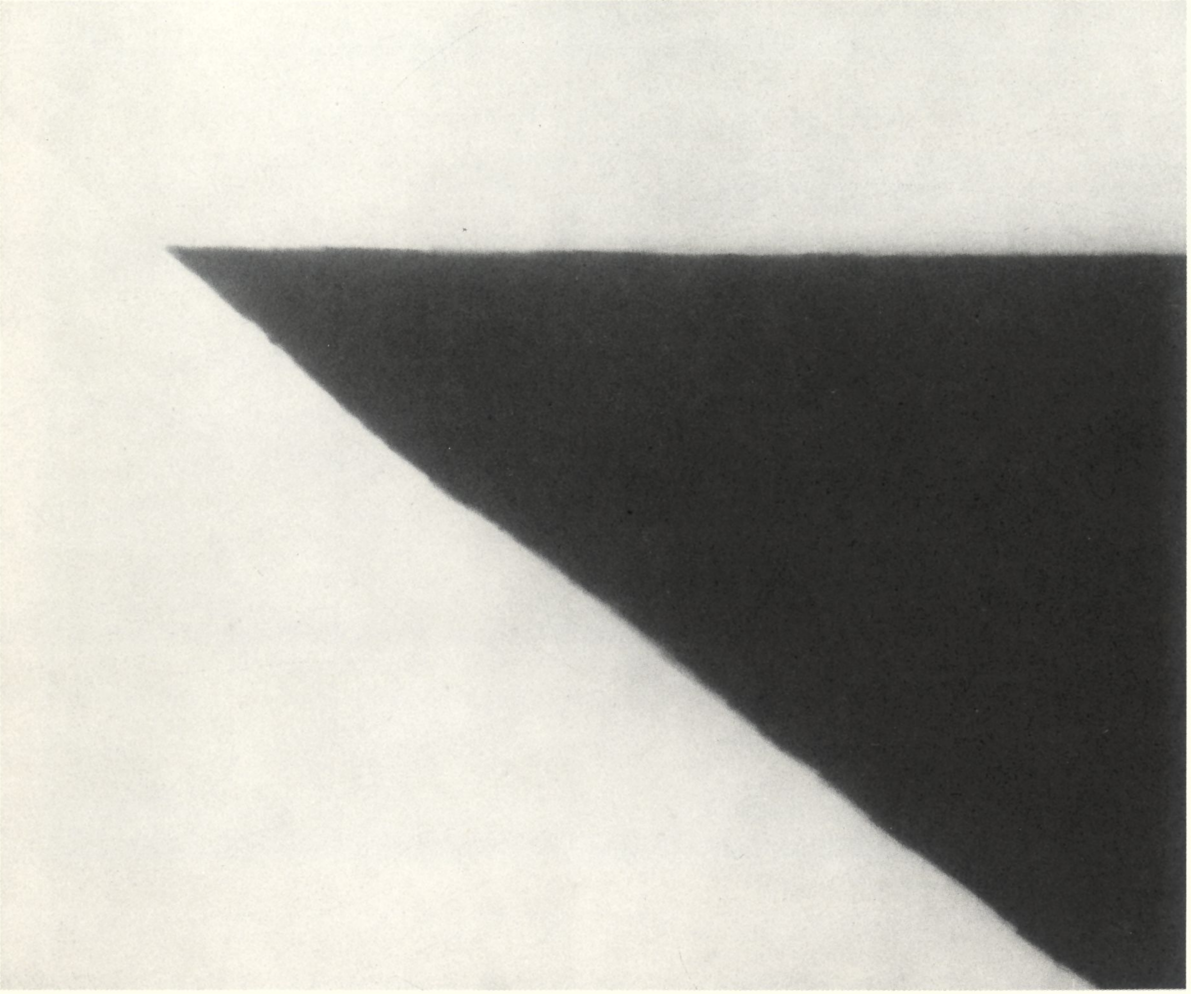
[1] Hilton Kramer, *Milton Avery: Paintings 1930-1960* (New York and London, 1962), p. 21.



2 Milton Avery. *Sand, Sea, and Sky*. Oil on canvas.

Biography

1893 Born, Altmar, New York.

1905 Moved with family to Hartford, Connecticut.

1913 Worked nights at United States Tire and Rubber Co. and spent days painting.

1923 Studied briefly with Charles Noel Flagg, Connecticut League of Art Students.

1925 Spent summer in Gloucester, Massachusetts, then moved to New York City.

1926 Married Sally Michel, painter and illustrator.

1928 First exhibited work (Opportunity Gallery, New York).

1934 First purchase of painting by a museum (The Phillips Collection).

1935 First one-man exhibition (Valentine Gallery, New York). After this, exhibited frequently in group and one-man exhibitions. Also spent periods of time in a wide variety of geographical regions in the United States and Mexico.

1952 Made first trip to Europe, visited Paris and southeastern France.

1960 A major retrospective exhibition was organized and circulated by the American Federation of the Arts.

1965 Died in New York City.

Selected One-Man Shows

1952 Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland. Also traveled to The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Lowe Gallery, Coral Gables, Florida; The Phillips Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford* (essay by Frederick S. Wight).

1956 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.*

1960 Retrospective Exhibition circulated by The American Federation of Arts, opening at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York* (essay by Adelyn D. Breeskin).

1965-66 Exhibition circulated by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.*

1966 Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln* (essay by Frank Getlein); The Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock* (essay by Frank Getlein).

1969-70 National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. Also traveled to The Brooklyn Museum, New York, and The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Ohio* (essay by Adelyn D. Breeskin).

1971 Art Gallery, University of California, Irvine* (essay by Stephanie Gordon Noland); William Cooper Procter Art Center, Bard College, Annandale on Hudson, New York* (essay by Matt Phillips).

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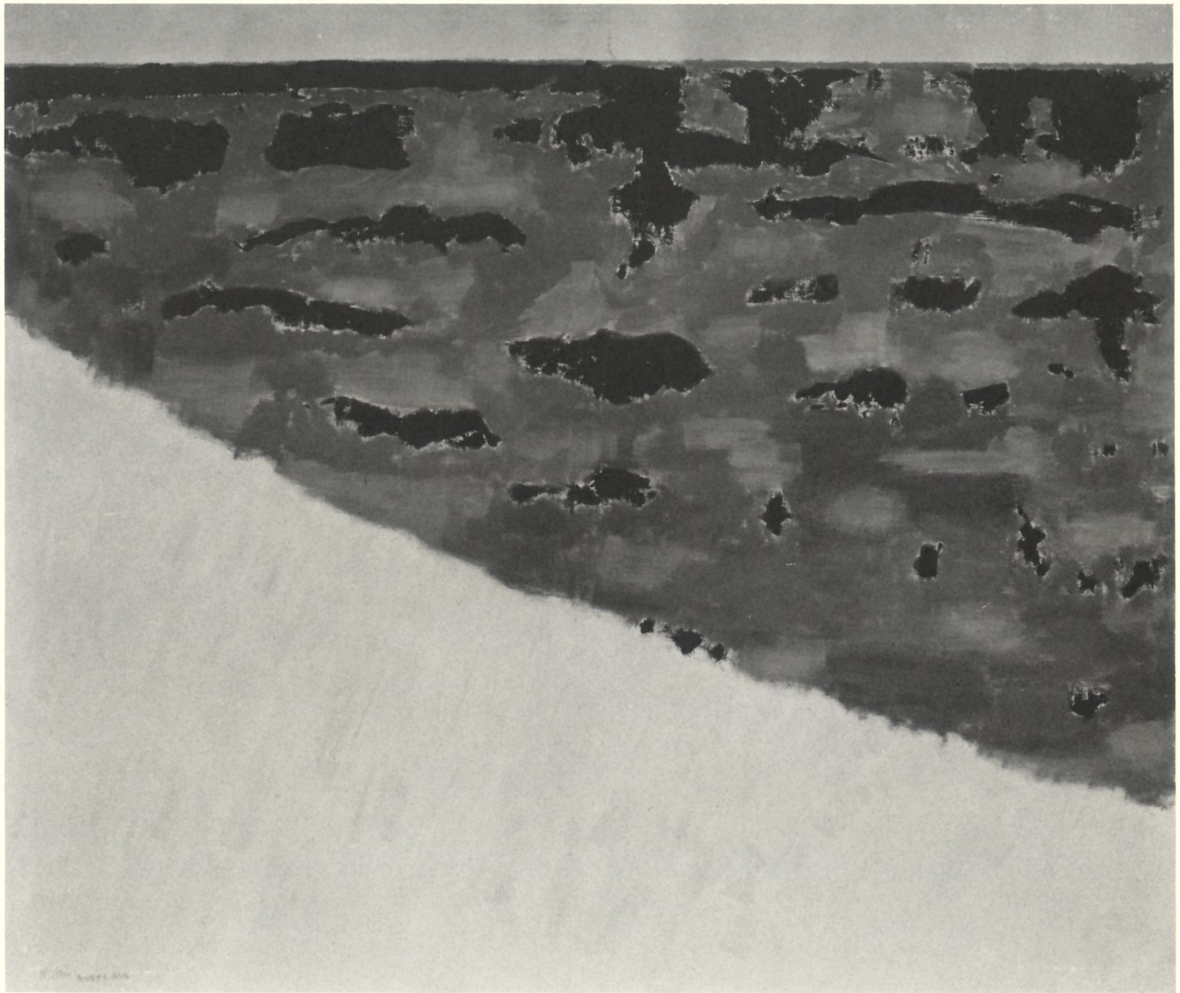
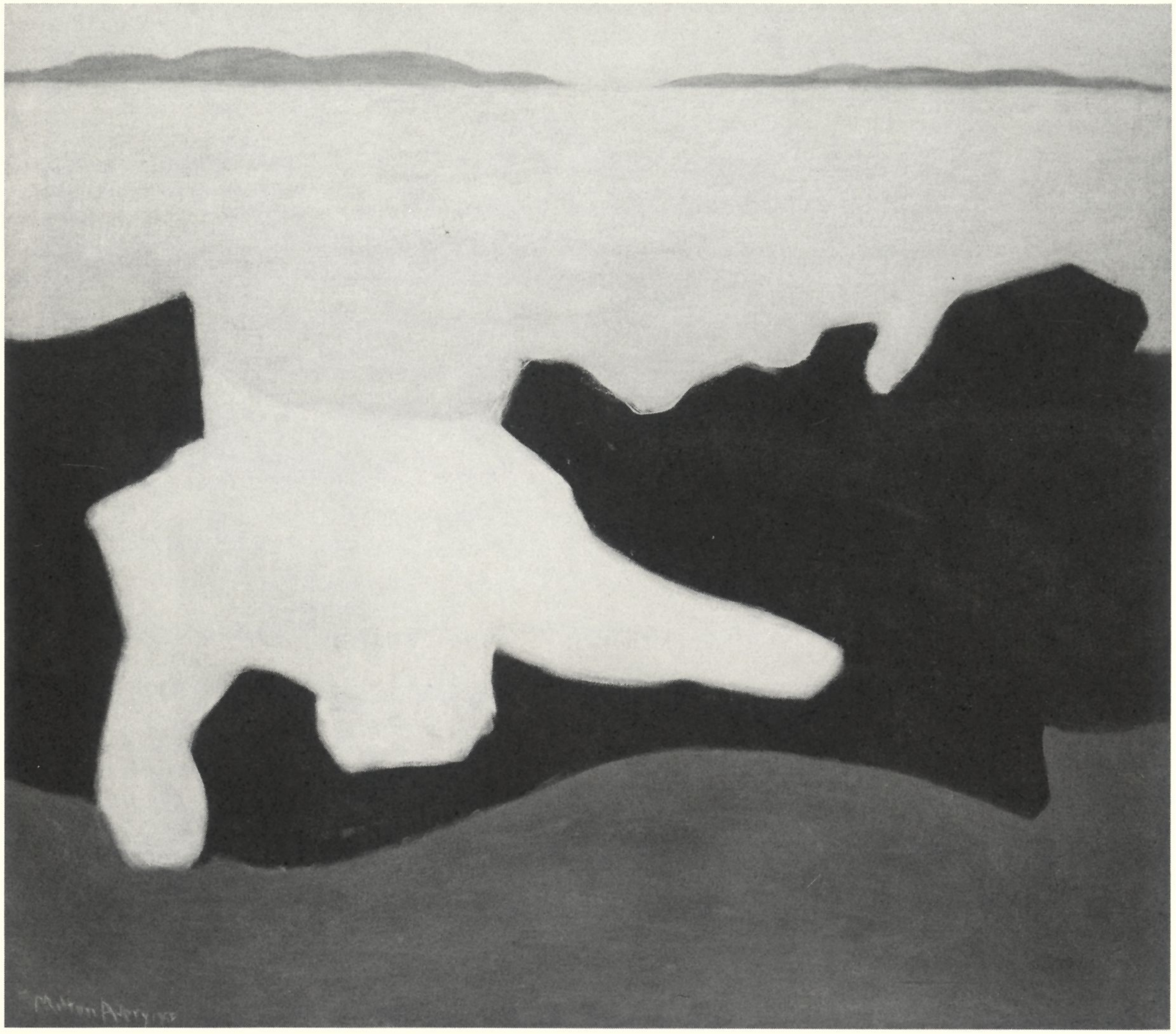


3 Milton Avery. ***Sea Grasses and Blue Sea***. Oil on canvas.



4 Milton Avery. *Sunset*. Oil on canvas.

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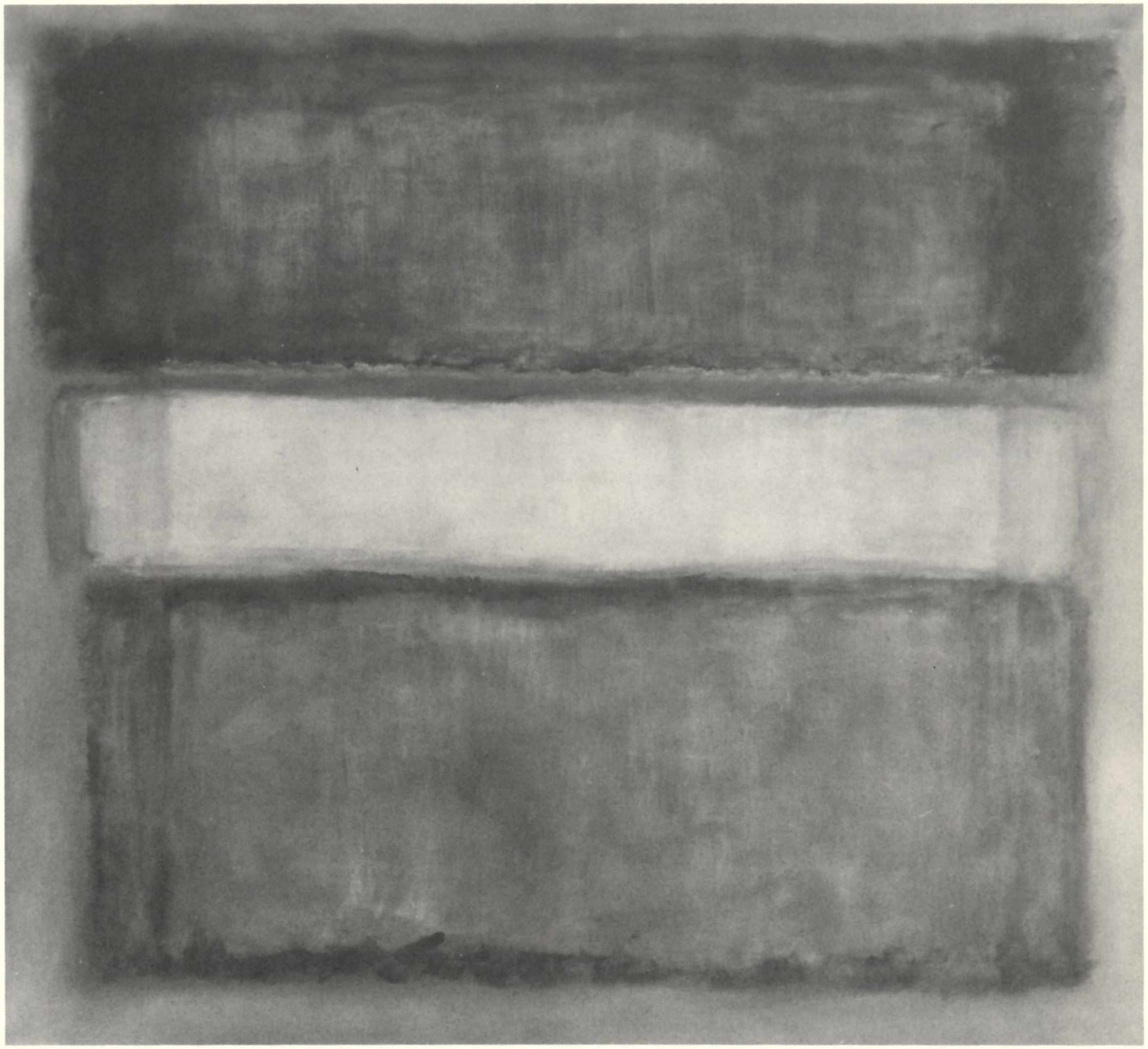
Mark Rothko

Mark Rothko was one of Avery's greatest admirers. Yet these two artists seem to have little in common. Where Avery was apparently unfailingly happy with the environments he painted, Rothko's mood varied from sublime joy to ominous depression. Avery's landscapes are elegant treatments of the visible world, Rothko's refer to his inner feelings. Avery's pigment is flat and dry, Rothko's is thin and translucent with many layers. Yet both artists were supreme manipulators of color relations and both reduced the elements in their compositions to the barest essentials.

Rothko was one of the major figures in the so-called Abstract-Expressionist movement in the United States during the late '40s, '50s, and into the '60s; yet he never worked with the vigorous "brushwork" of painters such as de Kooning, Kline, or Pollock. Rothko's art is extremely subtle, and depends on just a few elements to express his inner experiences: horizontal rectangles with softly blurred edges on a thinly painted ground. Rothko insisted that he was not an abstractionist (in the strict sense) but that he was concerned with the expression of basic human emotions.[1]

How then can emotions be expressed by a few colored rectangles on a colored ground? Let us begin our answer by considering the words of the linguistic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. He constructs a particular class of words which refer to what he calls "inner" events or sensations. These are not the same as words which are used to refer to our experiences of the ordinary visual world, as one might point to a structure



7 Mark Rothko. ***White Band***. Oil on canvas.

and say, "That is a house." Yet they are perhaps the most certain of all references to experience. One may mistake a garage or a store for a house, but if one says he has a pain in his head and feels despondent, it would be absurd to ask if he's sure it's not an itch he feels and that he is really happy. According to Wittgenstein, assertions about inner feelings such as pain, grief, joy, etc., are really a part of the behavior relevant to the "inner" event itself; they are simply substitutes for primitive cries of pain or joy, etc. The analogy with art is that the act of painting and the *form* of a painting, such as one of Rothko's, is also part of the behavior of the artist's inner sensations and can provide insight to their character and intensity even more poignantly than words.

The softly painted, amorphous shapes of Rothko's paintings with their sense of ambiguous space and intensely glowing colors suggest a great range of subtle emotions. The colors (laid on in thin glazes and scumbles) seem to glow and pulsate as though penetrating the surrounding space, almost physically engaging the viewer. It is a "landscape" of intensely felt interior feelings, moods, and emotions.

1. Mark Rothko, in Seldon Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York, 1961), p. 93.

Biography

1903 Born, Dvinsk, Russia.

1913 Moved with his family to Portland, Oregon.

1921-23 Studied at Yale University.

1925 Moved to New York City, studied with Max Weber at the Art Students' League.

1929 Exhibited (Opportunity Gallery, New York).

1930-40 Work was influenced by Avery and Matisse. Became interested in primitive art and in Jungian psychology.

1933 First one-man show (Contemporary Arts Gallery, New York).

1935 One of founding members of The Ten (a group of expressionist painters including Adolph Gottlieb).

1936-37 Worked for W.P.A. Federal Art Project, New York.

1942-47 His painting went through a Surrealist phase (many European Surrealists were in United States). Images referred to biomorphic forms.

1947 The Surrealist phase ended and his work became more abstract with soft-edged, irregular shapes. Taught during the summer at the California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco.

1948 One of founders of the school, Subjects of the Artists, along with Robert Motherwell, William Baziotes, and Barnett Newman.

1949 Taught during the summer at the California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco.

1950 Traveled to Europe: England, France, and Italy.

1951-54 Taught at Brooklyn College, New York.

1955 Taught at the University of Colorado.

1956 Taught at Tulane University, New Orleans.

1958 Commissioned to do paintings for the Seagram Building, New York (refused to allow the paintings to be purchased when he realized they were to serve as decoration in a restaurant).

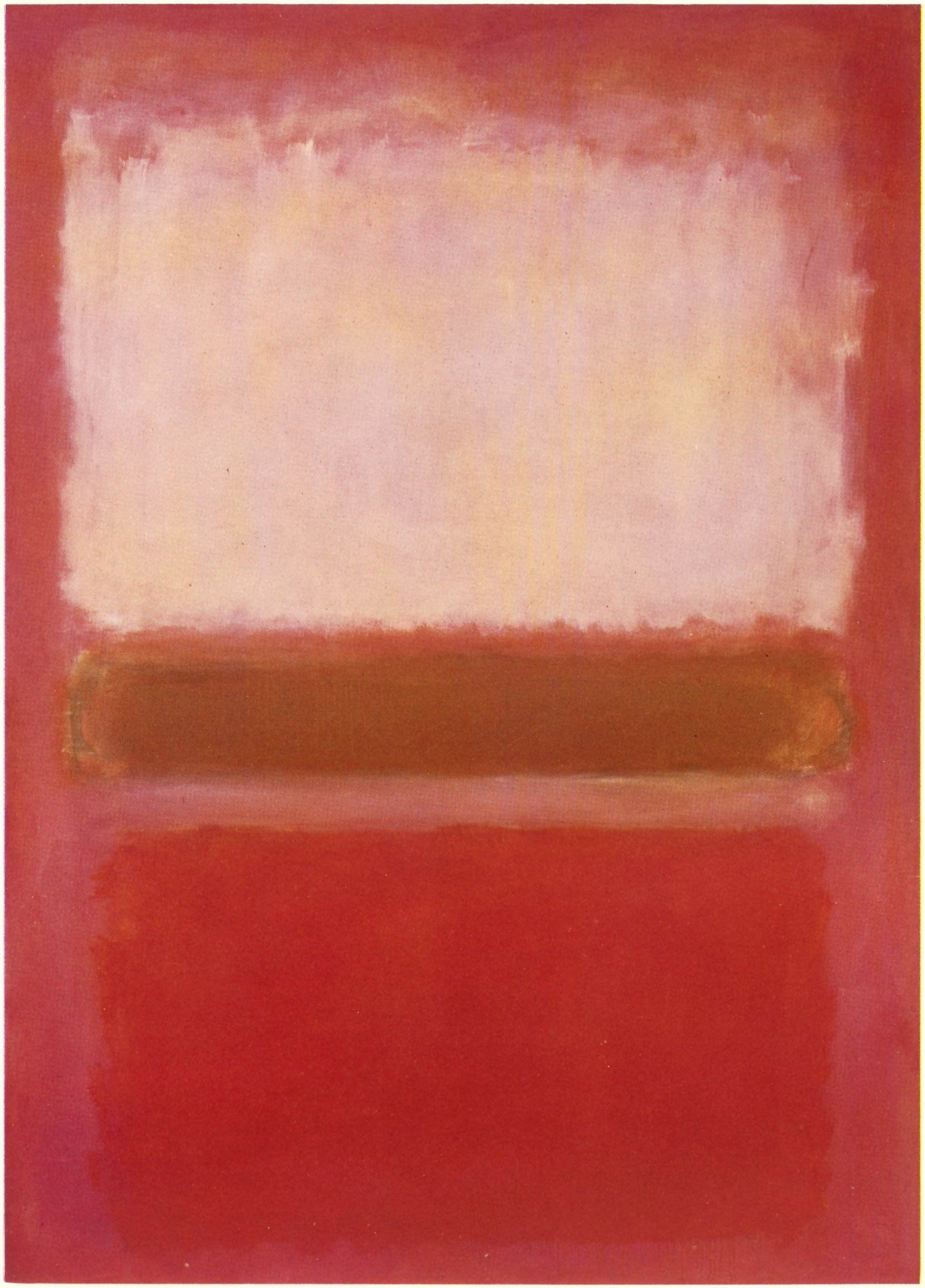
1959 Traveled to Europe: England, France, Italy, Belgium, and Holland.

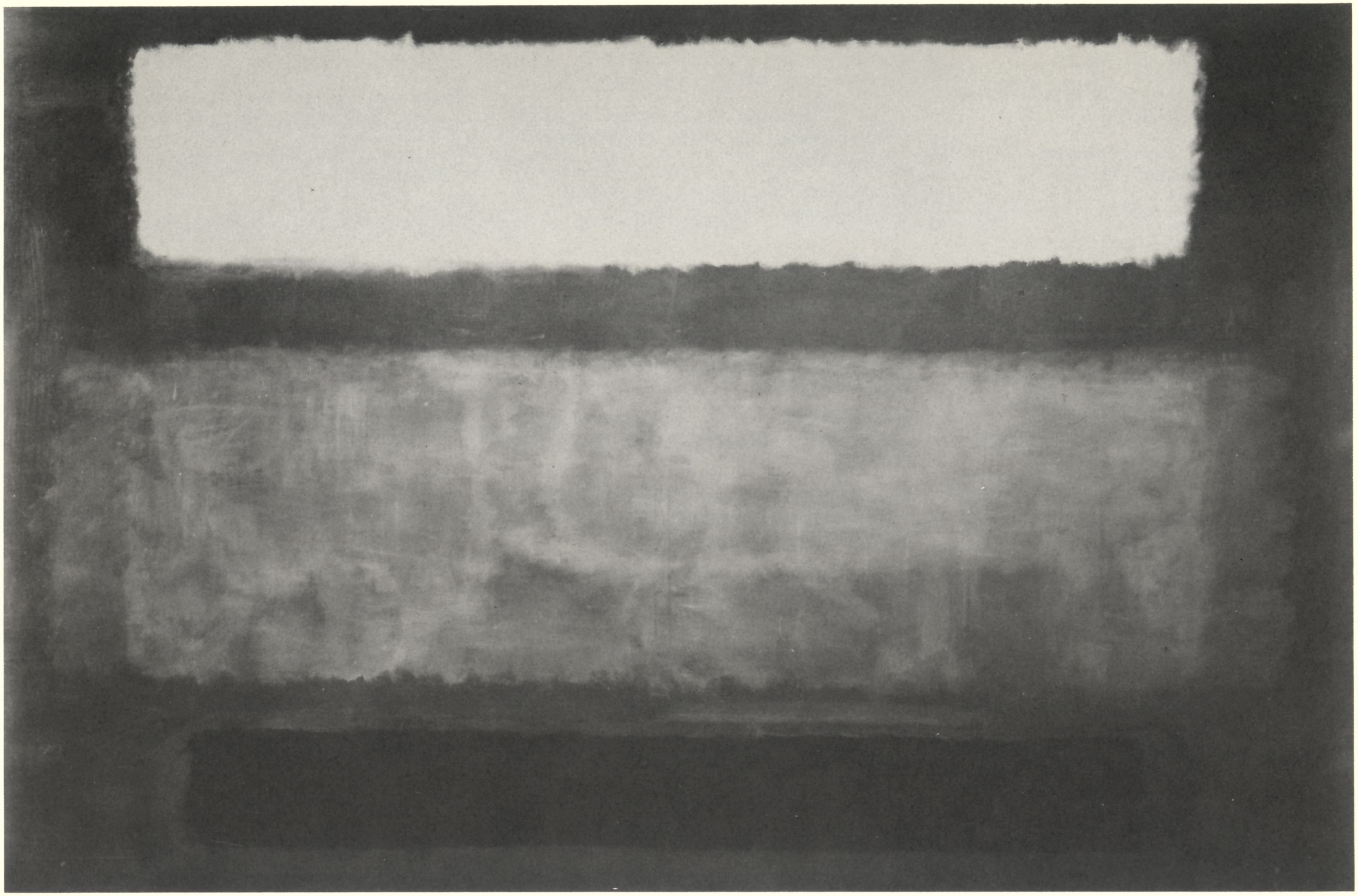
1965-67 Worked on paintings for a chapel in Houston, Texas.

1969 Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts, Yale University.

1970 Died, New York City.

8 Mark Rothko.
White, Pink, and Mustard.
Oil on canvas.





6 Mark Rothko. *Black, Maroons, and White*. Oil on canvas.

Selected One-Man Shows

1933 Portland Art Museum, Oregon.

1946 Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California; San Francisco Museum of Art.

1954 Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; Art Institute of Chicago.

1957 Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.*

1961 Museum of Modern Art, New York* (essay by Peter Selz); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam* (essay by Robert Goldwater).

1962 Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Kunsthalle, Basel.

1962-63 Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

1963 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

1965 Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome.

1970 Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museo d'arte moderna Cá Pesaro, Venice (XXXV Biennale).

1971 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.*

1971-72 Kunsthaus, Zurich. Also traveled to Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Städtische Junsthalle, Düsseldorf; Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam* (essays by Werner Haftmann and Donald McKinney).

1972 Musée national d'art moderne, Paris.*

1974 Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California* (essay by James B. Byrnes).

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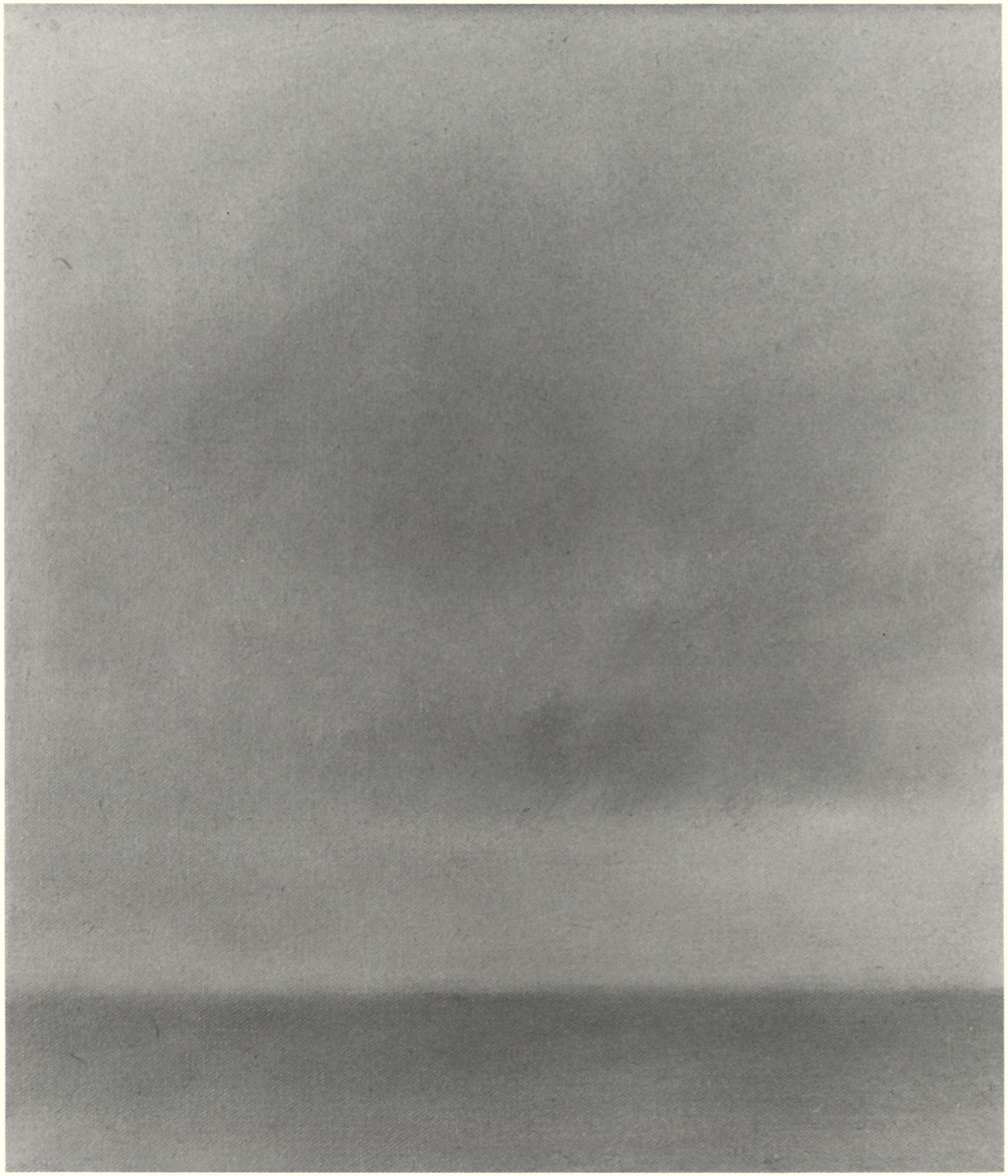
Jon Schueler

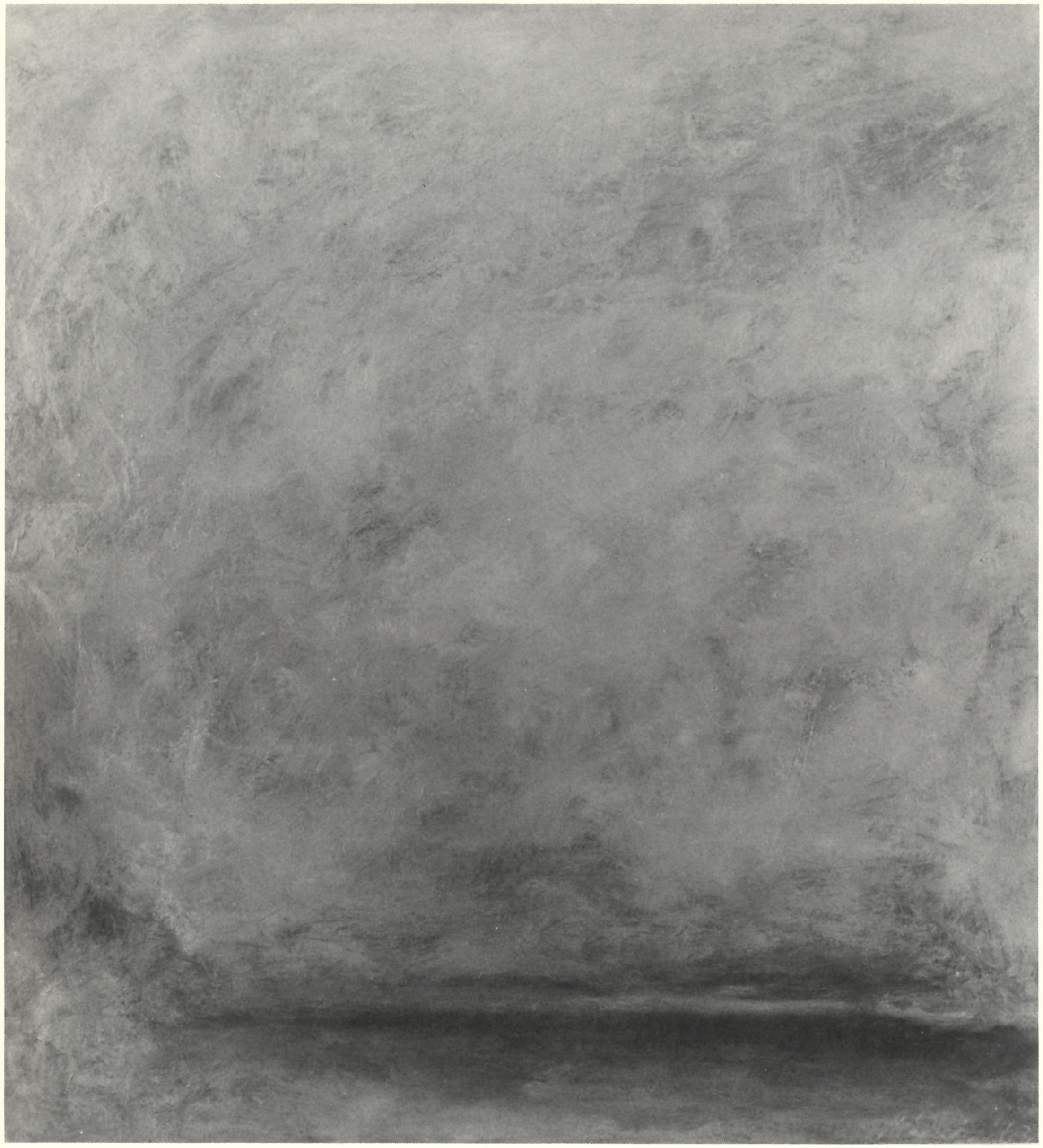
Born in 1916 (the same year as Robert Motherwell), Schueler did not start painting until 1945, at 29 years of age, when he became a student in a night class in Los Angeles. Fortunately he found his way to Clyfford Still's studio by 1947, and worked there until 1951. Nevertheless, at an age when some of his contemporaries were playing a major role in the development of Abstract Expressionism (especially in New York), Schueler was still a student.

He had studied economics and English literature for six years before entering the United States Air Corps in 1940. He served as a navigator on a B-17 bomber, and it was while flying over Britain and the Continent that he first began to conceive his ideal landscape: a landscape dominated by the sky, and where nothing is static but exists only in a state of flux. As a navigator, his awareness of such things as atmosphere, clouds, weather, ever-changing terrain, and emerging forms, must have been honed to a singular sharpness.

While he was in Britain a friend described the Scottish Highlands to him and urged him to visit that wild Northern terrain. After returning to this country and studying and working in California, he went to New York. The intensity of life there and the fast pace appealed to him. He knew Rothko quite well, having first met him at the California School of Fine Arts when Still introduced them. In New York he saw a good deal of Rothko, often visiting with him in his studio. They did not always agree, and Schueler remarks that "Rothko's work both impressed and upset



11 Jon Schueler. *Counterlight*. Oil on canvas.



13 Jon Schueler. *Fog*. Oil on canvas.

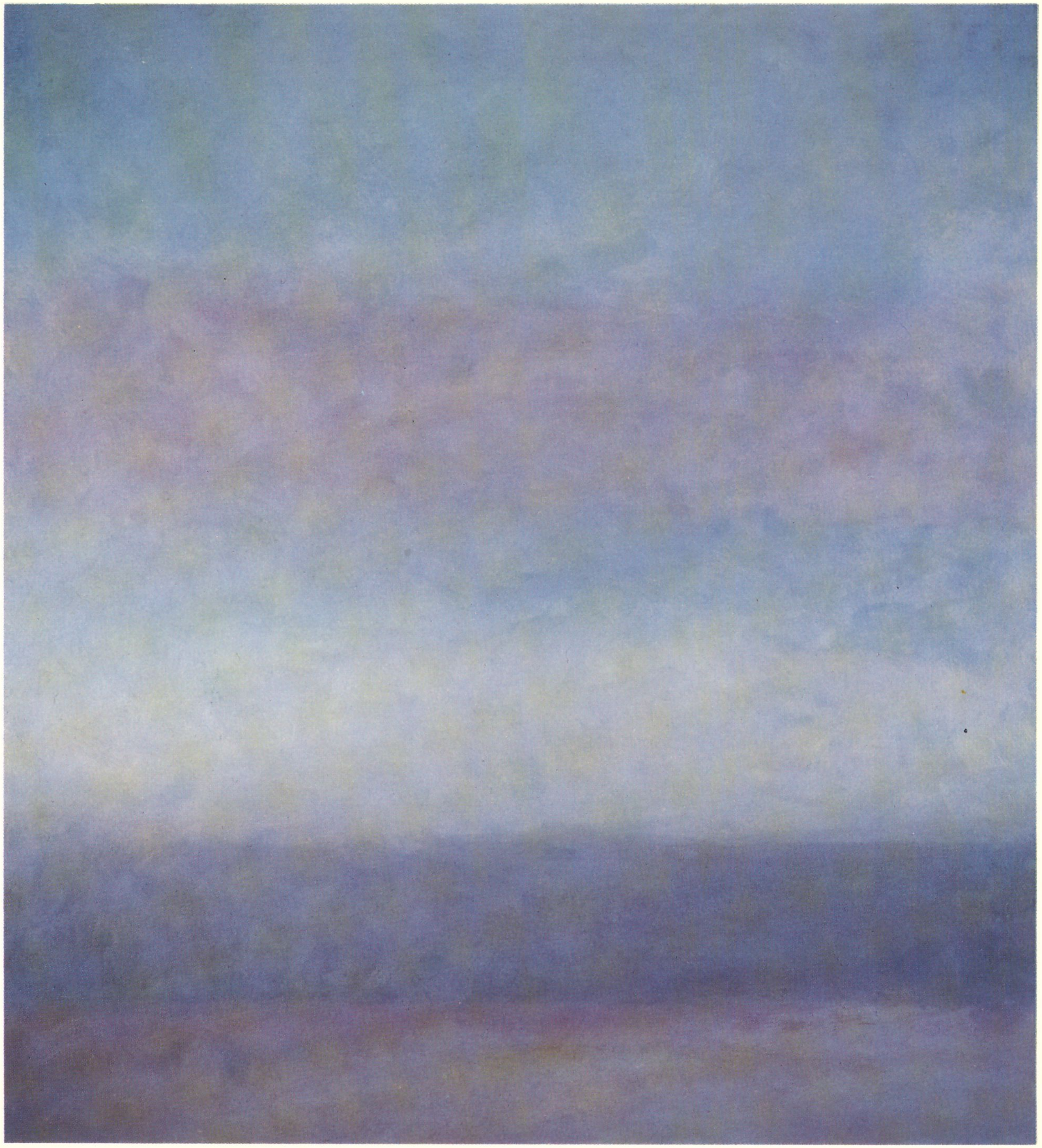
me." He has also said, "As I came to know the paintings and the men during the '50s, I came to believe that consciously or unconsciously many of the major painters were reflecting aspects of nature or landscape that they may not have been willing to admit."[1]

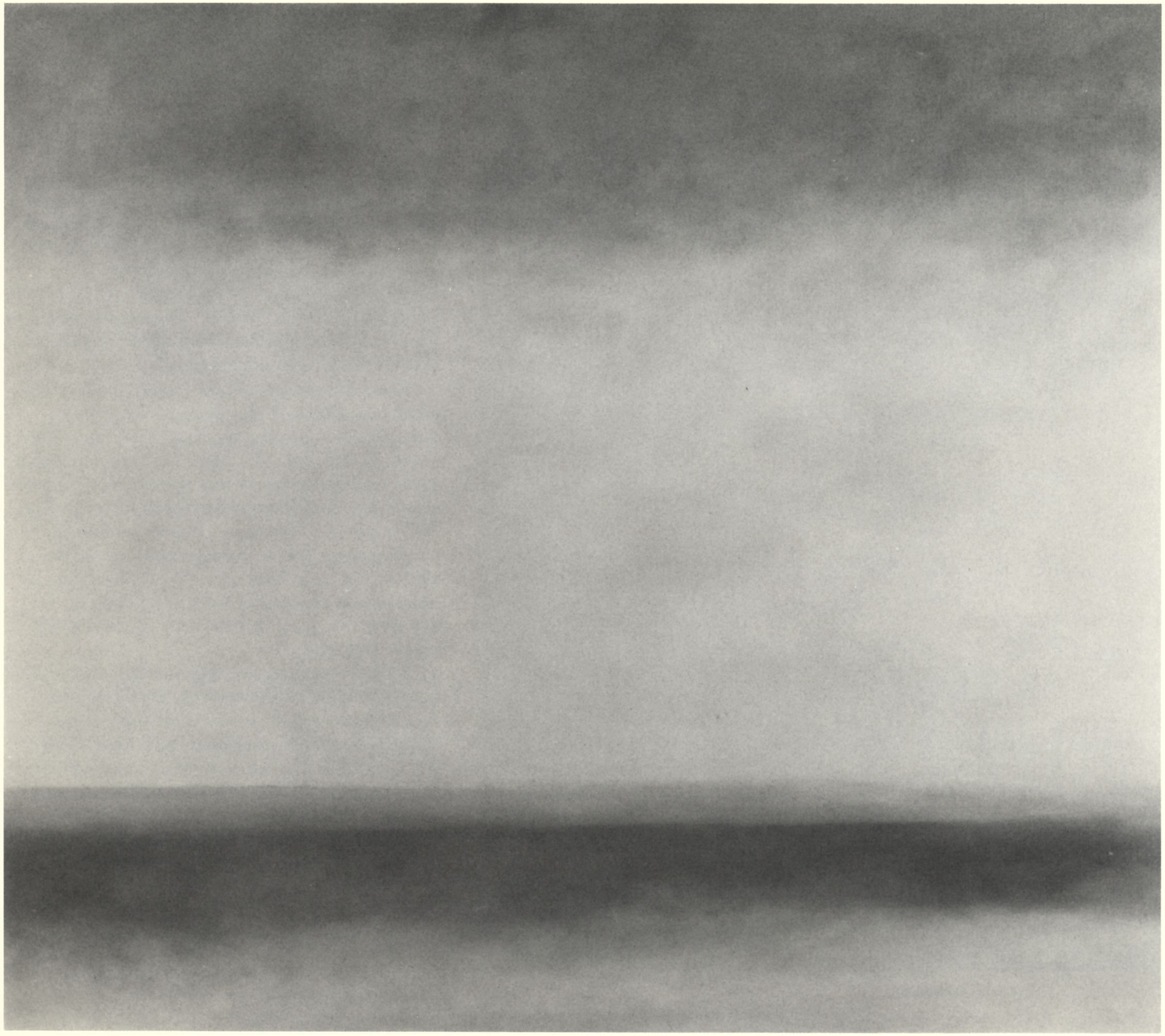
It is, of course, a simple and familiar idea that all vertical forms suggest figures, while horizontal forms suggest landscapes. And of course it is possible that the landscape image was subconsciously behind Rothko's mature paintings which were composed of horizontal rectangles (it even seems *probable* that it lay behind his last gray and black paintings).

Also during the '50s the image of a particular landscape was taking form in Schueler's mind. He rejected the Abstract Expressionists' idea of eliminating the appearance of nature from their work, opting instead to embrace nature in his own work. He wrote: "I knew that something could be expressed that was very real. . .if one allowed one's self to respond to the immediate surges and impulses of the imagination. Nature. The painting. The inner 'landscape.' Back and forth. In and out. One revealing the other. Yet, each its own."[2]

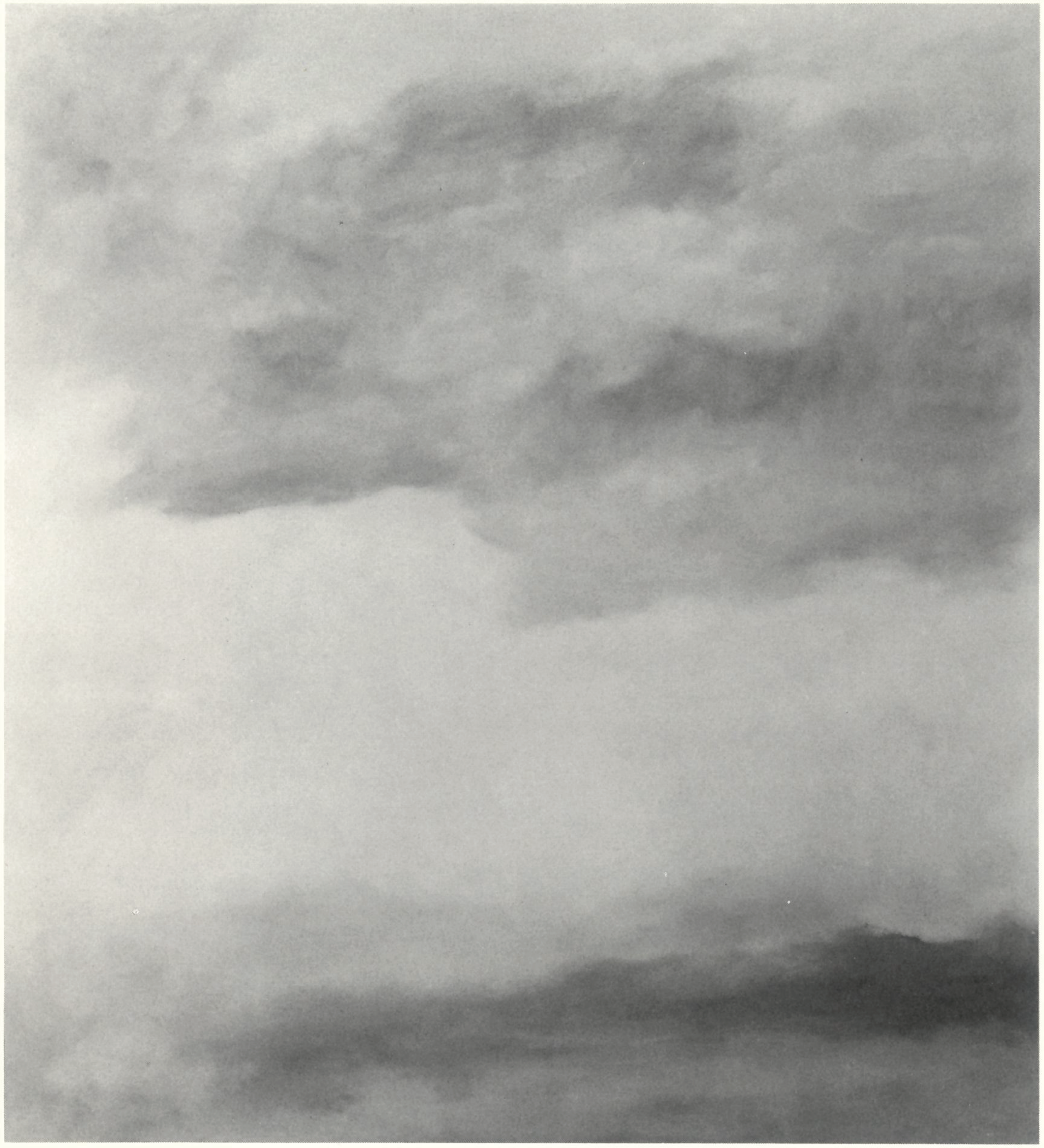
When Schueler returned to Britain in 1957 and finally made the trip into the Highlands of Scotland, he found a landscape close to his ideal image. And as he traveled he described characteristics of this inner image to people, asking if they knew such a place. Finally, someone answered that he was describing the country around Mallaig on the West Coast overlooking the Sound of Sleat to the Sleat Peninsula of the Isle of Skye. He went directly there and, almost incredibly, found his landscape—a landscape which the artist describes both in his paintings and in a particularly appropriate verbal statement:

18 Jon Schueler.
Mood with Magda: Blues in Grey, III.
Oil on canvas.





17 Jon Schueler. ***The Light of Sleat, I.*** Oil on canvas.



21 Jon Schueler. *Sleat Remembered: Light, I.* Oil on canvas.

When I speak of nature, I speak of the sky, because the sky has become all of nature to me. But it is most particularly the brooding, storm-ridden sky over the Sound of Sleat in which I find the living image of past dreams, dreams which had emerged from memory and the swirl of paint. Here I can see the drama of nature charged and compressed. Lands form, seas disappear, worlds fragment, colors merge or give birth to burning shapes, mountain snows show emerald green. Or, for a moment, life stops still when the gales pause and the sky clears after long days of careening sound and horizontal rain or snow.

The sky: Father, Mother, Mistress, and the lonely mystery of endless love. Each moment of light or night is as complex as all of life.

From the claustrophobic terror of my studio I enter the unframed sky. There I find every passion, soaring to Death, as certain and as fleeting as the intimacy of a night mist, passion which melts aesthetic pleasure and seduces the intellect across the horizon or past the shadow on the sea. The sky is an enlargement of man, suggesting mind beyond that which one feels and understands. The artist lives in loneliness, searching for what he can only fail to find, as he looks to the sky or to his work, to the canvas, to his scratchings, to his mark.

I fall in motionless silence across a high sky. I watch the light spread through the shadowed snow-cloud and the sea, and I recognize what I have always known and have come here to find: not the Highlands, but a nameless place—unless North is a name. It is truly North. The sun and shadow and infinite sea, all of it the sky, vast and intimate, eternal creation and destruction, one, a simplicity impossible to understand.[3]

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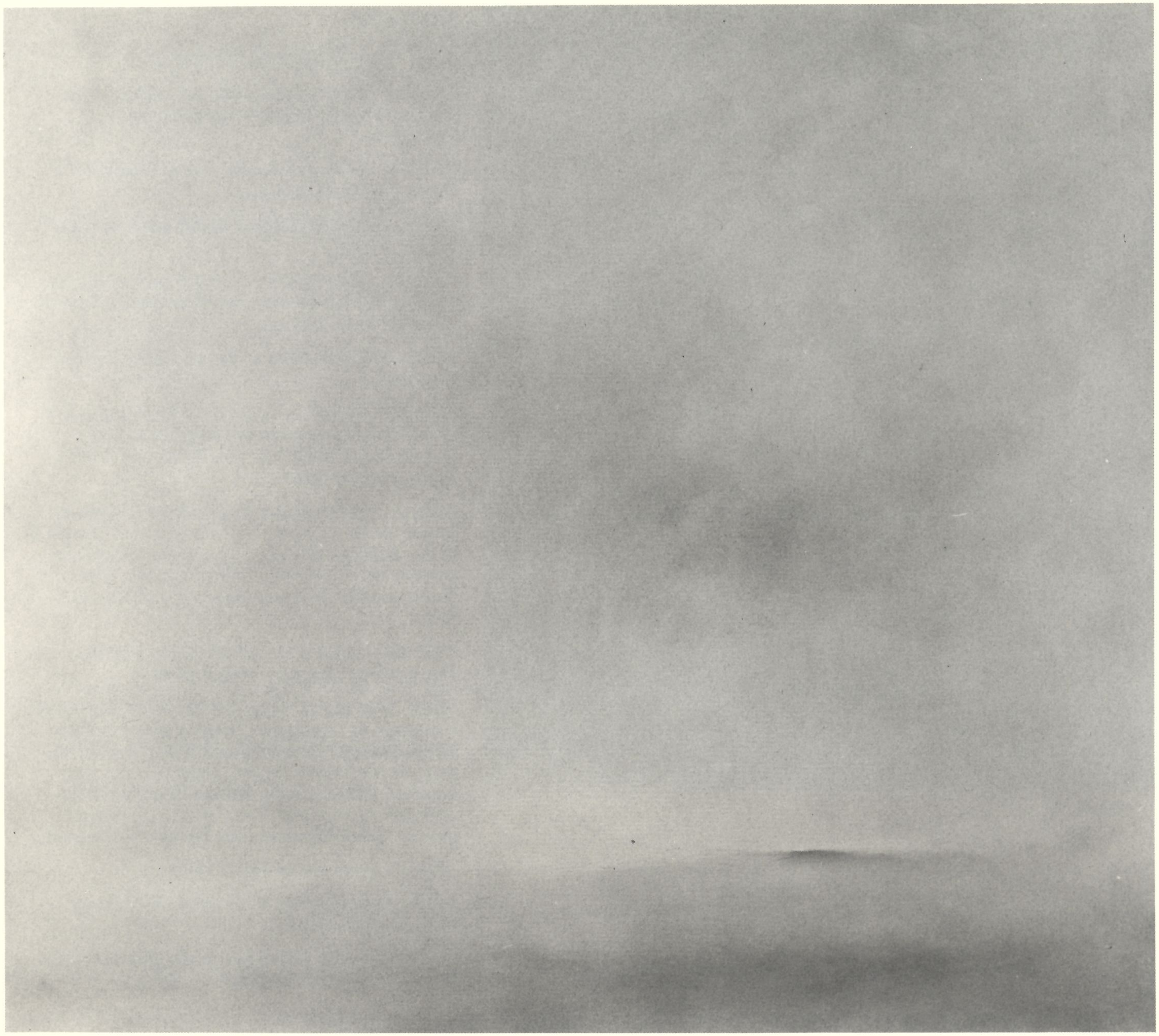
1. From a letter to Ben Heller dated 27 November 1974.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Jon Schueler, "The Sky," *Jon Schueler* (exh. cat., Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1975).



24 Jon Schueler. *Summer Sea Remembered, II*. Oil on canvas.

25 Jon Schueler. *Summer Storm*. Oil on canvas.

Biography

1916 Born Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

1934-40 Studied economics and achieved an M.A. in English Literature at University of Wisconsin.

1940-45 In England with United States Air Corps as aircraft navigator.

1945 Began painting in evening portrait class in Los Angeles.

1947-51 Worked with Clyfford Still at California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco, where he also met Mark Rothko.

1950 One-man show at Metart Gallery in San Francisco.

1951-70 Lived in or near New York; again met with Rothko and other artists of Abstract-Expressionist generation; made trips to France, Spain, and Scotland.

1954– Has had many one-man exhibitions at Stable Gallery, Leo Castelli Gallery, and Hirschl & Adler Gallery; also was in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.

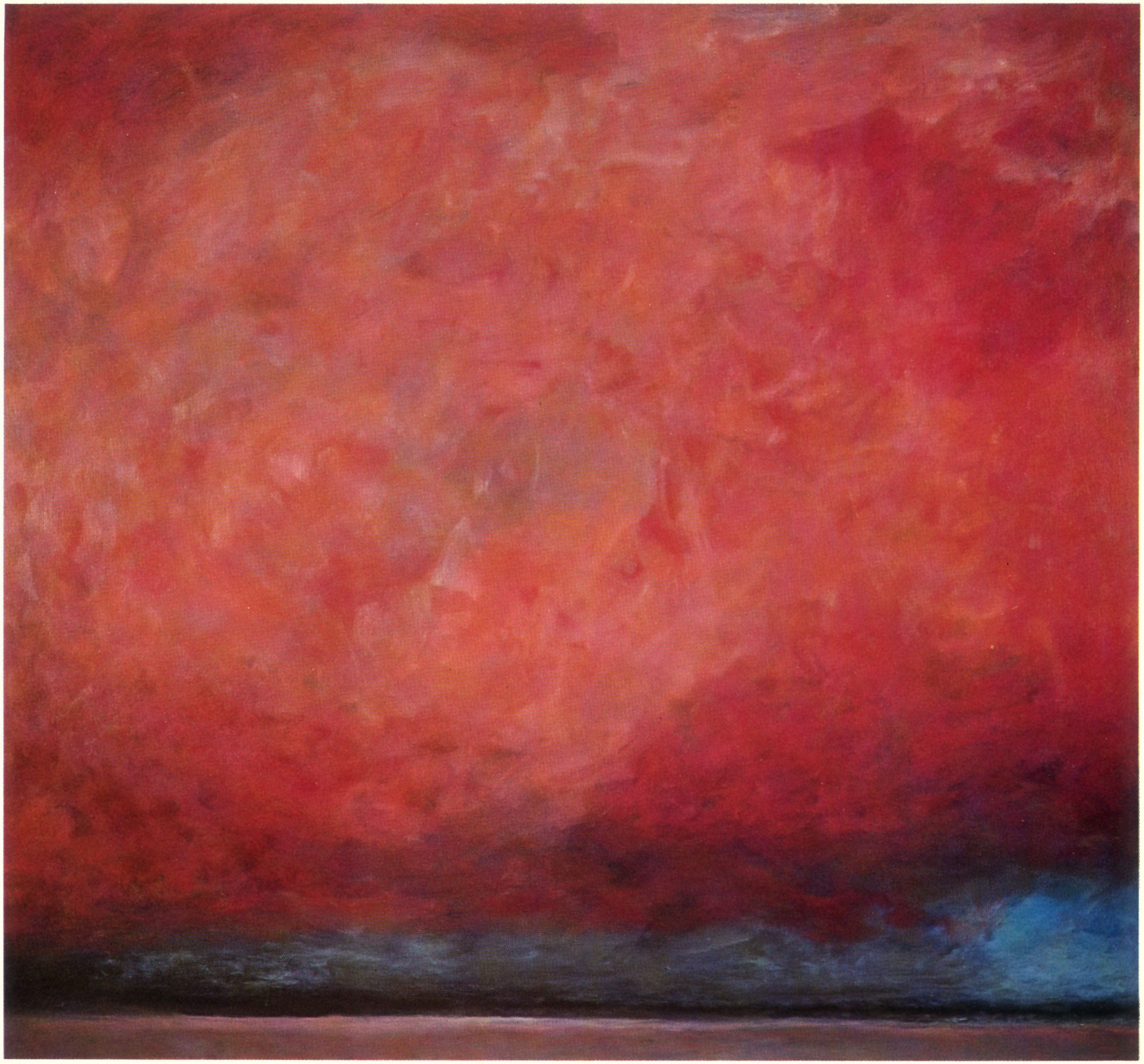
1957-58 Spent a year at Mallaig in the West Highlands on the coast of Scotland.

1959 Was one of eleven artists selected by B. H. Friedman for the book, *School of New York: Some Younger Artists,* Grove Press. The others were Helen Frankenthaler, Jasper Johns, Joan Mitchell, Alfred Leslie, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Stankiewicz, Larry Rivers, Raymond Parker, Grace Hartigan, and Robert Goodnough.

1970– Lives and works at Mallaig.

1973 Exhibition of his works at Edinburgh Festival in Scotland.

1975 One-man exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



23 Jon Schueler. *Snow Cloud and Blue Sky*. Oil on canvas.

Selected One-Man Shows

1973 The Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland.

1975 The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

26 Jon Schueler. *Untitled, No. 160*. Water color.

27 Jon Schueler. *Untitled, No. 164*. Water color.

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Catalog

MILTON AVERY

1 *Dunes and Sea, II.* Oil on canvas, 1960. 52 x 72 inches (132.1 x 182.9 cm.). Collection, Mrs. Milton Avery; Courtesy Grace Borgenicht Gallery.

2 *Sand, Sea, and Sky.* Oil on canvas, 1959. 60 x 72 inches (152.4 x 182.9 cm.). Collection, Larivière, Montreal. (Photo: after Kramer)

3 *Sea Grasses and Blue Sea.* Oil on canvas, 1958. 60-1/8 x 72-3/8 inches (152.7 x 183.8 cm.). Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of friends of the artist, 1959.

4 *Sunset.* Oil on canvas, 1952. 42 x 48 inches (106.8 x 121.9 cm.). Collection, The Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Roy R. and Marie Neuberger Foundation, Inc.

5 *White Wave, Dark Sea.* Oil on canvas, 1963. 24 x 30 inches (60.9 x 76.2 cm.). Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene M. Schwartz.*

MARK ROTHKO

6 *Black, Maroons, and White.* Oil on canvas, 1958. 105 x 169 inches (266.7 x 429.2 cm.). Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller.

7 *White Band.* Oil on canvas, 1954. 81 x 86-5/8 inches (205.7 x 220 cm.). Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller.

8 *White, Pink, and Mustard.* Oil on canvas, 1954. 92 x 66-1/2 inches (233.6 x 168.9 cm.). Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller.

JON SCHUELER

9 *April Sky.* Oil on canvas, 1963. 56 x 70 inches (142 x 177.8 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

10 *Burning.* Oil on canvas, 1958. 71-1/2 x 79-1/2 inches (179.1 x 201.9 cm.). Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller.*

11 *Counterlight.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 14 x 12 inches (35.6 x 30.5 cm.). Lent by the artist.

12 *Deep Sky.* Oil on canvas, 1971. 12 x 14 inches (30.5 x 35.6 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

13 *Fog.* Oil on canvas, 1963. 48 x 43-1/4 inches (121.9 x 109.9 cm.). Lent by the artist.

14 *Grey Sky Shadow, II.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 42 x 48 inches (106.7 x 121.9 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

15 *Jane Series, IV.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 80 x 75 inches (203.2 x 190.5 cm.). Lent by Ben Heller, Inc.*

16 *Light and Cloud.* Oil on canvas, 1971. 6 x 8 inches (15.7 x 20.3 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

17 *The Light of Sleat, I.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 52 x 60 inches (132.1 x 152.4 cm.). Lent by the artist.

18 *Mood with Magda: Blues in Grey, III.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 14 x 12 inches (35.6 x 30.5 cm.). Lent by the artist.

19 *Red Shadow in a Winter Dream.* Oil on canvas, 1972. 76 x 69 inches (193 x 175.2 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

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*An asterisk indicates that the painting is *not* illustrated in this catalog.

20 *Sleat Blue, II.* Oil on canvas, 1973-74. 12 x 16 inches (30.5 x 40.6 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

21 *Sleat Remembered: Light, I.* Oil on canvas, 1973. 76 x 69 inches (193 x 175.3 cm.). Lent by John C. Stoller, Minneapolis.

22 *Sleat: Winter Blues, III.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 29 x 32 inches (73.7 x 81.3 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

23 *Snow Cloud and Blue Sky.* Oil on canvas, 1962. 73 x 78 inches (185.4 x 198.1 cm.). Lent by the artist.

24 *Summer Sea Remembered, II.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 32 x 36 inches (81.3 x 91.4 cm.). Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Joel Ehrenkranz.

25 *Summer Storm.* Oil on canvas, 1973. 36 x 44 inches (91.4 x 111.4 cm.). Collection, Mrs. David Oreck.

26 *Untitled, No. 160.* Water color, 1974. 14-5/8 x 21-5/8 inches (37.2 x 54.9 cm.). Lent by the artist.

27 *Untitled, No. 164.* Water color, 1974. 10-1/2 x 14-1/8 inches (26.7 x 36.2 cm.). Lent by the artist.

28 *Untitled, No. 167.* Water color, 1973. 8-3/4 x 11-1/4 inches (22.2 x 28.6 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

29 *Untitled, No. 202.* Water color, 1974. 4-1/4 x 6 inches (10.9 x 15.2 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

30 *Untitled, No. 205.* Water color, 1974. 5 x 6 inches (12.7 x 15.2 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

31 *Untitled, No. 209.* Water color, 1974. 8 x 10 inches (20.3 x 25.4 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

32 *Untitled, No. 214.* Water color, 1974. 10-1/4 x 14-1/4 inches (26 x 36.2 cm.). Lent by the artist.*

33 *Waiting.* Oil on canvas, 1974. 14 x 18 inches (35.6 x 45.7 cm.). Lent by the artist.*