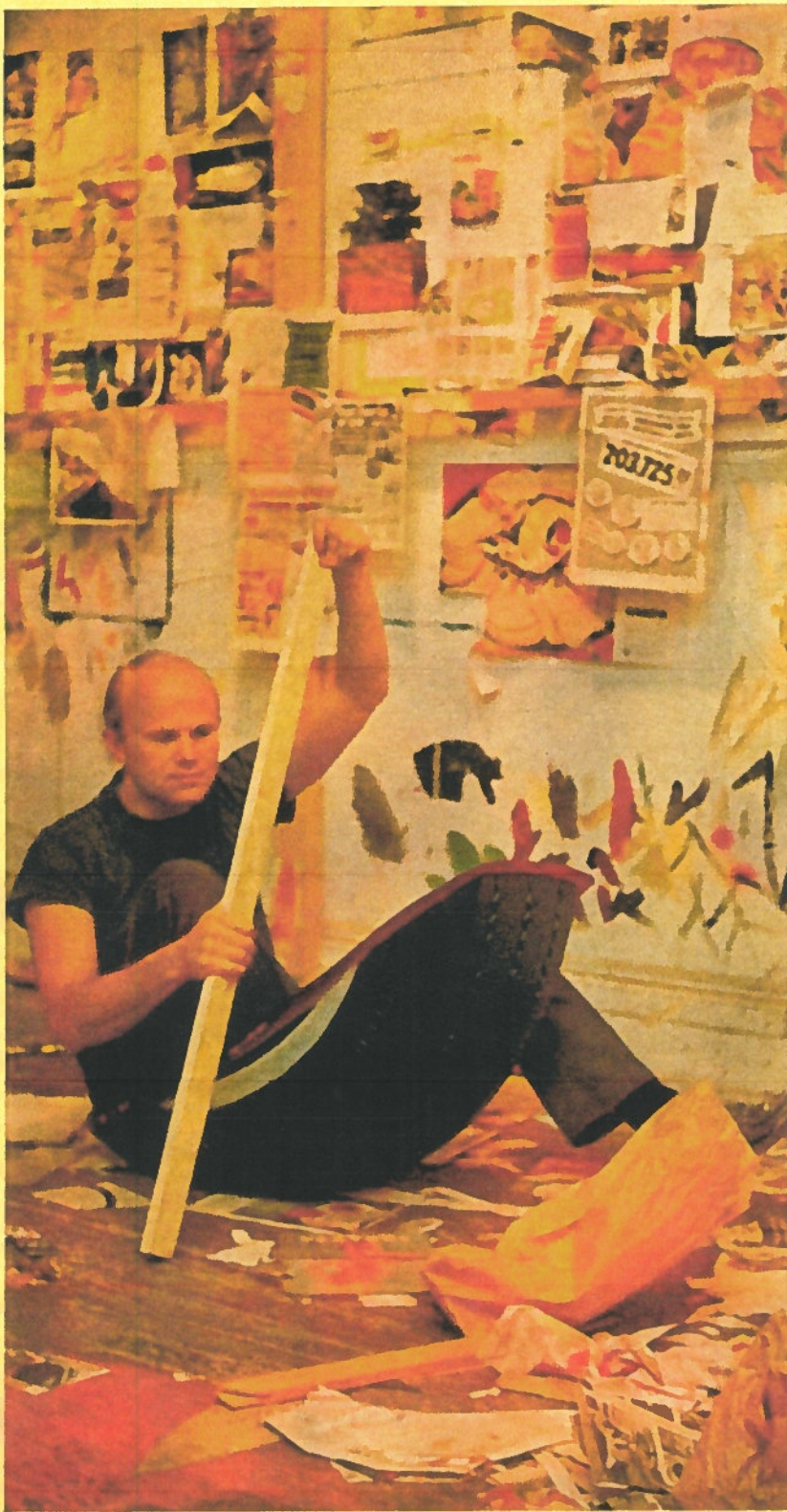


**Esquire Magazine**  
**January 1965**

**“The American Painter as a Blue Chip”**  
**by Marvin Elkoff**



TWO TITANS of the new industry: James Rosenquist in an improvised canoe; Andy Warhol in his silver-foiled bathroom and dark glasses.



# THE AMERICAN PAINTER AS A BLUE CHIP

by Marvin Elkoff

To the untutored eye the working conditions — and the work — may seem to be facets of the old Bohemia: but, my God, how the money rolls in!

**T**he Longview Foundation some years ago set up a grant for painters who had made significant contributions and were in need of cash. A gentleman on the committee selecting the recipients reports that the Foundation used up most of its money at the same time as it ran out of eligible painters.

To many of us, the idea that there are no longer any painters both reputable and short of funds comes as a shock. It is hard to adjust to the rapidity of change in the United States. We are bred for one life and lead another. And so we are prepared to look at the world of avant-garde art with memories of Modigliani selling his drawings in cafés and dying of consumption at thirty-five, of Soutine starving in his vermin-and-stench-ridden garret, of Van Gogh's madness, of irascible Cézanne's private labors and lack of public recognition.

The idea of a genius going unrecognized and unrewarded in his lifetime has always been part myth, but the myth has been more of a reality here in America than it ever was in Europe. Yet even the vivid example of Soutine is softened by the realization that Dr. Albert Barnes started buying him in quantity when the painter was thirty.

Today the myth serves a purpose. It is a selling weapon for the dealer, a justification for the uncertain collector. It is, in any event, one of the results of our history-conscious period: *Be the first on your block to recognize a genius*, says the dealer. *Don't let the critics make fun of you in thirty years*, says the collector to himself.

Nevertheless, we *have* been trained to see the art world through these mythic glasses, and what we find today is something different, radically different.

Up until the end of World War II, great modern art was always assumed to be School of Paris. American artists themselves were Francophiles, and the collectors more so. Adolph Gottlieb, one of the four or five leaders of the Abstract Expressionist generation that has dominated American art until recently, remembers that up until the end of

Photographed by Robert Adelman

the war he assumed that this situation would go on forever. And suddenly it began to dawn on people, first on the painters, that Americans were doing the best and most original art in the world. Soon the French were the ones doing the imitation. The process has already begun with Pop art, which now has imitators in almost every country.

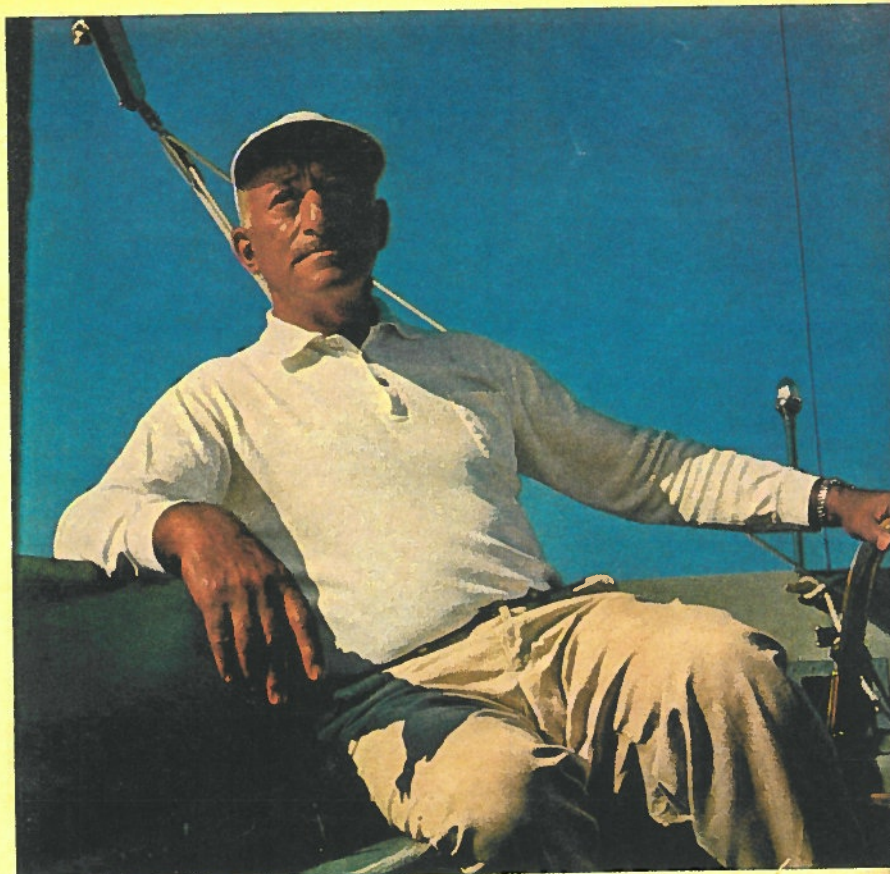
Though painting power, along with so much other power, came to America in the Forties, there was still no money. But a painter like Willem de Kooning, America's most famous and most highly rewarded avant-garde painter, looks back regretfully to that period. He appreciates his great current success and his money, but he felt more reality then, more security, more exuberance. "First there was this underground reputation we had in the late Thirties and during the war, you know, one painter for another, by ourselves, to hell with the rest," he says, with a Dutch accent that you almost forget because of his hip, loose style. "Whoever figured on a big success? That sounded crazy. Then after the war the reputation was aboveground, you know, the critics, a few dealers like Egan. Still no money. But excitement."

Today, at sixty, de Kooning's paintings sell for anywhere from \$3,000 to \$35,000, according to size. He is involved in the seemingly endless task of building a studio-house in East Hampton (costing over \$100,000).

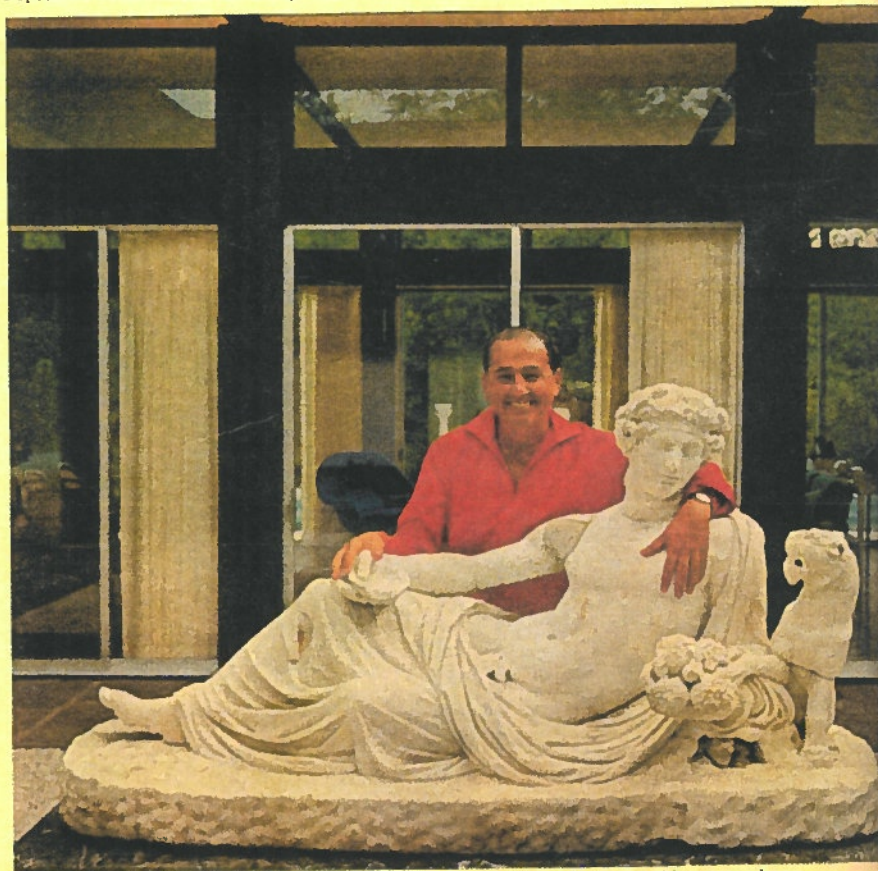
De Kooning speaks of the huge house as if it were a piece of reality he could mine from a fantasy of wealth and success that never seems too firm or credible, even to an artist of his stature. He is nervous about his reputation, which is under attack, nervous about his next show. He works slowly, and few people have seen his recent work. He seems intent on conveying that he really does not make all that much money, after taxes. On the other hand, he insists that he does not want to seem ungrateful to the American government by complaining about the taxes.

These proper statements seemed odd coming from a man who feels himself in the romantic tradition of Van Gogh, but only if you read them without hearing the odd combination of irony and innocence that hovers under the words.

The big money did not come into art until the middle Fifties, as late as '58 and '59 for most of them. "Poor Jackson [Pollock, who died in an accident in 1956] started it all and he died before the money came," says de Kooning. Only eight or nine years ago, though his world fame was second only to Pollock's, de Kooning still had little money. Sidney Janis, whose gallery handled his work, had turned down a group of his paintings about women. Around Christmas-time, when de Kooning needed money to pay his mother's hospital bills, he offered these for sale from his studio. (He was then sharing a house in Bridgehampton, Long Island, with Ludwig Sander and the late Franz Kline.) Martha Jackson bought a number, which accounted for a fine show she had the next year. It was as late as 1959 that Janis held the historic de Kooning show, when all his paintings were sold the first day for a total of \$150,000. De Kooning says it



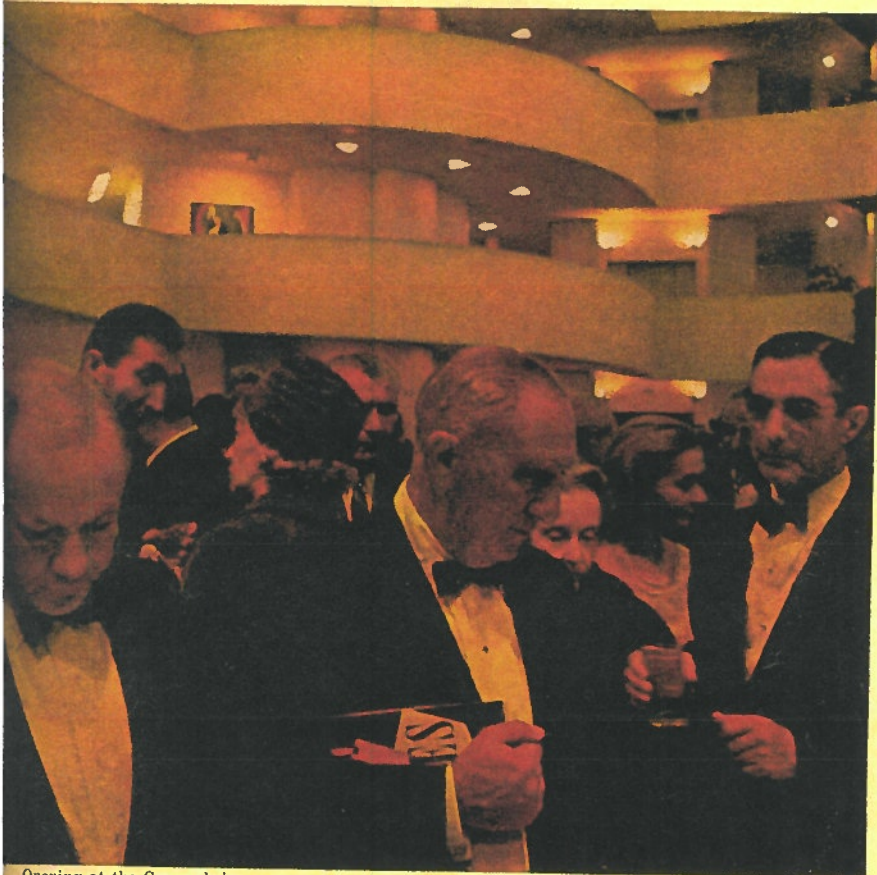
Aspects of Affluence: Painter Adolph Gottlieb sails in Three Mile Harbor, Easthampton...



Robert Scull, first big collector of pop art, embraces a non-pop statue in front of his summer home.



... and is visited by collector Ben Heller (a Gottlieb on the wall).



Opening at the Guggenheim.

was so unnerving he wished he were back on the W.P.A. project.

De Kooning displays a childlike surprise, almost entirely sincere, at his fame, especially when it comes in the form of governmental recognition. ("Me! Who expected it. I came here as a stowaway, a kid of twenty.") One night the government traced him to a dinner at the sculptor Ibram Lassav's in East Hampton. A man named Goodman left a message that President Johnson wanted to give de Kooning the Presidential Medal of Freedom and would he please call back. His first impulse was to figure out who was playing the practical joke. He was finally persuaded to make the call, and then had to be persuaded to go to Washington. It would have seemed like reverse snobbery, he said, *not* to go when such famous people as Leonard Bernstein would be there. As so often with celebrities, he was most impressed with the other celebrities.

Gottlieb's success came about the same time as de Kooning's—Gottlieb at sixty-one is a year older—but his life is very different. De Kooning would prefer to be left alone out in East Hampton; he lives there all year, and goes along with the business side of art only insofar as he is pulled into it or persuaded it is necessary. A sturdy, direct and businesslike man, Gottlieb is always Gottlieb and one feels he does simply that which he has to do to maintain his success. It was only eight years ago that he moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan, only four years ago that he bought a handsome \$75,000 summer house on "Millionaire's Row" in East Hampton, formerly owned by Jacqueline Kennedy's aunts. In the late Thirties he spent his summers in Gloucester, Massachusetts, for \$25 a month. In the early Fifties in Provincetown he still spent no more than \$300 for the summer. Now, once each summer in East Hampton, Gottlieb throws a huge and stylish cocktail party for perhaps two hundred people—artists, gallery owners, collectors, and the local rich who are often the collectors. This year there were several maids, several bartenders, and a local policeman to keep traffic moving. Everyone but the painters seemed to enjoy the party. To them it was clearly a business occasion; the strain on their faces showed it.

The rise of these older painters—Kline, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman and others, in addition to Pollock, de Kooning and Gottlieb, who though various in style are known as the first generation of Abstract Expressionists—was very slow and modest until the late Fifties. Most of them either had wives with jobs or worked themselves. The wives of both Newman and Gottlieb, for example, were teachers.

In 1946-1947 Gottlieb sold all his paintings to the Kootz Gallery for \$3,000. In 1960 a single painting sold for twice that. Today, especially after winning the recent Grand Prize at the São Paulo Bienal, a large Gottlieb will go for \$10,000 to \$15,000.

In 1957, after leaving a teaching job at Brooklyn College, Mark Rothko had difficulty raising enough money to make a trip to New Orleans—a matter of \$600 or \$700. When he came back he found he had made sales worth \$10,000. Today, because of taxes, he re-

fuses to sell more than four or five paintings a year, and there is a long, long waiting list. Each of his paintings, since he paints large, sells for \$15,000 to \$25,000. Last year he rejected a sale to The Four Seasons because he did not like the idea of his paintings being hung in a restaurant. "I did them a favor," he says. "My paintings might have been bad for the digestion of their patrons."

In 1955, Newman was selling nothing at all. And now, according to collectors, it is an ordeal to get one at \$15,000. Newman has been known to inquire where the collector will hang it, what paintings it will be near, and how sincere he really is in his desire for the painting. In other words, does the collector love him for his investment possibilities or does he really love his work.

In 1957, Janis Gallery had a hard time selling large Franz Kline paintings for \$1,200; today they go for \$25,000.

A Pollock bought for \$8,000 in 1954 is now worth more than \$100,000. Whereas prices had been rising steadily, it was his death in 1956 that triggered the beginning of the rise to a new plateau. Then, about three years later, prices of Pollocks jumped enormously and drew other prices up with them.

To one collector, these masters of the first generation have now become a "bunch of accountants. They're guarded, wary, suspicious."

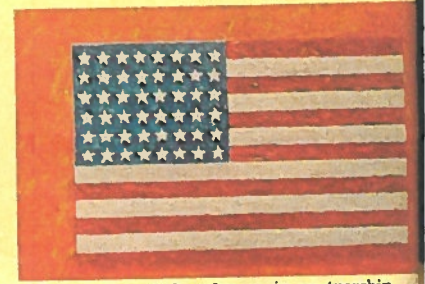
Another collector sympathizes with them, sees them as Depression-bred, and as suspicious and quirky because of the country's rejection of their work until they were on to fifty.

Both the first and second generations of Abstract Expressionism have been characterized as rougher, more drunken, brawling, and womanizing, angrier and less given to the amenities than the generation that followed. Henry Geldzahler, Associate Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum, who is very friendly and involved with the younger painters, threw a large party last year where some of the older artists met the young generation of Pop and hard-edge people (to deal in at least two categories). To Robert Motherwell, younger than the first generation but considered part of it, there was a whole difference in style of life as well as style of painting. The younger painters were, he says, so much more polite and sweet, so much less angry and bravly.

Certainly the biggest reason is that painters, far from being rejected by society, are in fact drawn into a too passionate, if not too pure, embrace. To be outside society had been a twisting and frustrating experience.



JASPER JOHNS, one of the first very successful pop artists, began as a window dresser in partnership



LARRY RIVERS began his career as a professional jazz musician and still plays sometimes. He no longer



ANDY WARHOL selecting models at the supermarket.



The models in use.



The Tom Wesselmanns and Dick Bellamy; Lucas Samaras—his studio is being offered for sale for \$17,000;



Barnett Newman, first-generation abstract expressionist;



Mike Goldberg behind a Mike Goldberg;



A Key Thing and Some Key Dealers: De Kooning's house in Easthampton; Critic Sam Hunter and Leo Castelli on the beach; Dick Bellamy, Director of the Green Gallery;



with Robert Rauschenberg. He is now thirty-four and has sold for as much as \$30,000.



needs the money. The piano is in Mike Goldberg's house.



Warhol thinking on the floor of his studio and recovering on a couch.



Marisol and Marisol doll;



Rosenquist out of his canoe.



Roy Lichtenstein at the Green Gallery; Maurice Tuckman (curator) and John Chamberlain (sculptor).



Painter Jim Dine in Sidney Janis' office; Martha Jackson and painter Paul Jenkins.



But it also protected the artist from distortions of success, from all the familiar vices that beset the other entertainment worlds. The painting world is closest of all to that of fashion and the theatre. Unlike the movies, or even publishing, where a product is thrown out into the world of millions who then either take it or reject it, paintings are thrown to a limited audience, a more homogeneously rich audience, almost in a face-to-face situation. It thereby takes less to make a trend, and to break it.

This audience is restless for the new, needs the *new* as a distinguishing accoutrement. It uses painting as a sign of rising social status in a world where minks, swimming pools, foreign travel and huge homes no longer carry enough distinction or have the same personal appeal—for most collectors *do* like painting: it is not just a flip of the coin between racehorses and painting. Since painting becomes a way of identifying oneself, there is a tendency to pick up some new trend in painting—to become among the first collectors to buy a certain kind of far-out work.

Investment in painting becomes uncertain in this atmosphere, especially among the second line of collectors. The sudden rise of Pop art almost paralyzed the art business for awhile. Art sales were seriously hurt in 1963 because no one knew what effect Pop's success would have on art prices, or how long Pop would last. In Los Angeles, said one gallery owner who had returned from there in the Summer of 1963, sales were at a standstill and galleries were on the verge of closing.

The Pop revolution was a perfect example of the fact that the small, compact world of modern painting is moved more quickly and easily than other culture worlds. Observers say that Pop took off—as opposed to developing slowly, which it would have done anyway—because of the support of three collectors: Mr. & Mrs. Robert C. Scull, Mr. & Mrs. Burton G. Tremaine, Jr., and Mr. & Mrs. Albert A. List.

What happens in situations like this, where changes are sudden, fads steadily changing, is that painters have their eyes cocked on their market as well as on their paintings. They suffer the anxiety of a Marc Bohan or an Yves St. Laurent preparing for a spring showing. That goes for everyone, but most intensely for the young, who are bred to making it, *anticipate* making it. A noted collector pointed out a double rub: That fathers still don't want their sons to be stupid enough to be painters; and if they don't make it in this success world, they appear doubly stupid. Young painters ask in effect: "What's the secret . . . how do you make it . . . how do you become a successful painter?" Since they now believe it can be done, they want to know how to do it.

When a young painter says this, he usually does not have in mind calculatedly painting for a certain market—opportunism is more complex and interesting than that, more intertwined with self-delusion. He usually has in mind that his paintings are just as good or as bad as another's; he feels all he lacks is the special selling mystique.

It is a too easy cynicism to consider a

change of style an opportunistic change, for there are two histories to art, an internal stylistic history, and an external one of markets and collectors. Styles dry up, just as markets do.

Many people feel that both histories are operating in the case of the second-generation Abstract Expressionists—such painters as Al Leslie, Michael Goldberg, Grace Hartigan and Joan Mitchell. In the middle Fifties, these painters (who are all around forty now) were successful, quickly successful by the standards of the times. But in the recent crush of new fads and styles in the art world, they have become a frightening object lesson to other painters. Pressed between the masters of the first generation and the new men of Pop and hard-edge, their fame and prices rose and fell with alarming speed. They have been squeezed out by the New.

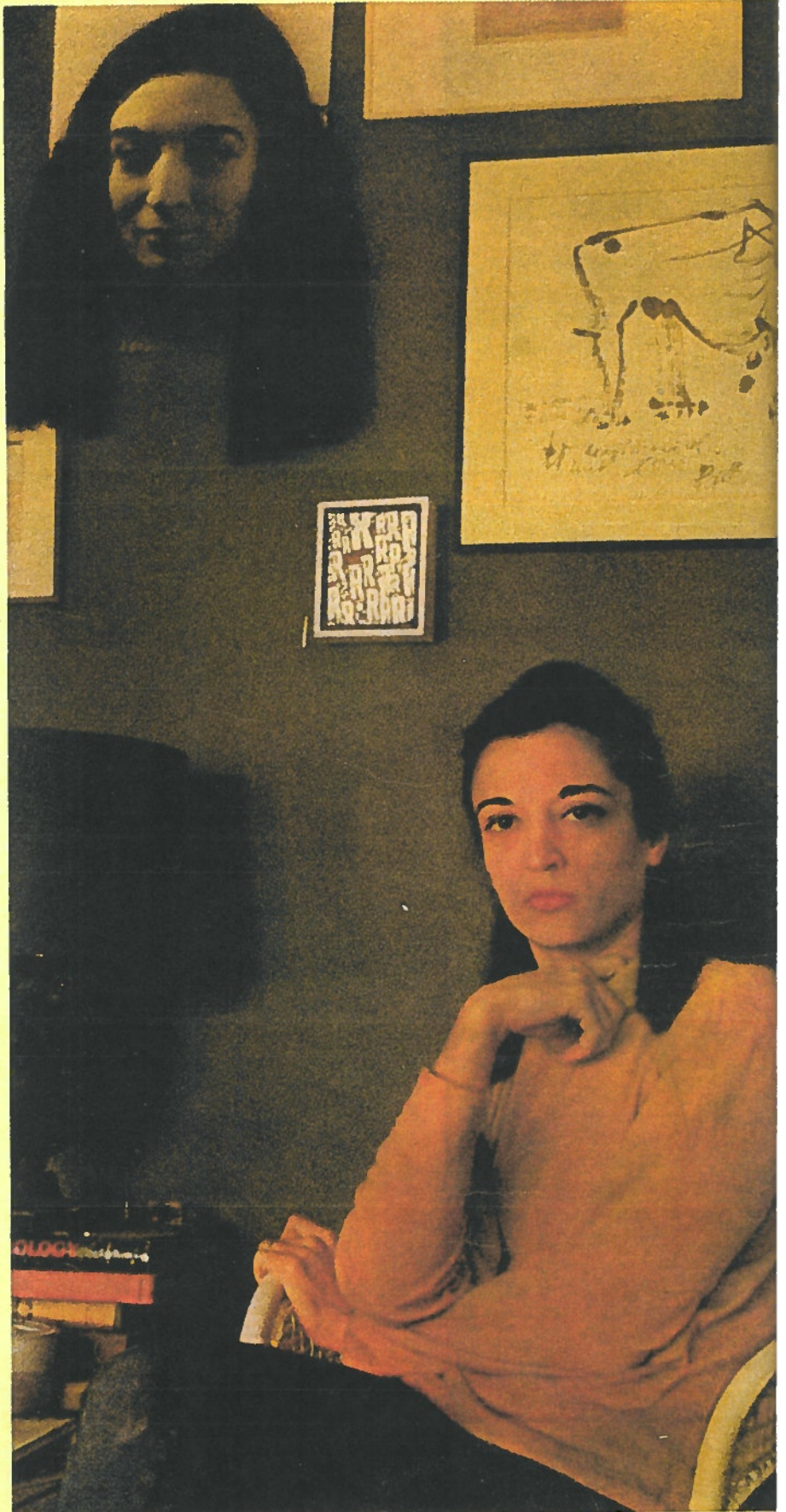
Whether they can come back is a familiar topic in the art world. Michael Goldberg is a good example that change *can* be successfully managed. Goldberg's first success started in 1956 when Walter Chrysler came down to his cold-water loft on East Tenth Street and bought sixteen paintings for a total of \$10,000, which he was to pay in four \$2,500 installments. Until then, Goldberg had worked as a moving man. His painting brought him a materials stipend of \$650 a year from the Poindexter Gallery.

Shortly thereafter, Martha Jackson gave him a \$10,000-a-year contract and he was on his way—for awhile, until the younger generation pressed up under him. Last year he had gathered together a quantity of new paintings in a very different Pop-influenced style. Goldberg candidly states that Martha Jackson did not want to show him; she had no confidence that his paintings would sell. They seemed too radical a change and there is a half-articulated, rather silly notion in the art world that a change has to be slow and visible, one stage related to another, thus betokening integrity. But she was persuaded to do so and the show sold out.

Not all changes work with such financial felicity. Al Leslie tried and so far has not succeeded. After an unsuccessful showing of Pop paintings in Los Angeles last year, he is now reported working in a realistic tradition. And there is the case of an older painter, Michael Loew, a serious and reputable artist who, during all the years of Abstract Expressionism's reign, painted in the then unfashionably pure geometrical style. Friends kept suggesting that he loosen up, get more Action, get more surface brushwork. He refused for years, then gradually changed. Now that he paints in the looser, more painterly style of Abstract Expressionism, he is once again on the outs with fashion.

Galleries, too, get squeezed by the new when they commit themselves to the "wrong" school at the wrong time. The handsome, well-financed Howard Wise Gallery on Fifty-seventh Street supported the cause of the first and second generation Abstract Expressionism for several years, to ever-diminishing returns. It is relieving itself of some of these painters, taking on the now popular geometrical and optical painters.

So far as the (Continued on page 112)



Marisol is the most original and the most successful sculptress on the contemporary scene. She sits beneath a photo of her favorite subject, Marisol, with hair added.



(Continued from page 42) middle generation of Abstract Expressionism is concerned, Mark Rothko sees the problem as a possible release from a style that dominated them. "My generation," he says, "never thought we had anything to lose or anything to gain; we just painted. Maybe now they will too."

To the steadily successful, non-school Larry Rivers—an example that in this world of fashion it is probably safer *not* to be part of a school—there is no turning back. The glare of success, the pull of money and fame is *there*, a reality, and he can't pretend it isn't. Nor would he wish to. He can conceive of the "lights going out"—but if they did he frankly concedes it would be unbearable to him. Right now he is a successful painter. This winter he will have a retrospective—he is only forty-one!—at the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, the affiliated international giant that recently invaded the New York art world. (Another recent move—Sotheby's purchase of the controlling interest in Parke-Bernet—marks the final shift of power to the United States, because it means that New York will become the auction, or price-setting, capital of the world.) Whatever paintings are on sale will probably go for prices up to \$20,000. Rivers' success is marked not only by a non-school style, but by an especially seductive and charming character to his work and to his personality; in fact, it is probably true to say that if you're not part of a school, you had better have personality, whatever the caliber of your painting. In the face-to-face world of painting, that is important.

Rivers came out of the jazz world. In 1947, when he first started painting, he was the first Beat character this writer had met; every fourth word was "like." He speaks that way no longer, indeed is highly articulate, though no less restless and distracted.

It is probably this uniqueness of painting and personality that accounts for the fact that his success came at about the same time, if not earlier, than the first generation of men twenty years his senior. He started to sell in 1951, and a few years later was able to live completely if modestly on his paintings. In 1955, he sold the well-known painting of George Washington Crossing the Delaware for \$2,500, quite a large sum in those days. (The buyer donated it to The Museum of Modern Art.) He remembers vividly receiving a call from John Bernard Meyers of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery telling him of the sale; he fell flat on the floor in a mixture of amazement, disbelief and joy. Five years later, the Seagram Building bought a very large painting for \$15,000. This message also came over the phone; Rivers received it coolly, and his first thought was to wonder if he could have gotten \$20,000. (About this story, Jasper Johns murmured: "Well, one can't go on indefinitely falling on the floor, can one?")

Rivers is more subtle and perceptive about the results of fame than other painters. He points out how striking it is to see one of your paintings hanging at the Museum on the same spot that a great Picasso had hung. According to your personality, he says, it either makes you think more of yourself or less of Picasso. Above all, he feels, it says *yes* to your impulses, makes you feel that whatever you do will somehow be right for you.

More than most painters, he moves

easily in the celebrity world. Last year he had a show in Los Angeles, which received a substantial play in the press. Hollywood producer Walter Mirisch—a distant relative—called Rivers when he saw the story and wondered how come Larry hadn't called him. They had met, but until then Mirisch had paid no particular attention to him. However, now there was a special situation. Billy Wilder, an admirer of Rivers, was at that time directing *Irma La Douce* for Mirisch—and fighting with him. It seemed there might be a blowup. Mirisch learned that the one painting Wilder wanted to buy was the one painting Rivers was not selling. Rivers realized that Mirisch hoped to use his family connection to get the painting, present it as a gift to Wilder, and thereby heal the wounds. Rivers would not sell. Mirisch sought to woo him. He took him to dinner and then to a party at his house with Peter Sellers, Tony Curtis, writer George Axelrod, Phil Silvers and several other celebrities. Beguiled by the fact that both he and Curtis came from the Bronx, Rivers got the nerve to tell Curtis how much he had always admired him. Mr. Curtis thereby got the courage to tell Rivers how much he had always admired Rivers' paintings, how he had always wanted to tell him, as one Bronx boy to another. Then they all watched a performance of *The Birds* in Mr. Mirisch's living room, where a wall of paintings swivels around to expose a projector. The next day Mirisch, Axelrod, and Curtis bought paintings. Mirisch took four, thus earning the right to buy the fifth—the one that Wilder coveted. ("And why," wondered Rivers, "didn't Peter Sellers buy a painting?")

Rivers' rapidity of success, the youth at which it was achieved, has become the standard in the new world of Pop.

One of the most recent and stunning successes has been thirty-two-year-old James Rosenquist, who rose from obscurity to fame within two years, whose prices rose from \$600 to \$4,000 in the same space of time, literally between two shows.

He was discovered less than three years ago by Richard Bellamy of the Green Gallery, who arranged a visit for collector Robert C. Scull, a specialist in Sunday-morning strolls to the studios of unknown artists. Scull saw Rosenquist's work and, after an initial confusion, decided he liked it. It showed some men sliding off the edge of the canvas; Scull asked for an explanation. "Well," said Rosenquist, "they're 1949 men, they're on their way out."

"I like it. I want to buy it. How much is it?" Scull says he enjoys this moment, which has become familiar to him, when he says he wants to buy a painting. There is a pause, a glazed expression, great suspicion. "It is a marvelous moment when they become a pro," says Scull. There was perhaps more suspicion than usual in Rosenquist, who has been described variously as a shrewd farmer or a hick inventor, leery of city slickers. Rosenquist said he didn't know how much to charge since he had never sold a painting. Scull offered to leave in order to give Rosenquist time to figure out a price. Rosenquist hurriedly dissuaded him, then, as the story goes, called to his wife: "Mary Lou, Mr. Scull wants to buy a painting. How much should I charge him? How about \$200?" They agreed on that price. It was the first piece of Pop art Scull had bought.

Rosenquist had his first show at the Green Gallery in 1962, and quickly moved on to the powerful Castelli Gallery and the \$4,000 price level.

He is reportedly already changing his style—putting sculptural objects in front of his paintings. This makes quite interesting a statement he gave to an art magazine recently. "If things are accepted very fast, they will be rejected very fast. This is inherent in the technology of the time. There is a new kind of paint that dries in a few minutes. It will displace other paints. Now it is practical to tear down a building and replace it every fifteen years. People constantly demand better things." (This does not sound like a hick.)

Jasper Johns—who, with Rauschenberg and Rivers, is more a bridge to Pop than part of the current deluge—began to live off his paintings at twenty-nine; he is now thirty-four and his works have sold for as high as \$30,000. A wry, intelligent young man, Johns finds his success disconcerting. No matter how seriously one takes oneself, \$30,000 is a lot of money for a young man's painting.

According to friends, he spends money wildly, in a classic throwing-away-the-easy-evil pattern, and is not a prolific painter. "What can Jasper do next," asked a friend, "after his international fame, his financial success, his critical success. . . . Become a Zen master or something?"

This last question was prompted by Johns's extended sojourn in Japan where his fame was a little eerie, according to the painter. "I had never had a show there, nobody had ever seen my paintings on exhibition. Yet everybody in the art world knew me, knew my work, discussed my ideas. I was famous, and yet the only things they had seen were one or two illustrations in magazines."

Handsomely bearded and bald-domed Jim Dine, another early success in Pop art, tells of coming to New York from Ohio six years ago at twenty-three. Although Johns and Rauschenberg were already famous in the hinterlands, Dine came upon their work by chance at the Castelli Gallery. Now Dine has acquired international repute; last year he was in twenty European shows. He has lived off his paintings since he was twenty-six.

Dine found his early fame too much to handle. A few years ago *Life* printed the photos of a hundred young comers in various fields, and Dine was the only one from the painting world. He was asked to go on radio and TV, and suddenly: "I felt like a Hollywood star, I felt like a commodity, because nobody really knew or cared about my work." For that matter, Dine apparently was asked to join the large and successful Janis Gallery at a time when Sidney Janis had seen little or none of his work. Or without Dine's doing anything about it. One day he received a call from Adolph Gottlieb, who was then with the Janis Gallery, saying that Janis would be in East Hampton the next day and wanted to talk to Dine about joining the gallery. (And on the beach the next week a tipster came up and whispered to a collector: "Buy Dine, he's going with Janis." Which was an indication that his fame and prices would be going up, Janis having a reputation as a man who takes on artists that have been promoted by others, just before they suddenly take off.)

The more the art world operates as a Bourse, the more the painter becomes a commodity, a measurable amount of concretized fame. ("I don't collect Jasper Johns's paint-

ings," said a collector: "I collect Jasper Johns.")

Dine talks of the need of insulating oneself against it and reports that too many painters do it with drinking. Unreality is at work here, too; there is too great a gap between what one is and does and has learned to expect, and what one gets from the world. It is all too like the problem reported by a psychoanalyst: Dr. Charles Socarides said that he had found increasing problems among executives, who were unable to justify the huge salaries they were making.

As fame moves fast, as fads move quickly, as reputations move and perhaps can be moved up and down quickly, it becomes necessary to rationalize production as businessmen do in other industries. Thus a new kind of professionalism emerges in the dealer world—symbolized by Leo Castelli. It is a professionalism marked by efficiency and the more streamlined public-relations methods of the modern business.

This new professionalism shows itself in the smallest ways, according to an art reviewer. If you need a photograph or biographical and bibliographical information from the Castelli Gallery, you get it at once, and most courteously. On the other hand, an equally large but less modern gallery is often without the photograph, or the information, and if they have the photograph, testily demand a dollar for it. Castelli sees himself merely as a man trying to promote the art he loves, of promoting a life he loves. To him, the newer kinds of painting are part of a general new spirit of the arts to which he feels committed—Nouvelle Vague in movies, Absurd Theatre, a certain fashion exuberance of Paris. He is delighted when a Terry Southern wants to have his picture taken at the Castelli Gallery during a Pop show, when Antonioni in Rome contacts him to tell of a movie he wants to make about Pop painters. He is trying to re-create the Surrealist milieu he enjoyed in pre-war Paris.

But others give him credit for more businesslike motives. They feel he watches the market like a research analyst, attempting to rationalize his market and anticipate trends. His talent for this draws nothing but admiration from collectors and competitors alike. The Green Gallery's Bellamy admits his own innocence in the face of Castelli's wisdom. He tells how Castelli wanted to make sure the Green Gallery held its first Rosenquist Show at the same time as Castelli held his show of Roy Lichtenstein—best-known for his comic-strip paintings—thereby creating a sense of movement to build up the enthusiasm of collectors, museums and the press. For the same reason, Castelli himself says, he urged Andy Warhol to go to the Stable Gallery, Dine to Janis, rather than his own gallery. (This year Warhol has come to him after all.)

Though committed to Pop, he also has Action painters in his gallery. There was a time, say close observers of the Castelli phenomenon, when he seemed to be hedging by diversification. But these same observers say that Castelli now foresees a long and rich life for Pop and that is why he is taking on Pop artists that originally he shunted off to other galleries.

Castelli denies that he is such a trend watcher. But if he isn't, he should be. For if it took only three collectors—or four or five—to accelerate (so astonishingly) the growth of Pop in the tight little world of art, how many will it take next time, and when will it happen? #