INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ABSTRACTION, SPIRITUALISM, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

THE ART AND WRITING OF CHARMION VON WIEGAND

by

JENNIFER NEWTON HERSH

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

UMI Number: 9820540

Copyright 1998 by
Hersh, Jennifer Newton

All rights reserved.

UMI Microform 9820540
Copyright 1998, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.

This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

© 1998

JENNIFER NEWTON HERSH

All Rights Reserved

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

11/12/97
Date

Marlene Park
Chair of Examining Committee

12/4/97
Date

R. Long
Executive Officer

Sally Webster

Dr. Rose-Carol Washton Long

Dr. Charles C. Eldredge

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Abstract

ABSTRACTION, SPIRITUALISM, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE ART AND WRITING OF CHARMION VON WIEGAND

by

Jennifer Hersh

Adviser: Professor Marlene Park and Professor Rose-Carol Washton Long

This study examines the significant contribution Charmion von Wiegand's (1898-1983) paintings and critical essays made to the development of American modernism. A feminist before the term was invented, she began her writing career in 1922 as a poet and playwright, publishing in Poet Lore, Buccaneer, and Double Dealer with the assistance of Hart Crane. In 1928, she gave up her artistic pursuits for a career in journalism, working for Hearst papers as the only woman correspondent in post-revolutionary Russia. From 1932 to 1940, von Wiegand turned her interests solely to art and theater as one of two women on staff at the New Masses. Her ideas about the relationship of art to politics and economics reflected a Marxist perspective. A steady stream of articles in Art Front (the official publication of the Artists' Union), where she served as the only woman editor, elevated her reputation as a New York critic in the mid 1930s.

Her articles appeared in later years with less

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

frequency in Art News, Arts Magazine, and The Journal of Aesthetics, but continued to document the evolution of the abstract movement. She gave new context and meaning to the works of George Vantongerloo, Mark Tobey, Marsden Hartley, and Pablo Picasso. Von Wiegand is best known for her critical writings on Piet Mondrian, about whom she wrote the first American essay in 1943.

Von Wiegand began painting in 1926 when she underwent psychoanalysis. In the 1930s, John Graham and Hans Richter encouraged her to experiment with psyche-automatism. In the early 1940s von Wiegand studied Mondrian's painting and the principles of Neo-plasticism. She found a spiritual kinship in Mondrian's theories of Neo-Plasticism. After Mondrian's death, von Wiegand researched the origins of Theosophy, reading Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan religious writings. Von Wiegand adopted many ideas from these Eastern sources for her choices in color and geometrical forms. By the 1950s, von Wiegand based her work on sacred principles of the Tantra--the foundation of Tantric Buddhism.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to several members of the faculty in the history of art at the Graduate School and University Center for their help and encouragement during the preparation of this dissertation. First, I would like to thank Prof. Marlene Park for her warmth and personal interest which have made my years of graduate study so memorable and enjoyable. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Rose-Carol Washton Long for her support throughout my graduate study. Her patience, knowledge, and disciplined scholarship have provided guidance throughout the writing and editing of this dissertation. I also thank Prof. Sally Webster whose insight and enthusiasm made the final edits of this text a delightful experience.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Charles Eldredge, who so graciously took time out from his hectic schedule to read my dissertation within a few weeks. He brought fresh insight during the final editing of this manuscript.

This dissertation would have been severely limited in its interest and value were it not for the generosity of friends and colleagues of von Wiegand who shared their insights and reminiscences of the artist with me. They have made the gathering of information a joyous human experience. Thanks to Marilyn Pearl, Ce Roser, Anne Feinberg, Kay Hillman, Elaine Wrong, Braham Norwick, Constance Poster,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ibram Lassaw, and Tony Spina whose generous natures contributed to the success of my research. This project could not have been carried out without the help of Khyongla Rato who placed the von Wiegand estate at my disposal.

I wish to express appreciation to the Department of Art History at the Graduate School and University Center for their financial support through the awards of the Kristie Jayne Fellowship and the Summer Travel Fellowship in memory of Dominic J. Madormo. Without this financial assistance I could not have traveled to archives in California, Texas, and Washington State, which provided the main documentation for this study. A special thank you to Kevin Gerard and Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Jayne who established the fund in Kristie Jayne's memory and took a personal interest in my research. I also commend the Madormo family for their support of young scholars.

This study owes a great deal to Stephanie Wiles who provided a sounding board and extra pair of eyes in the proofing of this manuscript.

The most significant factor in my success and completion of my degree comes from the emotional and financial support of my husband, David Seideman. His personal sacrifice and unfailing good judgment helped me to understand the value of good writing. I also wish to acknowledge and thank my parents, Bob and Sally Hersh for all their support and encouragement.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

FOREWORD

This study was undertaken in order to more fully document and assess the contribution of Charmion von Wiegand to the development of American modernism. Von Wiegand's role as a major spokeswoman for abstraction in the 1930s has not been addressed outside of her relationship to Mondrian, nor has the origins and context of her ideas or their relationship to her art been fully explained. There has been no attempt to comprehensively examine her work as both artist and writer or to establish parallels and contradictions within her complete artistic and intellectual production. This history attempts to integrate von Wiegand's art and writing, identifying the sources, interrelationships and contributions. Through this process, it will be shown that von Wiegand served as an acute barometer of her times, signifying contemporary conditions and establishing important connections and precedents within the spiritualist tradition of modernism. This study will demonstrate that von Wiegand made a significant, and heretofore overlooked, contribution to the development of American modernism, specifically geometric abstract art.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

VOLUME I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....vi

FOREWORD viii

INTRODUCTION.....1

Chapter

I. The Early Years, 1895-1922.....12

II. Early Writings, 1922-1926.....55

III. Early Painting, 1926-1929.....73

IV. Russia, 1929-1932.....108

V. The Critics Voice, 1930-1940.....160

VI. Mondrian, 1940-1944.....216

VOLUME II

VII. Painting and Collage, 1945-1949.....276

VIII. Painting and Collage, 1950-1959 347

IX. Painting and Collage, 1960-1983.....404

ILLUSTRATIONS.....445

APPENDIX.....499

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....509

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(Unless otherwise noted, the listed photographs were made by the author.)

1. Marion Greenwood, Portrait of Charmion von Wiegand, 1944, Mount Holyoke; photograph courtesy of Mount Holyoke.

2. Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled (Volga), 1929, The Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

3. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Volga), c. 1929, The Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

4. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Black Sea), 1929, The Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

5. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Factory), c. 1929, The Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

6. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Church), c. 1929, The Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

7. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Church), c. 1929, The Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

8. Von Wiegand, Ominous Form, 1946, oil on canvas, 35 x 24 7/8 inches, Seattle Art Museum; photograph courtesy of the Seattle Art Museum.

9. Von Wiegand, City Lights, 1947, oil on canvas, 32 x 24 inches, Whitney Museum; photograph courtesy of the Whitney Museum.

10. Von Wiegand, Untitled, 1946, Gouache on paper, 20 3/8 x 18 inches (51.8 x 45.7 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art; photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

11. Von Wiegand, Individual Worlds, 1947, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, Peter Fischer Collection.

12. Von Wiegand, The Image of Fire in Heaven, 1955, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

13. Von Wiegand, Sketch of Victory Boogie Woogie, 1942, pencil, crayon, and colored tape on paper, 11 x 8 1/2 inches, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; photograph courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art.

14. Piet Mondrian, New York, 1941-42, oil on canvas, 1940-41 [first state], Collection of Hester Diamond, New York.

15. Mondrian, New York City I, 1941-42, oil on canvas, 1941-1942 [second state], Musée National d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

16. Von Wiegand, Night Environment, New York City, 1947, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, private collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

17. Mondrian, Victory Boogie Woogie, 1943-44, oil on canvas, private collection.

18. Von Wiegand, Study for City Lights, 1947, gouache on board, 15 1/2 x 11 1/4 inches, private collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

19. Charles Sheeler, Church Street El, 1920, oil on canvas, The Cleveland Museum of Art; photograph courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art.

20. Von Wiegand, Untitled, 1945, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 inches, private collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

21. Von Wiegand, Untitled, 1945, gouache on board, 17 x 13 3/4 inches, private collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

22. Von Wiegand, Night Environment, 1946-49, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, collection unknown.

23. Von Wiegand, Tabernacle, 1950-52, oil on canvas, 28 x 22 1/8 inches, Cincinnati Art Museum; photograph courtesy of the Cincinnati Art Museum.

24. Von Wiegand, The Yellow Castle, 1951, oil on canvas, 27 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches, private collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

25. Von Wiegand, The Terrace of Jade, 1952, oil on canvas, 22 x 12 inches, The Seattle Art Museum; photograph courtesy of The Seattle Art Museum.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

26. Von Wiegand, The Gods Are in the Valley, 1952, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches, Ciba-Geigy Corporation, Ardsley, NY; photograph courtesy of the Ciba-Geigy Corporation.

27. Von Wiegand, Cairo, 1956, collage, 5 7/8 x 4 inches, Rabbi and Mrs. Jules Harlow.

28. Von Wiegand, Iris Gate, 1956, collage and gouache, 15 x 13 3/16 inches, Milwaukee Art Museum; photograph courtesy of the Milwaukee Art Museum.

29. Von Wiegand, Ka Door, 1950, oil on canvas, 42 x 18 inches, Estate of Charmion von Wiegand; photograph courtesy of Khyongla Rato.

30. Von Wiegand, The Emerald Tablets, ca. 1952, oil on canvas, 11 x 23 inches, Museum of Fine Arts Springfield, The James Philip Gray Collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

31. Von Wiegand, Finger of Buddha, #103, 1953, paper and gouache collage, 7 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches, Isabel and William Berley.

32. Von Wiegand, Chinese Labrynth, #14, 1954, collage, 10 x 7 inches, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York.

33. Von Wiegand, Sequence of Earlier Heaven, 1954, oil on canvas, 22 x 20 inches, private collection.

34. Von Wiegand, Eight Categories of Fate II, 1953-54, oil on canvas, 41 7/8 x 35 7/8 inches, Carnegie Museum of Art; photograph courtesy of the Carnegie Museum of Art.

35. Von Wiegand, Study for Chinese Horoscope, Gouache #124, 1960, gouache, 26 x 18 5/8 inches, Van der Mark; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

36. Von Wiegand, The Sign of Keeping Still, 1953, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches (31 1/2 x 26 3/4 inches framed), The Newark Museum; photograph courtesy of The Newark Museum.

37. Von Wiegand, The Image of Abundance, 1956, oil on canvas, 38 x 30 inches, Indiana Art Museum; photograph courtesy of the Indiana Art Museum.

38. Von Wiegand, The Wheel of the Seasons, 1957, oil on canvas, 39 x 32 1/2 inches (99 x 82.5 cm), Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; photograph courtesy of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

39. Von Wiegand, Expanding Magic Square, 1960, oil on canvas, 45 x 45 inches, The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame; photograph courtesy of the University of Notre Dame.

40. Von Wiegand, Sanctuary of the Four Directions, 1959, oil on canvas, 36 x 32 inches, Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation, Museum of Modern Art; photograph courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

41. Von Wiegand, Precious Pagoda, #114, 1959, gouache and oil on paper, 12 3/4 x 11 1/2 inches, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro; photograph courtesy of the Weatherspoon Art Gallery.

42. Von Wiegand, Birth of a Planet, #212, collage, 9 x 12 1/4 inches, Mr. and Mrs. Fong Chow.

43. Von Wiegand, Nebulae,#184, 1955, paper collage on board, 13 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches, Montclair Art Museum; photograph courtesy of the Montclair Art Museum.

44. Von Wiegand, Mandala, 1957, watercolor on paper, 15 3/4 x 11 1/8 inches, Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University; photograph courtesy of the Grey Art Gallery.

45. Von Wiegand, The Diamond Scepter No. II, #177, 1965, gouache, 17 x 6 inches, Marilyn Pearl Gallery; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

46. Von Wiegand, The Ascent to Mt. Meru, 1962, gouache on paper, 23 x 18 inches, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; photograph courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

47. Von Wiegand, Chakras, 1958-68, oil on canvas, 64 x 28 inches, private collection; photograph courtesy of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery.

48. Von Wiegand, To the Winter Goddess, 1969, gouache, 19 3/9 x 12 inches, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; photograph courtesy Cornell University.

49. Von Wiegand, The Shrine of Mirror-Like Wisdom, 1964, gouache on paper, 17 1/4 x 13 1/4 inches, Estate of Charmion von Wiegand; photograph courtesy of Khyongla Rato.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

50. Von Wiegand, Offering to the Adi-Buddha Amoghasiddha, 1966-67, oil on canvas, 50 x 27 inches, James and Mari Michener, The Archer M. Huntington Gallery, The University of Texas at Austin; photograph courtesy of The Archer M. Huntington Gallery.

51. Von Wiegand, The Lotuses #169, 1962, gouache with pencil on paper mounted on board, 12 7/8 x 7 7/8 inches, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; photograph courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

52. Von Wiegand, Untitled, #199, 1963, gouache on paper, 6 1/8 x 7 7/16 inches, The Seattle Art Museum; photograph courtesy of The Seattle Art Museum.

53. Von Wiegand, Nothing That is Wrong in Principle Can Be Right in Practice, 1966, oil on canvas, National Museum of American Art; photograph courtesy of the National Museum of American Art.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

INTRODUCTION

"Art, it's a bridge between heaven and earth. But it isn't religion, because the artist always has one foot on the ground, on the earth, and may reach for the heavens but the minute it leaves the earth there isn't any art." -- Charmion von Wiegand[1]

Writer and Critic

Charmion von Wiegand's (1898-1983) painting and critical essays stimulated the development of the vibrant new movement, geometric abstraction, in the United States beginning in the 1930s. Von Wiegand made important contributions to the public understanding of past and contemporary American and modernist European art when these fields were unfashionable or controversial, and she continued to publish in these areas well after public acceptance was the norm. Charmion von Wiegand enjoyed phenomenal success within the confines of a male-dominated society. A feminist before the term was invented, she began

---

[1]Charmion von Wiegand, Interviewed by Paul Cummings, 9 October 1968, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 108.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her writing career in 1922 as a poet and playwright publishing in Poet Lore, Buccaneer, Double Dealer, The Lyric West, and Casements. In 1928, she gave up her artistic pursuits for a career in journalism, working for the Hearst papers as the only woman correspondent in post-revolutionary Russia. She reported on the nation's culture and society during one of the most eventful periods in world history. An eyewitness to Stalinism's social turmoil, she covered topics ranging from factories and agriculture to theater and painting, not only for Hearst, but also in Russia's English edition of the communist paper, The Daily Worker.

Von Wiegand turned her interests solely to art and theater as one of two women on staff at the New Masses from 1932 to 1940. She reviewed exhibitions for the publication and occasionally wrote longer essays providing a broader perspective on the art scene in New York City. Von Wiegand's articles, largely unknown today, played a role in shaping a Marxist perspective within art criticism. Her ideas about the relationship of art to politics and economics were based on the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Lyov Davidovich Bronstein--Trotsky, and mirrored the literary Marxism of two of the founding figures of the New Masses, Mike Gold and her husband, Joseph Freeman.

A steady stream of essays in Art Front (the official publication of the Artists' Union), where she served as the only woman editor, elevated her reputation as a top New York

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

critic in the mid 1930s. Her articles in Art Front demanded basic rights for people in and outside the arts. She vigorously supported artists seeking refuge from fascism in Europe. Von Wiegand's writings called on Americans to take up the fight against the totalitarian menace spreading across the free world.

Her articles appeared in later years with less frequency in Art News, Arts Magazine, and The Journal of Aesthetics, but continued to document the evolution of the abstract movement. She gave new context and meaning to the works of George Vantongerloo, Mark Tobey, Marsden Hartley, Pablo Picasso, as well as Russian Art and Tibetan Painting. Von Wiegand is best known for her critical writings on Piet Mondrian, about whom she wrote the first American essay in 1943.

Von Wiegand's many published and unpublished journalistic works and art criticism, along with volumes of her personal letters are housed in the papers of Joseph Freeman, her husband, and Karl von Wiegand, her father, at the Hoover Archive, Hoover Institute of War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. Her estate in New York City also contains a wealth of material including published and unpublished essays.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Painter

Von Wiegand began painting in 1926 as a result of psychoanalysis, but it was not until after 1944, upon Mondrian's death, that von Wiegand declared herself a painter by profession. In the 1930s and 40s, von Wiegand's painting and collage flourished. John Graham, a Russian born painter and theorist and Hans Richter, a German avant-garde artist and film maker who came to the United States in 1941, encouraged her to experiment with psyche-automatism, a technique of drawing based on Freud's psychoanalysis that allows the subconscious to control the hand of the artist.

In the early 1940s von Wiegand studied Mondrian's painting and the principles of Neo-plasticism. The Neo-Plastic tradition became an important catalyst for her writing and painting during the following three decades. She found a spiritual kinship in Mondrian's theories of Neo-Plasticism. They were based on Theosophy, a modern religious sect incorporating aspects of Buddhism and Brahmanism. After Mondrian's death, von Wiegand studied the origins of Theosophy. She read Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan religious writings.

Von Wiegand adopted many ideas from these Eastern sources for her choices in color and geometrical forms. By the early fifties, her coloration fused greater subtleties of tone and shade than Mondrian's brilliant primaries, relying on an Indian art seven-tone scale. In the late

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1950s, Von Wiegand's preoccupation with non-Western art led her to exercise a unique influence in American geometric abstraction by introducing concentric circles and other focal devices into her paintings. She based her work on sacred principles of the Tantra, a series of scriptures that centers on practical paths to self-enlightenment--the foundation of Tantric Buddhism.

As a woman, von Wiegand enjoyed an exceptional position. A member of a largely male-dominated circle of geometric abstract artists, von Wiegand often viewed herself and was seen by critics and others as operating on the abstract movement's fringes. Her relative obscurity gave her greater freedom to take Neo-plasticism in a different direction than her male contemporaries--Burgoyne Diller, Fritz Glarner, and Harry Holtzman. In addition, von Wiegand's experiences as a female prompted her to choose subjects and designs overlooked by her male counterparts. For example, in her "Goddess" series von Wiegand found in Eastern art a visual geometric form representative of the female identity, thus marking a further departure from a strict neo-plastic structure.

Approximately eighty of her paintings and collages are in numerous major American collections, such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Seattle Art Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Chicago Art Institute, and the Milwaukee

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Art Museum. She is also represented internationally in such collections as the Pompidou Center, Paris, France; The Museum of Modern Art, Basel, Switzerland; and the Annely Juda Gallery, London. A large number of her works are still housed within the artist's estate under the care of the Tibet Center in New York City, including her major works Ka Door and City Lights. The estate also contains numerous studies and sketchbooks.

The Spiritual

As a mature artist von Wiegand, like many modern painters and sculptors, did not believe in the power of reason; she drew inspiration from Eastern religions and alternative religious traditions. The ideas of the latter that appealed to von Wiegand were: the universe is a single living substance; life is the expression of a dialectical process based on opposites (e.g., male-female, light-dark); the goal of living is to achieve oneness; and reality is reached by progressing through stages toward higher states of consciousness.[2] The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985, the title for an exhibition mounted first at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1987, exhibited abstractionists' work, much of which demonstrates the appeal

---

[2]Maurice Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art," The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, exhibition catalog, (New York: Abbeville Press printed for Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985), 32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the alternative religious tradition--a mixture of the mystic and the occult, as represented by Buddhism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Hermeticism, Mysticism, Rosicrucianism, and Taoism.[3] This exhibition provided the groundwork for further research on how alternative religious traditions have influenced the artists of the 20th century. The exhibition covered numerous American and European artists beginning with symbolist painters, such as Johan Thorn Prikker and Jan Toorop, and continued through contemporary art, including works by Jasper Johns and Ellsworth Kelly. Although Charmion von Wiegand's paintings and collage were not a part of this exhibition, she shared the interests and concerns of the artists exhibited in the show. Von Wiegand followed her mentor, Mondrian, in insisting one must dematerialize objects, to lay bare "the immutable gridwork behind the outer shells of visible reality."[4]

Social Circle

Von Wiegand's friends and colleagues continually

---

[3]Von Wiegand was not included in the exhibition. Many of the American artists who were included, such as Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Mark Rothko, Mark Tobey... shared similar interests and beliefs with von Wiegand. For more information on the exhibition see: The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, exhibition catalog, (New York: Abbeville Press printed for Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985).

[4]Ringbom, 146.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shaped the ideas behind her writings and paintings. The strongest influence on von Wiegand's early career of the 1920s was Hart Crane. Through long visits and letters Crane introduced her to avant garde artists in France, England and the United States. Joseph Freeman, her second husband, encouraged von Wiegand's political voice to emerge in the 1930s, providing her with an education on Marxism and an avenue for publication, the New Masses. In the 1940s von Wiegand's artistic vision was transformed through her friendship with Piet Mondrian, who introduced her to an abstract vocabulary of painting. In the later years, Mark Tobey offered intellectual and spiritual support through an exchange of books and ideas on religion, particularly Buddhism. In 1978, a one-hour documentary on the artist's life, art, and social circles was filmed and aired nationally on the Public Television Network. For the first time von Wiegand was discussed in the context of her fellow artists and writers.[5]

The literature on von Wiegand is limited. The four essays that have been published accompany museum exhibitions and are short general essays on her life and stylistic

---

[5]The Circle of Charmion Von Wiegand, Ce Roser, narrator and producer, Fay Lanser, co-producer, first telecast, New York, WNET Channel 13, November 5, 1978, at 12:00 noon.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

development. In January 1994, the most recent retrospective was held at the Joseloff Gallery at Hartford University in West Hartford, Connecticut. Susan Larsen wrote a three page essay for the brochure for the exhibition, "Charmion von Wiegand in Search of the Spiritual." Her essay emphasized von Wiegand's involvement with the American Abstract Artists and her unique departure from Neo-plasticism through her study of Tibetan Art.[6] In 1982, shortly before von Wiegand's death, Miami's Bass Museum held a large retrospective exhibition. Nancy Joslin Troy wrote a five-page essay "Charmion Von Wiegand, Her Art and Life" to accompany the Miami show.[7] This piece, largely a chronology of her life and painting, contains a brief introduction to von Wiegand's years as a journalist and writer. Von Wiegand's work was also included in Nancy Troy's "Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America," (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1979). She is briefly mentioned in Troy's essay regarding her 1943 article on Mondrian in the Journal of Aesthetics.[8] In 1975, the Springfield Museum of Fine Arts held an exhibition entitled "Three American Purists:

---

[6]Susan Larsen, Charmion von Wiegand in Search of the Spiritual (West Hartford, CT: Joseloff Gallery, Hartford University, 1994).

[7]Nancy Joslin Troy, "Charmion von Wiegand, Her Art and Life," Charmion von Wiegand, Her Art and Life (Miami Beach: The Bass Museum of Art, 1982).

[8]Charmion von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 2, no. 8 (Fall 1943): 62-70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mason/Miles/Von Wiegand."[9] In the brochure issued with the show, May Brawley Hill wrote about each artist's contributions to the growth of the American Abstract Artists.

Only two articles on von Wiegand have appeared in periodicals. Virginia Rembert's "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian"[10] introduces the development of von Wiegand's art, focusing on her first encounter with Mondrian in 1941. She touches on her transition from the rigid confines of neo-plasticism to a geometric abstraction of the late 1950s, which incorporated the circle, triangle, and prismatic color. Rembert argues that these are variations on a Mondrian aesthetic derived from von Wiegand's study of Eastern Art. Susan C. Larsen in "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones"[11] discusses the influence of Tibetan Art and Mahayana Buddhism on von Wiegand's images from the 1960s.

---

[9]May Brawley Hill, "Three American Purists: Mason, Miles and von Wiegand," Three American Purists: Mason/Miles/Von Wiegand (Springfield, MA: Museum of Fine Arts, 1975).

[10]Virginia Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," Woman's Art Journal (Fall 1983/Winter 1984) 28-30.

[11]Susan Larsen, "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones," Arts Magazine 60 (November 1985) 29-31.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The following is the first comprehensive study of von Wiegand's influence on and participation in the development of abstract art in the United States. This work is organized into two parts: her writings, and her art. The themes of her painting, collage, and writing are framed within the broader social and cultural contexts of the American spiritualist tradition, the American Communist Party, the avant garde of Greenwich Village, the geometric and abstract traditions of American art, World War II, and the history of Buddhism in the United States.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS: 1895-1922

Childhood

Charmion von Wiegand's contemporaries described her as a woman who had a strong commitment to friends and family, comfortable with her talents, her sexuality, and unconventional in pursuit of her personal vision. Her broad exposure to European and Asian cultures, a classical education in Greek and Latin, and an extroverted personality made her one of the great conversationalists of her day. A striking woman from adolescence through old age, von Wiegand enhanced the beauty of her delicate porcelain features--almond shaped brown eyes, small nose and full lips--with layers of scarves, necklaces, and later wigs. She said that with the aid of accessories she was able to detract admirers away from her worst feature, her legs, to emphasize her best asset, the beauty of her face. (Fig. 1)

Von Wiegand came from an influential family. Her father's position as an international correspondent for the Hearst Press allowed the von Wiegands to live in expatriate luxury all over the world. During her adolescence the family

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

resided in Berlin and traveled often to London and Paris. The happy cosmopolitan circumstances of von Wiegand's youth provided her with unique opportunities for education, travel, and exposure to art, literature, and the theater. Mature aesthetic criteria, based on quality and good taste, had its roots in von Wiegand's privileged background.

Inez Royce von Wiegand, Charmion's mother, was from a wealthy midwestern family. Royce, admired by others as a beautiful and glamorous woman, often made reference to her pre-revolutionary roots. Von Wiegand said about her mother in an interview: "Mother was more conservative and Victorian [than father], one of the society girls of the American colony in Europe."[1] Royce suffered a complete mental breakdown from which she never fully recovered, after the end of her marriage in 1925. Von Wiegand described her health in a letter to her father written in 1927, two years after her parents' separation: "She is sick nervously. She does nothing about it and doesn't intend to. As long as she has hopes of getting what she wants or thinks she wants, she will do nothing for herself."[2] On September 2, von Wiegand

---

[1]Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, American Women Artists (New York: Avon Books, 1982), 296.

[2]Karl von Wiegand separated from his wife in 1925, but never divorced Inez Royce for fear she would harm herself and/or his reputation. He supported her financially, and she remained his wife in the eyes of the public, although he lived with Grace M. Drummond-Hay from 1925 until her death in 1946. Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, 23 March 1927, Karl von Wiegand Papers, Hoover Archive, Hoover Institute of War, Revolution and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wrote:

> The point is mama will be better off when you are divorced and she is put in a place, where the environment is fixed up for her. It is too much to ask any one human being, untrained in psychiatric work to deal with mama... I hope whenever your work allows--the sooner the better you will be able to come and gently but firmly work upon mama to get her into a sanitarium.[3]

Inez von Wiegand was never put in a mental institution. She moved in and out of depression throughout her life. From 1927, the year of Royce's move back to the United States, until her death in 1975, Charmion von Wiegand was at times burdened with the care of her mother.

Where as in von Wiegand's adult years her relationship with her mother was an ordeal, von Wiegand's relationship with her father blossomed. She often boasted about the accomplishments her father had achieved despite his humble beginnings. Karl von Wiegand was born on September 11, 1874, in Hesse, Germany and emigrated to the United States when slightly more than a year old with his parents, Henry and Anna von Wiegand. Karl von Wiegand, rebelling against the strict regime at home in rural Iowa, ran away at 14 to work for one of Buffalo Bill's Ranches. In 1899, at the age of 25, he launched his journalism career as a telegraph

---

Peace, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. (The Karl von Wiegand Papers will be referred to as KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.)

[3]Charmion von Wiegand, Rowayton, CT, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 2 September 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

operator and country correspondent in Arizona. While in Tucson he sent his dispatches to the Pacific Coast newspapers, and was soon transferred to Los Angeles as a reporter in Southern California for the San Francisco Examiner.[4]

Karl was a man of medium height, sturdily built, square shouldered, round-faced, and balding. Thick-lensed glasses covered his gray-blue eyes. He presented a most austere exterior, projecting the image of a general in the German Army.[5] Yet he also wore battered hats and carried a gold-headed walking stick.

Von Wiegand described her father in an interview: "Father was a brilliant journalist... He was always trying to make me more modern."[6] Karl von Wiegand covered more wars than any other American correspondent abroad. He worked as a newspaperman for 61 of his 86 years, the last 49 of which were spent hopscotching the globe. From January, 1917 until shortly before his death in 1963 he was Chief Foreign Correspondent for the Hearst Newspapers. Besides covering Europe, he often ventured to the African nations and the countries of the Far East. He became the dean of

---

[4]Ibid., and Karl von Wiegand, "Outline of the Memoirs of Karl von Wiegand," n.d., TMs, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[5]M. MacPhail, "A Biographical Press Release of Karl von Wiegand of Hearst Press, 15 October 1942," TMs, Time Life Library and Archive, Time Life Building, New York, NY.

[6]Rubinstein, 296.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

American foreign correspondents, not only as a result of his lengthy service abroad but also because of his uncanny insight into the international scene.[7] Moreover, he scored exclusive interviews, including those with Pope Benedict XV, Crown Prince Wilhelm, Paul von Hindenburg, and Adolph Hitler.[8]

---

[7]Karl von Wiegand, "Outline of the Memoirs of Karl von Wiegand," n.d., TMs, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Von Wiegand went to Europe for the UP in 1911 after serving with the AP in San Francisco. He was the UP correspondent in Berlin when the war began in 1914, but returned to New York in 1915 to work for the New York World. Then he switched to the INS in 1916, to the New York Sun, before rejoining the Hearst service in August 1919. Back in Berlin, he was European director for the Universal Service until its demise in 1937. With unique news sources in Germany and central Europe, von Wiegand produced special reports for the Hearst papers, distributed through the International News Service. Occasionally, he traveled to other parts of the world, notably on special flights for the Graf Zeppelin and the Hindenburg in the 1920s and 1930s. Robert W. Desmond, Crisis and Conflict: World News Reporting Between Two Wars 1920-1940 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1982), 246-48.

[8]Karl von Wiegand was most noted for his coverage of the Versailles Peace Conference, the Spanish Campaign against the Riffi, flight around the world in the first world trip of the Graf Zeppelin, his memorable series on China and the Far East, Mahatma Gandhi's passive resistance strike for Indian independence from Great Britain, consolidation and modernization of Turkey under dictator Kemal Pasha, suppression of Socialists in Vienna's bloody "Social Revolution," Mussolini's "March on Rome" and seizure of dictatorship of Italy, the Nazi "blood purge," Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, the Spanish civil war of 1936, and the coverage of the last Sino-Japanese conflict. Karl von Wiegand, Press Release, n.d., Universal Service Promotion, 1944, Time Life Library and Archive, Time Life Building, New York, NY.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

San Francisco

At the time Karl von Wiegand worked for the Hearst Papers in San Francisco from 1902-1911, Charmion von Wiegand's earliest training in the arts began. The San Francisco school system in the first decade of the 20th century adopted a curriculum that incorporated the "two universal written languages of the civilized world," one being music and the other drawing.[9] In 1899, the San Francisco school system had begun to use the series "Thompson's Educational and Industrial Drawings" for first through eighth grade. Starting with Thompson's Primary Freehand Series for the grade school years and moving to Thompson's Model and Object, these drawing exercises improved eye-hand coordination skills year after year.[10] The books, based on the rules of linear perspective, reduced the particular shapes and forms of a scene or still life into geometric components: sphere, cylinder, cone, cube, hexagon, pyramid. For example, "drawing objects bound by plane surfaces and straight edges" developed from a series of exercises: drawing first a straight stick, edge, or line; next sketching a square plane and then a cube; followed by drawing a square prism and a square plinth; and finally

---

[9]San Francisco Board of Education, Course of Study in the Public Schools of San Francisco, California, 1897-1898 (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, Stationers and Printers, 1897), 3.

[10]Ibid., 73-74.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

illustrating a square pyramid. Each lesson built on the previous one; the final exercise applied the geometric forms to a natural object, or objects.[11] This conceptual approach to drawing synthesized natural objects into their geometric forms. Von Wiegand later in adulthood used geometry to describe a spiritual reality, a knowledge of the world beyond appearances.[12]

San Francisco's Chinatown shaped von Wiegand's aesthetic sensibilities. As a young girl, she would sit with her mother on the hill near their home and look out

---

[11]Langdon S. Thompson, Model and Object Manual, Model and Object Series of Drawings Books (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., Publishers, 1893), 35.

[12]Music during von Wiegand's childhood was of lesser importance to her development. Her memories of music during this early period focused on singing in the schools. The teaching of vocal music in 1898 became a regular branch of a standard curriculum derived from The Natural Course of Music. The publication of the San Francisco Board of Education states that the vocal music curriculum should come from F.H. Ripley and T. Tapper, The Natural Course of Music; Extension Bulletin of the New School of Methods (New York, 1903). (San Francisco Board of Education, Course of Study in the Public Schools of San Francisco, California, 1897-1898, 73-74.)

Beginning in San Francisco von Wiegand studied piano privately for a number of years. "I had to suffer through learning the piano and I forgot it quickly." (Charmion von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 9 October 1968, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 4.)

When asked if she remembered any specific music in San Francisco, she replied: "Chinese music. It sounded like Tin Pan Alley." Her love of Chinese music grew with an interest in Japanese music. Later in life, she discovered from a Chinese scholar that the Japanese music which she enjoyed was really the music of the T'ang Dynasty, preserved in Japan but lost in China. (Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 5.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

across Chinatown and the harbor. The ships, festooned with oriental flags, prepared to head back to the Orient.[13] Von Wiegand wandered through the marketplaces of Chinatown collecting bits of precious and worthless scraps of paper, including fragments of Chinese calligraphy in newspapers.[14] Chinese servants (whom von Wiegand considered as part of the family) always resided in the von Wiegand home in San Francisco. This early familiarity allowed her to be always "perfectly at ease with the Chinese and their culture."[15] Her childhood exposure grew into a life-long fascination with Asian art and philosophy:

> I think my whole color sense comes out of San Francisco and seeing Chinatown. When I want to relax I go down to Chinatown. I don't mind that it's garish in spots. I feel very much at home. I like it. But it was probably less garish and more beautiful in those days when I was a child in San Francisco. And the colors were very vivid in my mind.[16]

Von Wiegand remembered drawing during her childhood. The earliest recollection was of watching the fires after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906:

> I always drew and scribbled from my childhood on. I can remember there was a big fire in San Francisco and I sat on the porch and started to draw the fire. Mother

---

[13]Ibid., 3.

[14]Susan Larsen,"Charmion von Wiegand," Charmion von Wiegand: In Search of the Spiritual (West Hartford, CT: Joseloff Gallery, 1993), 9-11.

[15]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 2.

[16]Ibid., 31-32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> came out and said what are you doing. She was very nervous about the fire. And I said I was drawing the fire and she gave me a big slap.[17]

Her mother discouraged von Wiegand's artistic leanings. Not until Charmion von Wiegand entered psychoanalysis in 1926 and confronted the unstable character of her mother, did she evince a deep desire to be a visual artist.

Another early visual memory which served her well as a mature artist derived from a contrast of two pages of her grade school primer--a line drawing of Buddha and a color picture of Venus rising from the sea on the opposite page.[18] Von Wiegand recalled this religious and philosophical contrast of images during the 1960s when she was working on the goddess series--images of female identity originating in Tibetan Art.[19] (See Chapter IX.)

In San Francisco, Charmion von Wiegand attended meetings of the Theosophical Society with her parents. As an adult this early exposure to Theosophy and its sources, Buddhism and Brahmanism, sparked an interest in occult literature, which later added to her understanding of the theoretical sources behind Piet Mondrian's painting and

---

[17]Ce Roser, The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand, produced and directed by Ce Roser and Fay Lanser, 45 min., first telecast Paris, summer, 1978, second telecast, New York, WNET Channel 13, November 5, 1978 at 12:00 Noon. Videocassette.

[18]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 3.

[19]See Chapter IX for a full discussion of the Goddess images and forms in von Wiegand's painting.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other modern artists' work. When she met Mondrian in 1941, von Wiegand became one of the few critics to comprehend the philosophical principles that were the basis of Neo-plasticism.[20]

Berlin

Karl von Wiegand's education was lacking in the formal sense, but he spent much of his spare time studying history, business, and international affairs--he was particularly knowledgeable about nineteenth-century Germany.[21] The more he studied and observed, the more he felt that the seams were going to split in Europe; the stronger his admonition grew, the more he wanted a foreign post in Germany. Finally, by going to a rival news agency and convincing them of his knowledge of German history, peoples, and the German language, he landed a job as a foreign correspondent. Karl von Wiegand took charge of the United Press Berlin office in 1911. He moved the family, including Charmion, her mother Inez, and her brother Norman, five years Charmion's junior, to Germany.

---

[20]Von Wiegand mentioned particularly her father's involvement with Theosophy in numerous interviews including: "...Well, I just remembered that in San Francisco we used to go to the Dante church. But this I'd forgotten all these years. It lay dormant so to speak..." (Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 31-32); and "...father Karl von Wiegand was a Theosophist and a friend of Jack London..." (Rubenstein, 296).

[21]MacPhail, 3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

By 1911, Charmion von Wiegand, at the age of thirteen, was attending high school in Berlin. Von Wiegand's first memory of Europe centered on the coast of Cornwall.[22] "We went to Europe on a boat. I remember the most exciting part of that was seeing the coast of Cornwall for the first time in 1911. It made me think of Tristan and Isolde. I was old enough for that. I mean I hadn't read the story; I was brought up on the music."[23]

Experiences in Europe enhanced Charmion von Wiegand's cultural education. She took trips throughout France, Germany, and England where she attended countless plays, concerts, and visited galleries and museums. While residing in Germany, von Wiegand attended the opera regularly. "We used to go to the opera a great deal. And even here [in the United States] we always had seats, twice a month we went to the opera. And it was always a Wagnerian opera, practically always. And sometimes it was very dreary. And then I got to like it very much. And later I got to hate it very much."[24]

---

[22]"...We saw the coast of Cornwall today--always gives me a thrill. The sun came out, it finally became warm, and the sea was blue-green. The waves were dancing very high with white caps. I have seen this channel for the first time in 1911, in 1914, and not sure 1931..." Charmion von Wiegand, aboard de Grasse French line, to [Joe Freeman, New York] 22 August 194[2], Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover Archives, Hoover Institute of War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. (The Joseph Freeman Papers at the Hoover Archive will be referred to as JF Papers, Hoover Institute.)

[23]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 3.

[24]Ibid., 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Her first experience with modern art occurred in Berlin at an exhibition of Matisse's paintings. Von Wiegand saw Matisse's colorful Moroccan paintings at the Fritz Gurlitt Gallery in Berlin, May 1-10, 1913:[25] "I had seen Matisse. And I thought that was very odd, but I liked the colors so much immediately... So I had a certain interest. But modern art wasn't a crusade in those days. At least not to me."[26] Although she did not grasp the work at the time, she was drawn to the bright colors of red, blue, and green of Matisse because they resembled the bold colors of her beloved San Francisco Chinatown.[27]

College Years

In 1915, Karl von Wiegand was assigned as a war correspondent to the New York World's Star.[28] Meanwhile, his daughter, Charmion, returned to the United States to attend Barnard College in New York City. Although she was constantly drawing and taking courses in the history of art and archaeology, she entertained no thought of becoming an

---

[25]It is not clear which Matisse exhibition von Wiegand saw in Berlin, but the exhibition of Moroccan paintings coincides most closely with her time in Berlin. For more information on the exhibitions of Matisse see: John Elderfield, Henri Matisse: A Retrospective (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 238.

[26]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 10.

[27]Ibid., 9.

[28]MacPhail, 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

artist or critic. Restless, von Wiegand explored drama at the hands of director, Minor White Latham. She described Latham's "dramatic laboratory" as a tool for self discovery.[29] Latham, known as Azubah, placed the focus of the theatrical experience solely on the ability of the actor--not on the technical crafts of set design, lighting, and costuming as had been the previous theatrical method. He was famous for the first use of central staging in 1914, when he directed the play, The Mask of Joy at Columbia's Teachers College.[30]

Pressure from her father to commit to a writing career caused von Wiegand to transfer a year later to Columbia University and the School of Journalism.[31] While heeding her father's wishes to follow in his footsteps, she

---

[29]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 5.

[30]George Altman, and others, Theater Pictorial: The History of World Theater as Recorded in Drawings, Paintings, Engravings, and Photographs (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1953), 513.

The method of central staging, or arena theater, would become famous almost twenty years later with Glenn Hughes of the University of Washington at Seattle. Von Wiegand experienced this use of central staging first hand where the focus was on the acting and not the technical craft.

For more information on the methods of Minor White Latham and his philosophy of teaching dramatic composition consult Minor Latham's, A Course in Dramatic Composition (New York: Columbia University, 1921). He also wrote a book on folklore: The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare (New York: Columbia University, 1930).

[31]"My father wanted me to be a writer. He decided that my brother never would be and, you know, I was to be a writer like him. But of course I rebelled very much against it." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

continued to take the drama courses of Latham and others for over five years of study. Due to her split focus between theater and journalism she never completed her degree.[32]

Her writing talents continued to be expressed in a theatrical venue. She honed her playwriting skills under the tutelage of Hatcher Hughes.[33] Hughes wrote numerous plays which were published by Harper and Brothers in New York in the 1920s. His major works were Hell Bent for Heaven and Ruint: A Folk Comedy in Four Acts.[34] A year after attending journalism school, her wish to pursue the arts and disagreements with her father about her career plans prompted her to transfer from the School of Journalism to the Liberal Arts School at New York University.

Here her interests in literature were eclectic. She wished to read Homer in the original, so she took Greek and mastered it. She also studied Latin. A course in Jewish literature nurtured her passion for the culture and its literary tradition. While avoiding her logic homework, von

---

[32]For information on von Wiegand's college education consult: Rubinstein, 296-297; Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 1-10; and Ce Roser, The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand.

[33]R. R. Bowker, Who's Who in American Art (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 1959), 231.

[34]Hatcher Hughes was notable for the following four plays: Hell-Bent for Heaven (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924); Its a Grand Life (New York, n.d.); Ruint: A Folk Comedy in Four Acts (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1925); and Wake Up, Jonathan (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand discovered Nietzsche.[35] Writers like Havelock Ellis, Henri Bergson, Benedict de Spinoza, Feodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, Ralph Waldo Emerson, stimulated a growing spiritual consciousness.[36]

Von Wiegand, like many young intellectuals of the time, was particularly taken with Havelock Ellis, who published the Dance of Life in 1913.[37] Ellis's books supported von Wiegand's own belief in the importance of spiritual life. His writing on the necessity of art (prose, poetry, painting and music) strongly influenced von Wiegand. Ellis wrote of painting:

> In the phenomena of religious mysticism we have a key--if we only knew it--to many of the most precious human things which on the surface may seem to have nothing in them of religion. For this is an art which instinctively reveals to us the secrets of other arts. It presents to us in the most naked and essential way the inward experience which are transmutations of the art of religion and yet have on the surface nothing to indicate that this is so. It has often been seen in poetry and in music and in painting. One might say that it is scarcely possible to understand completely the poetry of Shelley or the music of César Franck or the pictures of Van Gogh unless there is somewhere within an intimation of the secret of mysticism...We may even go beyond the sphere of the recognized arts altogether, and say that the whole love of Nature and landscape, which in modern times has been so greatly

---

[35]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 7.

[36]Ibid., 8.

[37]Havelock Ellis, The Dance of Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 191.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> developed, largely through Rousseau, the chief creator of our modern spiritual world, is not intelligible if we are altogether ignorant of what religion means.[38]

He defined mysticism as the "art of finding our emotional relationship to the world conceived as a whole."[39] Von Wiegand continued to explore Havelock's mysticism well into her eighties.

Von Wiegand described archaeology as her greatest love during her early twenties. In this field, she concentrated on the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine.[40] One of her most inspiring professors was Thomas Whittemore,[41] the important Byzantine archaeologist who was famous for writing three reports for The Byzantine Institute on the study of the

---

[38]Ibid., 237-238.

[39]Ellis also wrote about the relationship of science and mysticism, a passion of von Wiegand's: "...not only is there no opposition between science and mysticism but in their essence and at their outset they are closely related...When all deduction has been made of the mental and emotional confusions which have obscured men's vision, we cannot fail to conclude that science and mysticism are nearer to each other than some would have us believe." Ibid., 209.

[40]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 6.

[41]Thomas Whittemore's important writings include: Whittemore, The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul Preliminary Report of the First Year's work 1931-1932: The Mosaics of the Narthex (Paris: John Johnson at Oxford University Press for the Byzantine Institute, 1933); Whittemore, Second Preliminary Report Work Done in 1933 and 1934: The Mosaics of the Southern Vestibule (Paris: John Johnson at Oxford University Press for the Byzantine Institute, 1936); and Whittemore, Third Preliminary Report Work done in 1935-38: The Imperial Portraits of the South Gallery (Paris: John Johnson at Oxford University Press for the Byzantine Institute, 1942).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

mosaics of St. Sophia.[42] Von Wiegand developed her love of Byzantine art during a semester of study of St. Sophia's mosaics.

Rudolf Meyer Riefstahl, a New York University professor and scholar, taught Oriental art to von Wiegand. He was well known for his work on Persian miniatures. Published in 1923, Riefstahl's book, Persian and Indian Textiles, From the Late 16th and the Early 19th Century,[43] traced Chinese style and influence on Persian and Indian textile art. This book was not just a work of history; Riefstahl believed in creating an influential pattern resource for American decorative arts:

> The 18th century gained greatly in charm through a delightful adaptation of 'Chinoiserie.' We are coming to a similar intimate relationship with the colorful art of the Near East. Since the Near Eastern influence has been especially marked in the field of textile design this volume of Indian and Persian patterns,

---

[42]Whittemore, The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul Preliminary Report of the First Year's work 1931-1932: The Mosaics of the Narthex, 1.

On the first page of report number one: "The study of the mosaics on which members of the Institute had already been for some time engaged, was actively pursued from December 1931 in the Narthex of the Mosque." The order of the Turkish Government enabling the Byzantine Institute of America to lay bare and conserve the mosaics of St. Sophia was issued in June 1931 at Ankara by the Council of Ministers. Whittemore's interest and study of the mosaics had begun over a decade earlier.

[43]Rudolf Meyer Riefstahl, Persian and Indian Textiles, From the Late 16th Century to the Early 19th Century (New York: E. Weyhe, 1923).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> while contributing modestly to the more recent history of textiles in the Near East, may serve an immediate practical purpose.[44]

Von Wiegand largely studied Chinese and Indian art in Riefstahl's courses. His perspective on Eastern influence in American art and design would later inspire her own work.

Her favorite professor was Richard Offner, a specialist in Florentine art and the Italian primitives.[45] He took his students on field trips to many of the local collections of Renaissance Art, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Von Wiegand described his class as a constant off-campus discourse. "He would say meet me in Boston at the Boston Museum next Saturday at twelve o'clock and we would all go."[46] In 1924, Offner utilized student assistants to aid him with his study, published in 1927, on the Yale University collection of Italian primitives. Von Wiegand was one of several students to volunteer assistance. Offner described the Yale collection, the three centuries of Tuscan painting, "...as more adequately supplied in fine and rare examples of thirteenth century of this area than any other museum outside Italy."[47] The thirteenth century with its flattened

---

[44]Ibid., 5.

[45]Bowker, 231.

[46]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 8.

[47]Richard Offner, Studies in Florentine Painting, The Fourteenth Century (New York: Frederic Fairchild Sherman, 1927), 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

forms and bright colors became one of von Wiegand's favorite periods of Italian art history.[48] Through exposure to these three professors von Wiegand decided that she preferred the Sienese to the Florentine School, and the Byzantine mosaics and Italian primitives to the paintings of the High Renaissance, and she liked all Asian art the best.[49]

From Offner's descriptions of the people and culture of Italy, von Wiegand became obsessed with the country and viewed Italian culture as a haven from New York, where art

---

[48]Von Wiegand embraced the "non-Giottesque" art of the 13th century largely due to the influence of Offner. In 1927 Offner wrote the definitive multivolume work on Florentine painting, A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Art. Trained by Bernard Berenson, in his analysis of Tuscan art, Offner distinguish between the Florentine & Sienese Schools.

> There is, in fact, a tendency in Florence opposed to the Giottesque genius in taste, and activity and its intellectualism, a tendency, never the less, art by idealizing action and psychology chilled the spontaneous human sympathies; by its structural balance, it arrested the mobility of life, and burdened the sensibilities by its monumental weight... Approaching the world by way of an intense and sentimental empiricism the masters of the non-Giottesque tendency wanted to create the illusion of life by exploiting a pantomime more explicit than the averaged face and gesture of the Giotteschi, to present an action with a more impulsive and unrehearsed air. They wanted to render things in their flux and catch the sparkle on their surface...

Offner stressed the importance of the Italian primitives and the "non-Giottesque" tendency in Italian art to von Wiegand and his other students. Richard Offner, A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Art (New York: Frederic Fairchild Sherman, 1927), 8.

[49]Larsen, "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones," 29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was seen as a commodity. When she finally visited Italy several years later she wrote:

> ...I really love it. I mean the landscape and the whole tone of it...And the constant feeling that art is part of life... It isn't something extraneous. It isn't something that's a business, an investment as it has become in America. Or it isn't getting cultured for status...It's really part of existence.[50]

Von Wiegand began her travels to Italy in 1924, while her mother was living in Venice.

> I get thirsty for Venice. And it's waking up in the morning and feeling and seeing...Venice I really feel is for the artist--I mean it's a joy to wake up because everything is keyed to color in a sense, the whole atmosphere. And it's a very different taste, the artistic atmosphere....the environment and the landscape are part of the art, they're together. And I can't feel about art that way in the United States. I mean we have a good art, we have a past that's interesting but it isn't that pure aesthetic sense that you feel.[51]

Von Wiegand managed to maintain the Italian integration of art and life through the rest of her years.

Second Exposure to Modern Art

Von Wiegand's second encounter with modern art came during her college years. A much older friend, Edith Jarmuth, [52] took her to a show of Lachaise's sculptures at

---

[50]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 86-87.

[51]Ibid., 87.

[52]Jarmuth was Olive Brand, one of the women from Theodore Dreiser's book on twelve women. Theodore Dreiser, A Gallery of Women (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stephen Bourgeois Gallery.[53] Jarmuth was vivid, sensitive, broad-minded and widely-read.[54] She traveled in the Socialist and Marxist circles of Greenwich Village and befriended Bill Haywood of the Industrial Workers of the World, Emma Goldman, one of America's most notorious anarchists[55] and

---

[53]Von Wiegand recalled that the exhibition was at the Stieglitz Gallery. The first exhibition organized by Stieglitz of Gaston Lachaise's sculptures was held at The Intimate Gallery, March 7 - April 3, 1927. Twenty sculptures were exhibited: eight statuettes, six portraits, two seagulls, The Mountain, a torso, a nude, and a marble relief. Gerald Nordland, Gaston Lachaise The Man and His Work (New York: G. Braziller, 1974), 36.

The exhibition at the Stieglitz Gallery would have been too late to fit the chronology of events. It is more likely that von Wiegand and Jarmuth saw the exhibition of Gaston Lachaise's sculpture at Stephan Bourgeois Gallery in 1920. Stephan Bourgeois, who exhibited Lachaise's sculptures earlier than Stieglitz, was a commercial dealer with a personal style close to Alfred Stieglitz. This exhibition coincides with her college years. See S[tephan] B[ourgeois], Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawings by Gaston Lachais, (New York: Bourgeois Gallery, 1920), unpaginated.

[54]Theodore Dreiser, A Gallery of Women, vol. 1, 70.

[55]Emma Goldman entered the anarchist movement in 1899 at the age of twenty. She enjoyed a notoriety unequalled by any other woman in American public life. The government thought she was one of the ablest and most dangerous anarchists in the country. She began annual cross-country lecture tours in the late nineties. Large audiences turned out to hear her ringing denunciation of capitalism, militarism, and government and her controversial defense of atheism, sexual freedom and homosexuality. She raised funds for the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), campaigned for birth control, organized legal defense for imprisoned radicals, and opposed the draft during WWI, for which she spent 20 months in prison. For 12 years she published the anarchist magazine, Mother Earth, and also produced two volumes of essays. She lectured extensively on The Social Significance of the Modern Drama, the title of her second book--insisting that radical art was potentially even more subversive than outright political agitation, a view von Wiegand shared. Washington kept up a running battle with Emma Goldman until it finally succeeded in deporting her,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ben Reitman, a Chicago physician who was Emma Goldman's lover. Jarmuth and von Wiegand had met while studying the craft of playwrighting at Columbia University.[56] Von Wiegand developed profound respect for Jarmuth's intellectual capacity. She, in turn, fueled von Wiegand's sharp mind by lending her numerous books and introducing her to a bohemian circle of friends from the Village, including Theodore Dreiser and Max Eastman.[57]

Even though Charmion von Wiegand enjoyed a broad background in art history, particularly in the old masters, she was shocked when Jarmuth paused in front of a small white alabaster relief by Gaston Lachaise. Von Wiegand at first thought she must be joking to give such a rough and unfinished work high praise. In contrast to the very detailed, well proportioned Greek marbles von Wiegand was studying in school, she found this small abstract piece quite grotesque.[58] Von Wiegand was intrigued to find out more about this modern art movement.

---

along with several hundred immigrant radicals, on December 21, 1919. For more information on Emma Goldman see: Alice Wexler, Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); and Candance Serena Falk, Love, Anarchy and Emma Goldman (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and Emma Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910).

[56]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 92-95.

[57]Ibid., 9.

[58]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hermann Habicht

Von Wiegand's father continued to be concerned about his daughter's future. As an aspiring bohemian, von Wiegand spent her time in the village with writers, artists, and intellectuals. Karl von Wiegand desired a comfortable life for Charmion and availed himself of every opportunity to introduce her to numerous young businessmen that he had met while in Europe reporting for Hearst. It is likely that von Wiegand encountered Hermann Habicht, an executive, from Darien, Connecticut, in the import-export house of Habicht-Braun, through her father. In 1919, von Wiegand married Habicht. Bowing to family pressures, she dropped out of school before completing her bachelors degree to attend to her new social role as a wife of one of New York City's top businessmen. Von Wiegand hosted numerous dinners and parties for her husband at their home in Noroton Heights, an exclusive community in Darien, Connecticut.

Habicht, from the beginning of their relationship, supported his wife's interests in the arts, encouraging her to collect oriental objects. She wrote her mother in December 28, 1919 of their first Christmas together at Habicht's parents:

> ...I have not told you of my lovely presents. Hermann outdid himself. When I entered the front room after dinner, there were presents heaped up in all corners.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> My pile was twice the size of any other. I received from Hermann, ...four exquisite Chinese paintings (two 17th century and two 14th century)..."[59]

Von Wiegand, however, soon grew dissatisfied with their stultifying life in Connecticut. "I had to entertain all these merchants and millionaires. It was very boring."[60] She yearned for an intellectual and artistic life surrounded by fellow writers and artists.

The Village

In 1927, the year von Wiegand took up painting, Hermann Habicht indulged his wife's passion for Greenwich Village life and rented an apartment on MacDougal Alley. They continued to maintain their Connecticut home only for the weekends and the warm summer months. Von Wiegand wrote her father:

> ... We are moving on the first of October to no. 7 MacDougal Alley in the Village. We have a little house that was once one of the stables to the grand houses on the North of Washington Square. Our "alley" is very famous, having housed many well known and notorious people--chiefly writers and artists. We will have only five rooms, but the main living room is a studio about 25 by 28 feet and about 20 feet high. It is regal and like a stage setting for Bohemia.[61]

---

[59]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Inez von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 28 December 1919, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[60]Rubinstein, 296.

[61]Within a short period of time von Wiegand converted their city apartment on MacDougal Alley into her studio. The only original furnishings she kept were the velvet purple curtains. Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, October 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Through family and friends, she met the intelligencia of the New York Village. Von Wiegand managed to maintain a flirtatious existence with many avant garde writers and artists while fulfilling the expectations of her social position. She hobnobbed with Hart Crane, David Burliuk, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Harris, Max Eastman and Marsden Hartley.[62] Because her own interests lay with literature and playwrighting, she was closer to writers than visual artists. Habicht was well intentioned in his attempts to please von Wiegand, but she blamed Habicht for treating her like a child by financially supporting her, indulging her whims, and never allowing her much responsibility in managing the household, organizing vacations, or planning social engagements.[63]

Hart Crane

Von Wiegand met Hart Crane before her move to the village, in the spring of 1919, through Crane's roommate Alex Baltzly, a graduate of Harvard and a lieutenant just

---

[62]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 13, 14 and 64; Ce Roser, The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand.

[63]The letters between Charmion von Wiegand and Hermann Habicht dating from the late 1920s (31 July 1928 to 25 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute) document the problems between the Habichts.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

out of the service.[64] The young Crane had hoped to find employment at Habicht-Braun, but instead found a kindred spirit in von Wiegand.[65] The artistic relationship began in November of 1919 when von Wiegand sent Crane a number of her poems for his advice on publishing. Crane accepted "Egyptian Sonnets" for the new magazine, Modernist. He wrote: "Dear Charmion: Here are the rest of your poems; I think they are all there. The Modernist took one of the Egyptian sonnets, I cannot remember the exact name of it, and hopes you will send more soon."[66] Hart Crane had joined The Modernist as a contributing editor, believing in its platform:

> Radical in policy; international in scope. Devoted to the common cause of toiling people. Opposed to compromise; pledged on truth. Dedicated to the task of

---

[64]When Crane first moved to New York he took a small apartment on West 70th Street which he shared with a new acquaintance, Alexander Baltzly. Thomas W. Lewis, ed., Letters of Hart Crane and Family (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 109.

[65]Hart Crane, Hotel Albert, New York City, to Grace Hart Crane, 21 October 1919, Hart Crane Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY; and Letters of Hart Crane and Family, 146.

Crane had long before heard his father speak of von Wiegand and her husband, Hermann Habicht. Habicht-Braun was one of Senior Crane's chief suppliers. John Eugene Unterecker, Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane (Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 1969), 145-9.

[66]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 5 November 1919, Hart Crane Papers, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. (The Hart Crane Papers at Yale University will be referred to as the HC Papers, Yale University.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> overthrowing old falsehoods. A forum for active minds and vital art. A better and freer magazine.[67]

Hart Crane's suggestions for the first issue of The Modernist were eliminated, including von Wiegand's poem, and his hopes for a strong voice in the magazine collapsed. Crane wrote the editor, Gorham Munson, at the publication of the first issue "I was quite astonished by the amount of literary rubbish [Fawcett] had managed to get into its confines." Crane must have watched the disappearance of The Modernist, in the winter of 1919, with relief. He felt responsible not only for his own contributions, but for those of his friends, like von Wiegand, whom he had urged to submit work.[68]

Although von Wiegand's and Crane's relationship got off to a shaky beginning because of The Modernist's rejection of her poetry, von Wiegand grew closer to Crane and the friendship fostered amiable exchanges about art and literature through the 1920s.[69] Von Wiegand described Crane

---

[67]The Modernist: A Monthly Magazine of Modern Arts and Letters 1, no. 1 (November 1919; reprint, New York: Johns Corporation, 1967), ii (page references are to reprint edition).

[68]Unterecker, 145.

[69]Hart Crane was certain by the early 1920s that he would never marry. The best he could hope for was a home not far from friends to whom he could turn for a kind of second-hand participation in family life. Perhaps it is this drive that accounts for Hart's intense relationships with women who were already married to his friends and colleagues. Claire Spencer, Mary Colum, Charmion von Wiegand, Charlotte Rychtarik, Sue Jenkins, Peggy Cowley were, each in turn, enormously valuable to him; he could

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as: "brown eyed," and "a very warm and sweet person." But he had a complex personality full of contradictions. There was also the "demonic side." Von Wiegand said, "sweetness and light alone does not make poetry." That it is..."the dual aspect of the nature of the unconscious that really fused. Then you get that white heat. And I think he [Crane] had that... It was beyond the ordinary experience."[70]

Hart Crane's short and troubled life--filled with uncontrollable drinking, homosexual promiscuity--ended with his suicide at the age of thirty-three in 1932. On several occasions, von Wiegand witnessed Crane's dark side. Hart Crane often spent his summers visiting from one friend to the next.[71] Almost all of Hart's stays with von Wiegand at the Habichts new summer home in Croton-on-Hudson were pleasant, but during one, von Wiegand remembered, Hart stepped across the line of drunkenness he had warned her about. He had seemed absolutely exhausted when she picked

---

confess to them his darkest fears and frustrations. Unterecker, 389.

[70]Unterecker, 770.

[71]Crane writes to his father:" The Habichts (Hermann and Charmion) have been after me all summer to make them a visit so I am stopping off here at Croton at their lovely place for a day or so on my way into town. The huge barn and stables of the old Horace Greeley estate have been made over into a long L-shaped or rather U-shaped villa, with an ample court and patio garden within. And I haven't had such good food since I left Pasadena." Hart Crane, Croton-on-Hudson, to Hart Crane Senior, 2 August 1928, Hart Crane Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY; and Letters of Hart Crane and Family, 629.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

him up at the station, his face gaunt and drawn. This episode was almost certainly during his bitter correspondence with his mother, Grace Crane. Soon after his first glass of wine he was full of talk about the perfidy of women. In no time at all, von Wiegand recalled, he became "frightfully drunk, emptying glass after glass. He went straight through half a gallon of red wine."[72] He insisted that they dance together, but he became so caught up in the dancing that he did not hear the music end, the phonograph needle scratched on and on. Finally he dashed over to put on a new record. Crane kept railing about the untrustworthiness of women. Then, after they stopped dancing, began to lecture her on the essential ugliness of women as opposed to the essential beauty of men. To illustrate his lecture--the phonograph in the background still croaking jazz tunes--he extracted from his wallet and lined up on the piano photographs of men he had loved. He praised their muscles and hard flesh, sneering at the flabby buttocks and breasts of women. Then Crane and von Wiegand danced again--his dancing, frantic and desperate, ending in collapse. Von Wiegand rushed out to call her Irish housekeeper, and the two women attempted to drag him up the stairs to his bed, while the phonograph scratched away in the record's last grooves. Halfway up the stairs Crane came to his senses long enough to snarl, "I'll kill you if you

---

[72]Unterecker, 554.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

touch that phonograph." Von Wiegand was not easily frightened but reported to John Eugene Unterecker, Crane's biographer, that she was frightened then. The next day, Crane appeared unaware that he had been drunk the night before.[73]

Hart Crane was not just a colleague to von Wiegand, but also a teacher of the ideas and principles behind modern art. Through books and personal introductions to his wide circle of artist and writer friends he exposed her to the European avant garde. In his letters, Hart Crane often played the role of advisor. Crane wrote von Wiegand, inquiring about the progress of her poetry: "...How about poetry? What are you reading, etc.? I have about settled on Rabelais as my favorite..."[74] Crane's letters often sound like a side-line coach encouraging von Wiegand: "I am very glad to know that you have been keeping up the writing--whether prose, poetry, or drama doesn't so much matter. The point about it all is that it serves to keep you alert and alive much more than any other activity I know of."[75] At times Crane was the only serious validation for von Wiegand's creative writing. He, of all the friends in her life, understood her psychological need for creative

---

[73]Ibid., 556.

[74]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 7 June 1921, HC Papers, Yale University.

[75]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 13 August 1921, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expression.

In addition to Crane's support, he also influenced her thinking by advising her on what books to read to stay informed about Europe's literary and artistic world. Hart Crane wrote to von Wiegand in Germany in 1927:

> You asked about French books. I have not been reading much modern work, but I am in touch with a good deal of it through a French-Swiss painter friend of mine here who has modern tastes and is in touch with Europe and the best of it all the time. There are my recommendations through this channel: Les Arts Vivants, a wonderful book on scenery and dancing, by Adolphe Appia; Anicet, sort of a novel extravaganza by Louis Aragon, one of the few Dadaists who has something to say. Any of the works of André Gide are good, same of older ones like Rimbaud, Laforge (Jules) and Guillaume Apollinaire. The latter's Calligrammes and Alcools (poems) are just being talked about in this country. I am mad about Laforgue, but he is hard to translate and very acid. There is a wild bird and fashionable, Jean Cocteau, who writes plays, poetry and novelties that I understand is the present king of les boulevards, but I haven't read him. The scene in France today is, I judge, about as scattered as the Genoa Conference. Everybody is being intensely clever, and everybody is also worried about what new standard tomorrow may erect. However, I have tried to name people here who have already been more-or-less settled and accepted, or who bid fair to be.[76]

Von Wiegand's previous education had been focused on German and Italian painting, neglecting French writing and art. Crane provided von Wiegand with an in-depth study of French modernist art and literature. He also encouraged her to read the British and American writers: Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Marlowe, Webster, Donne and Drayton and particularly

---

[76]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 6 May 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Melville.[77] Through his insistence she obtained an unexpurgated edition of James Joyce's Ulysses from Sylvia Beach's Shop, 8 Rue Dupuytren in Paris.[78] At the time, in 1922, the book was banned in the United States.[79] He also suggested she read E.E. Cummings' The Enormous Room "for a real inspiration in language and humanity."[80]

Crane stressed the importance of Cézanne's paintings and had her buy in Germany Burger Fritz's Cézanne und Hodler a comprehensive, multivolume work, so together they would form a greater understanding of the artist's ouevre.[81] They

---

[77]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 15 August 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[78]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 6 May 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[79]James Joyce's Ulysses was banned in both Britain and America on its first appearance in 1922. It was serialized earlier in the Little Review (March 1918 - December 1920). Publication was stopped abruptly when the U.S. Post Office brought a charge of obscenity against it. On December 6, 1933 Judge Woolsey ruled in favor of Ulysses, which resulted in the lifting of the ban and free circulation of the work first in America and soon afterwards in Britain. Cliver Driver, Ulysses: The Manuscript and First Printings (New York: Octagon Books, 1975). For more information on James Joyce and Ulysses see: Richard Ellman, James Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[80]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 15 August 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[81]Fritz Burger, Cézanne und Hodler. Einführung in die Probleme der Malerei der Gegenwart (München: Delphin Verlag, 1913).
Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 28 June 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shared a passion for Greek vase painting,[82] and Egyptian sculpture, Chinese landscape painting and "negro plastik" or African sculpture.[83] Von Wiegand gave Crane a copy of Buschoe's Griechische Vasenmalerei,(Greek Vase Painting) which he absolutely adored, writing her that it is a book that he would always carry with him.

> With few exceptions I prefer Egyptian sculpture to the Greek, and this book makes me feel that the Greeks had more to express in line and design than they had in the third dimension. In pottery you get the less ambitious and less 'cosmopolitan' aspirations and expression of these people. There is an intimacy and rusticity to the pottery which especially appeals to the literary instinct. The famous Nike of Samothrace left me somewhat cool. Lady Milo is a bit imposing and these idealized human dolls all stand too much on their dignity..."[84]

In New York, Crane found it difficult to write in spite of his free time. He had only been able to produce a few poems, none of them of the quality he desired. In 1919, the opportunity to go to work for his father in Cleveland, Ohio came as a welcome relief. He had been rootless, and no matter how much he enjoyed the "metropolitan" whirl he was drawn to the "great expanses of cornfields," which he often referred to in his letters to von Wiegand. The midwest's interrelationships between rural, metropolitan, and

---

[82]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 28 June 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[83]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 5 November 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[84]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 20 January 1923, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

industrial lifted Crane's hopes for a new kind of poetry. These were only half-formed feelings in 1919, but in the months and years following they came to dominate much of his thinking.[85]

Crane's views expressed in his letters was one of the most seminal influences shaping von Wiegand's understanding of contemporary American and European art, literature, and society. An important duality (city/country, industrial/rural) of American life that Crane was wrestling with in his poetry emerged as a major concern for von Wiegand. During her stay in Russia, while Stalin was in power, von Wiegand questioned human being's relationship to the machine and to the land. Like Crane, she found the industrial mechanization of society both comforting and disturbing.

Crane was also instrumental in shaping von Wiegand's tastes in painting. In 1921, he introduced her to the work of William Sommer.[86] Sommer, strongly influenced by Clive

---

[85]The idea of the interrelationship of rural, metropolitan and industrial America is expressed in the correspondence of November 1919 between Hart Crane and Charmion von Wiegand: Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, November 1919, HC Papers, Yale University.

[86]The friendship of Sommer and Crane began in 1919, and it was in August, 1922, that the poet wrote the poem "Sunday Morning Apples." Philip Horton in his Hart Crane wrote: "Crane was drawn to the older man [Sommer] by his vitality, the Rabelaisian vigor of his spirits, which was reflected in his painting in what Crane liked to call his 'dynamism.' The two were soon in the habit of spending an evening together once a week when they would retire to the 'ivory tower' to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bell's book Since Cézanne (1922), painted in a style close to the master, Paul Cézanne. In turn, von Wiegand looked to Sommer's work during the early twenties for a further understanding of Cézanne; William's Sommer's painting became another avenue for a modern art education. Crane was completely committed to an aesthetic he and Sommer had worked out together. This aesthetic, which they shared with von Wiegand, was shaped by readings from Clive Bell, Wyndham Lewis and P. D. Ouspensky.[87]

In midsummer, Crane worked feverishly to insure Sommer's paintings were exhibited in New York, relying on friends including von Wiegand, for assistance. Crane sent von Wiegand to De Zayas gallery to retrieve Sommer's work and view the drawings. An August 13, 1921 letter to von Wiegand described Sommer as a great painter, "really a

---

play records of Ravel, Scriabin and Debussy; to read Heine's lyrics, or spar hilariously about the low ceiling room..." Sommer was the outgoing and outgiving individual. His overwhelming vitality sparked the younger man.

Hart Crane, when he moved to New York, took Sommer's paintings and drawings with him, trying his best to sell them for his friend. Finally Crane's efforts were partially successful. Certain individuals of recognized taste and authority began to take an interest in Sommer's canvases. Sibley Watson of The Dial bought two or three pieces, and later printed several more in the magazine. William Carlos Williams made a purchase of two and wrote Sommer a letter to say that his paintings got 'under his underdrawers.' (Philip Horton, Hart Crane,

For more information see: William Sommer Memorial Exhibition (Cleveland, Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1950); and Philip Horton, Hart Crane, The Life of an American Poet (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1937).

[87]Unterecker, 270.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

master." He wrote:

> He has worked most of twenty years, after studying in Munich and Strassburg,--in a tiresome lithograph factory here,--has lately become radical, (freed by Wyndham Lewis, Pablo Picasso, Roger Fry, Clive Bell, etc) and is turning out (really) superb things. De Zayas and Daniel are enthusiastic about some of his work. It is there. Ask to see the drawings and water-colors by William Sommer.[88]

Another artist close to Hart Crane in Cleveland was the architect, William Lescaze.[89] Crane sent von Wiegand a portrait of himself Lescaze had completed.

> ...I'm glad my face in the "Gargoyle" stirred your curiosity so--even though it can't be satisfied for a while and I look so much more exotic there than reality permits, that I'm afraid I'll disappoint your expectations. Lescaze, the artist, a French-Swiss painter here, is very clever and very futuristic--I think he has done very well with what material he had...[90]

Crane felt that Lescaze's "futuristic" portrait drawings with a heavily accented right eye portrayed him as Jakob Boehme's visionary man--the right eye focused on both future and eternity, the left turned backward into time.[91] When Crane met Lescaze in Cleveland in 1920 Lescaze was just

---

[88]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 13 August 1921, HC Papers, Yale University.

[89]William Lescaze, an architect and artist, who was sophisticated in all the latest fads of Paris and who helped Crane in his French reading, had arrived in Cleveland in 1920 from Paris. Lescaze organized a weekly meeting of young men and women interested in the arts. Crane was the most faithful attendant. Unterecker, 208-212.

[90]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 9 October 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[91]Unterecker, 260.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

eight months out of Paris and very sophisticated in all the latest movements and styles. He kept Crane and von Wiegand advised as to the artistic happenings of Paris.

Literary and Art Magazines

Hart Crane introduced von Wiegand to the multitude of small literary and art magazines being published in the United States and encouraged her to submit her writings. Crane informed von Wiegand about Gorham Munson's new literary magazine, Secession.[92] Munson, previously of The Pagan, was a mutual friend of Crane's and, later, von Wiegand's. They attended meetings with Munson against prohibition and restricted speech.[93] Crane wrote:

> He expects to print his magazine in Vienna right along, as he can get it done there so much cheaper. His magazine is filled with quite ultra things by E.E. Cummings, Marianne Moore, Slater Brown, Matthew

---

[92]Vienna, Berlin, Brooklyn, and New York all played host to the group review Secession. Gorham Munson was editor, or Director, as he preferred to call himself, of the magazine's eight greatly discussed issues. From the spring of 1922 to the spring of 1924, Secession boisterously promoted such writers as Wallace Stevens, Malcolm Cowley, Hart Crane, Waldo Frank, Slater Brown, Matthew Josephson, and Kenneth Burke--authors on an experimental tangent which appealed to Munson.

Munson became interested in literary matters in 1916, while still in college. Inspired by The Seven Arts and its introduction of Waldo Frank and Van Wyck Brook's work, Munson sought the literati of Greenwich Village. Munson wrote for The Pagan, Little Review, and many others before starting Secession.

For more information see: Gorham Munson, "The Fledgling Years 1916-1924," The Sewanee Review XL, 31 (Spring 1932).

[93]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 6 May 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Josephson, Malcolm Cowley, etc...all of whom were with him in Paris last fall and winter when the inception of the magazine took place."[94]

Crane continued: "[Secession] will....expose the private correspondence, hidden sins and secret history of its American contemporaries, The Dial, Little Review,[95] Broom,[96]

---

[94]Crane wanted the magazine to succeed and wrote Munson his own ideas about the journal. Munson offered Crane a position on the magazine and Crane sent Secession the soon-to-be-withdrawn "Praise for an Urn." By the end of March the magazine had been named and the flyers circulated announcing the program.

Crane wrote: "Your list of contributors to your magazine is indeed a galaxy. And when you so insistently and delightfully invite me to join the crew I am full of all kinds of yearnings to do so. But what if I have nothing to send! There is only one possible thing, and I am enclosing it. I am not at all certain that you will like it, but use it if you want to. It seems to be my limit these days." Unterecker, 233-235.

[95]Articles on modern art and literature appeared in a range of publications. The Dial, catered to a self-consciously sophisticated audience of intellectuals, employed both Henry McBride and Thomas Craven, as well as other prominent writers including the German art critic Julius Meier-Graefe. Even more radical was the Little Review magazine and gallery. The gallery displayed Dada and Constructivist work as an adjunct to the activities of the Little Review. The magazine established its avant-garde reputation in the teens by publishing James Joyce's Ulysses for the first time. The director of the gallery and editor of the magazine after 1923 was Jane Heap. She presented artists associated with Dada, Constructivism and Surrealism. Heap made several major contributions to the introduction of modern art in America. She presented the first English translation of Fernand Léger's seminal essay "The Aesthetics of the Machine," in 1923/1924. (Fernand Léger, "The Esthetics of the Machine," The Little Review (Spring 1923): 45-49 and, (Autumn and Winter 1923-24): 55-58. The spring issue did not come out until the fall.) Susan Noyes Platt, Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism, UMI Research Press Studies in the Fine Arts: Criticism (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 22-24.

For more information on the Dial and Little Review see: Thomas L. Scott and Melvin J. Friedman, eds., Pound: The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Poetry,[97] etc..." Through Secession Crane introduced von

Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence (New York: New Directions, 1988); George Willis Cooke, An Historical and Biographical Introduction to Accompany the Dial; reprint in Numbers for the Rowfant Club (Cleveland, OH: Rowfant Club, 1902); Nicholas Joost, Schofield Thayer and the Dial (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964); and Matthew Josephson, Life Among the Surrealists a Memoir (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1962).

[96]Broom asserted an eclectic interest in literature. It presented both conventional and experimental writers. Under the influence of Matthew Josephson and Malcolm Cowley, the writers William Carlos Williams, John Dos Passos, E.E. Cummings and Hart Crane wrote for the publication.

For more information see: Frederick J. Hoffman, The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 101-107.

[97]For information on the journal, Poetry, see Robert M. Crunden, American Salons: Encounters With European Modernism, 1885-1917 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 108-113; Harriet Monroe, A Poet's Life (New York: MacMillan, 1938); and Ellen Williams, Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

Von Wiegand was very familiar with Poetry, and knew Harriet Monroe, the editor. Monroe provided an outlet for more modernist poets than any other editor during the second decade of the 20th century. She published the work of Ezra Pound, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, and Robert Frost. Monroe supported genteel experiment and it was only under her foreign correspondent, Ezra Pound's, influence that truly modern work was published in Poetry. Hart Crane was disgusted by Monroe's art criticism. For instance when she reviewed the Armory Show as art critic of the Chicago Tribune, she reported that the crowd was gaping and laughing. "And no wonder, for if these little groups of theorists have any other significance than to increase the gaiety of nations your correspondent confesses herself unaware of it." She called attention to the work of Marcel Duchamp, "whose Nude Descending a Stairway looks like a pack of brown cards in a nightmare or a dynamited suit of Japanese armor." As for Picabia's "Dance at the Spring," she thought it suggested "a pile of red blocks in an earthquake." Nor did she have any use for Matisse. She preferred the productions of Odilon Redon. (Monroe, A Poet's Life, 159, 212-13.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand to the young generation of American writers--Slater Brown, Kenneth Burke, Donald B. Clark, Malcolm Cowley, E.E. Cummings, Matthew Josephson, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, and European writers: Guillaume Apollinaire, Louis Aragon, André Breton, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault and Tristan Tzara.[98] As soon as the flyers reached Crane, he began distributing them among his friends. "You know I shall talk it up," he explained to Munson,"...but the worst is that most of my acquaintances are totally unfitted for enthusiasms of this sort.[99] The indifference you will encounter when you return to these States you must be prepared to face."[100] Von Wiegand was one friend Crane knew would take an interest in the magazine.

After the release of the second issue Crane wrote to von Wiegand:

> The first issue of "Secession" does not come up to the second, now out. You should get it somewhere there in N[ew] Y[ork] and read Cowley's two poems ["Two Swans" and "Play it for me again"] and Josephson's story, "The Oblate".[101]

---

[98]Ibid.

[99]Crane worked diligently to advise and promote the new magazine. When the first copy of Secession reached him in mid-April, Hart sent off a long critique of the issue: a poem work by Louis Aragon ["Bottle Found at Sea"] ("in its odd way, a quite beautiful thing"); a poem ["Daycoach"] by Malcolm Cowley was "encouraging" (he quickly added, "although dreadfully alike something he had published in one of the last Little Reviews.") Unterecker, 234-35.

[100]Ibid., 235.

[101]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 15 August 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Crane was convinced that Secession would shed new light on the weaknesses of the current publications of Dial and Little Review:

> Secession gets away from the "temperamental" editorial attitude of the Little Review (good in many ways as this has been) and bases its judgement on more tradition which at the same time being far more daring in its experiments than such magazines as the Dial. It has been discouraging to see how very "safe" the Dial plays sometimes, despite its protests to the contrary. I find that I have derived considerable stimulation from Secession. Without it there would be only the vague hope that the steady pessimism which pervades the Dial since Chot and others have announced that happiness and hearty droll only in memory--might sometime lift. I cry for a positive attitude!...I gave your name to Munson along with the friend's names to send Secessions manifestos out to, etc... I think it is a credit to Munson's platform and writing that so much attention has already been payed to Secession. I was very lukewarm in the beginning and urged him not to "waste his time" on any magazine project. But after his visit here last summer I quickly switched about, especially as I have contained such new and suggestive material in the last 2 numbers included.[102]

Von Wiegand not only recognized the genius of Munson and the importance of Secession, but she also was involved in the support of one of its writers, Sherwood Anderson. By 1922, she had read: many of his essays in Little Review, his novels, Windy McPherson's Son, 1916, Marching Men, 1917, and Poor White, 1920; his stories--Mid-American Chants, 1918; Winesburg, Ohio, 1919; and his work The Triumph of the Egg, 1921--a book of impressions of American life in tales and poems. Von Wiegand, with great prescience, saw his tales of small town life, Winesburg, Ohio, as a landmark in American

---

[102]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 20 January 1923, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

fiction. She admired it for its candor about small-town America, for its realism, and for its success in offending the sensibilities of indifferent people.

Von Wiegand worked hard in the spring and summer of 1922 with Hart Crane to arrange for a German translation of the works by Sherwood Anderson because she believed the author's writing had an important relationship to the "new realism" literature of Germany in the 1920s.[103] Crane wrote to von Wiegand regarding Anderson:

> ...You will be interested to know, I'm sure that the Anderson translation matter has been settled and I got a letter from Huebsch (Anderson's publisher) last week saying that he had given Herr Reeck the rights...[104]

---

[103]Von Wiegand proposed to Crane to contact Anderson regarding a German translation of his work. She, having Germany as a second home in her youth, saw a relationship between Anderson's work and the cultural currents of Germany, particularly Berlin. Hart Crane responds to von Wiegand's request:

> ...I very much agree with you that Germany would be really appreciative of Anderson, and they ought to have him. However, as Heubsch, Anderson's publisher, is himself a German and very much in touch with Berlin, I suspect that already translation arrangements may have been started. Anderson is having a great enough vogue here at present to turn the head of any one but a pessimist like Anderson. He is, I understand, very much made of by the Nouvelle Revue Francaise Group (headed by Jacques Copeau) and has been translated into French. His trip to Europe last summer put him in direct touch with all the younger crowd in France. However, we'll see about Germany. There is still a chance.

Ibid.

[104]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 15 August 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Emil Reeck, a German friend of von Wiegand, prepared the translations.[105]

[105]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 6 May 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER II

EARLY WRITINGS--1922-1926

Introduction

Charmion von Wiegand began her professional career writing poetry and plays. It is estimated from the contents of her estate that she wrote ten one-act plays and close to 300 poems.[1] I have limited the scope of the examination of her early body of work to a few of the published pieces, which I deemed her best efforts in each category. The Double Dealer published several of her poems and plays. The literary magazines Casements and Buccaneer also printed her poetry on a regular basis.

German Theater--Wedekind

In 1922, while Charmion von Wiegand and her husband, Hermann Habicht, visited her father in Germany, von Wiegand attended Berlin University to continue her theatrical studies. Her interest in drama began during her high school

---

[1]The unpublished poems and plays can be found in the Estate of Charmion von Wiegand, New York and in the JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

years in Berlin and was further cultivated during her years at Columbia University. In Berlin during the early 1920s it is likely von Wiegand would have followed three particular playwrights: Gerhart Hauptmann, Frank Wedekind, and Arthur Schnitzler. Theater scholar Peter Skrine refers to these three playwrights as all members of the new "naturalism" movement in Germany.[2]

Germany was a logical place for fostering von Wiegand's dramatic study. In Germany, theater had become one of the most widely accepted cultural forms of expression since the 18th century, when critic and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was invited to become the resident critic of the Hamburg National Theater in 1767.[3] Friedrich von Schiller's famous essay "The Stage Viewed as a Moral Institution" (written in 1784) gave authoritative voice to a view still evident in the German-speaking countries today: that the theater serves an essential social or political function and should uphold morality, speak the truth, and encourage audiences and their legislators to think and to adapt to new ideas.[4] German audiences were happy to accept the idea that entertainment blends profound aesthetic pleasure and

---

[2]Peter Skrine, "General Introduction," chap. in Hauptmann, Wedekind and Schnitzler (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1989), 2-3.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Leroy R. Shaw, The Playwright and Historical Change: Dramatic Strategies in Brecht, Hauptmann, Kaiser and Wedekind (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 3.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

intellectual challenge.

By the middle of the 19th century almost every German-speaking town and city supported its own theater, and the broad mass of the growing urban population patronized this art form. Yet the playwrights themselves betrayed a considerable lack of original talent. The breakthrough to a new golden age in German drama came in 1889 in Berlin, 28 years after the city emerged as the capital of the new German Empire, and it soon became the leading cultural center of German-speaking Europe.[5]

Around 1900 the German-speaking countries produced three outstanding dramatists: Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946), Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), and Frank Wedekind (1864-1918).[6] A number of enterprising theatrical managers,

---

[5]Skrine, 3. Also see the introduction in John Osborne, The Naturalist Drama in Germany (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971).

[6]For further information on Hauptmann, Wedekind and Schnitzler in addition to works already cited consult: **Hauptmann**--H. F. Garten, Gerhart Hauptmann (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, and New Haven: Yale University Press, both 1954); and "Gerhart Hauptmann," in German Men of Letters, ed. Alex Natan (London: Wolff, 1961), 235-49. Margaret Sinden, Gerhart Hauptmann: The Prose Plays (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957) remains the best academic study of Hauptmann's drama in English. **Wedekind**--Alan Best, Frank Wedekind (London: Wolff, 1975); Elizabeth Boa, The Sexual Circus: Wedekind's Theater of Subversion (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Sol Gittleman, Wedekind, Twayne's World Author Series no. 55 (New York: Twayne, 1969); and Alex Natan, "Frank Wedekind," in German Men of Letters II, ed. Natan (London; Wolff, 1963), 103-29. **Schnitzler**--H.B. Garland, "Arthur Schnitzler," in German Men of Letters II, ed. Alex Natan (London: Wolff, 1963), 57-75; Martin Swales, Arthur Schnitzler: A Critical Study (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Reinhard Urbach, Arthur Schnitzler

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

imaginative producers, and gifted playwrights, converged in Berlin and Vienna, backed by critics and reviewers. Book publication played an influential part in the propagation of new ideas, even in drama.[7]

Frank Wedekind's work inspired von Wiegand's early development as a writer and artist. Wedekind's best known works, Spring Awakening, Earth Spirit, Pandora's Box, The Marquis of Keith and King Nicolo, were eventually translated into English.[8] (Von Wiegand read them in German.) When he

---

(New York: Ungar, 1973).

[7]Around 1900 the German theater was the equal of any in Europe. Although none of the three dramatists, Hauptmann, Wedekind and Schnitzler, is now a household name in Britain or the United States, there was at one time a positive response to their work thanks to the influential German element in the American theater-going public. In 1897 the celebrated German actress Agnes Sorma appeared at the Irving Place Theater in New York in works by Hauptmann and Schnitzler, and, until 1917, most of Hauptmann's plays were given performances in German by resident companies in cities such as New York, St. Louis, and Milwaukee within months of their premieres in Germany. It is likely von Wiegand encountered these three playwrights' work in New York before her trip to Germany in 1922. Skrine, 2-7.

[8]Wedekind's plays were not translated into English until the 1960s, 70s, and 80s: Spring Awakening, trans. Tom Osborn (London: John Calder, 1969); Spring Awakening, trans. Edward Bond (London: Methuen, 1980); The Marquis of Keith, trans. Ronald Eyre and Alan Best (London: Royal Shakespeare Company, 1974); Frank Wedekind, The Lulu Plays and Other Sex Tragedies: Earth Spirit, Pandora's Box, Death and Devil, Castle Wetterstein, trans. Stephen Spender (London: John Calder, 1977); and Peter Barnes, Lulu. A Sex Tragedy. Adapted from Wedekind's Earth Spirit and Pandora's Box, trans. Charlotte Beck (London: Heinemann, 1971). Wedekind's collected writings comprise some thirty plays and pantomimes, seventeen prose narratives, twenty-one on literary, cultural, social, and political topics, nearly one hundred and fifty satirical, cabaret, and political poems, and a collection of notes by the author on his plays.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

died on March 12, 1918 the public which had heard of Wedekind considered him to be mostly a libertine, an anti-bourgeois exploiter of sexuality and a threat to public morality. A small but vocal group of writers and critics, who made it their business to defend Wedekind, confirmed this view. The abolition of censorship in the Weimar Republic after World War I led to a surge of enthusiasm for Wedekind's work in the 1920s. On von Wiegand's return to Germany, she witnessed firsthand this boom in Wedekind theater. (The advent of National Socialism eventually put an abrupt end to the Wedekind heyday.)[9]

At three o'clock on a gray, rainy Sunday afternoon in May of 1922, Charmion von Wiegand paid her forty marks (13 American cents) to attend the German Theater (Deutsches Theater) in the company of the typical crowd of Berliners--workingmen, wives, clerks, stenographers, and merchants--to see a sold out performance of Wedekind's Pandora's Box.[10]

Wedekind drew the play from life--not literally, in a

---

[9]Alan Best, Frank Wedekind (London: Oswald Wolff, 1975), 7-22.

[10]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Box of Pandora," Double Dealer IV, no. 22 (October 1922): 197-199.
Wedekind's work was first seen in closed performances in Nuremberg (1904) and in Vienna (1905) in a production staged by the Austrian satirical writer Karl Kraus, with Tilly Newes as Lulu and Wedekind as Jack the Ripper. Occasional open performances began to take place from 1911, and, when these were officially permitted in 1918, the play became a *succès de scandale* and thus a box-office success. Elizabeth Boa, The Sexual Circus: Wedekind's Theater of Subversion (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 87-89.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

photographic sense, but in such a way that, if audiences were really honest with themselves, they would recognize the protagonist's, Lulu's, world as a valid dimension of their own. Von Wiegand described Wedekind's play:

> There is no attempt in the acting to approach absolute naturalism. Wedekind, as the father of modern German drama, is a link between naturalism and expressionism. The acting, too, hovers between the two styles. It is neither realistic nor widely futuristic as in some of the newer plays. It is Wedekind's own style, reminding one in its conventionalization of a painting by Derain.[11]

If any one theme underlies Hauptman and Wedekind's plays, it is that of change. Their plays, though vastly different in most other respects capture the feel of a society in transformation.[12] The sense of change spreads upwards through society. According to Peter Skrine, education brought dissatisfaction with one's background; the new scientific outlook provoked a break with the older generation; tensions surfaced, gaps widened, conflict increased. Women took stock of their role in German society by calling into question some of its most cherished notions. Artists asked themselves what their vocation meant. Were they geniuses raised above the norm of humankind as the

---

[11]Von Wiegand, "The Box of Pandora," 198.

[12]For more information on Pandora's Box see: Frank Wedekind, The Lulu Plays and Other Sex Tragedies: Earth Spirit, Pandora's Box, Death and Devil, Castle Wetterstein, trans. Stephen Spender (London: John Calder, 1977); and Peter Barnes, Lulu. A Sex Tragedy. Adapted from Wedekind's Earth Spirit and Pandora's Box, trans. by Charlotte Beck (London: Heinemann, 1971).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

German Romantic and Classical traditions both had? Or were they the servants of a basically philistine bourgeoisie, which had the money to pay the piper and call the tune?[13] The Lulu plays excited strident reactions, especially in the English-speaking world, because they exemplified a conception of drama that was very un-English. Their uninhibited view of what goes on behind the social facade may at first provide a brief moment of embarrassed delight, but the view persists. The Lulu plays enraged London and New York audiences.[14]

---

[13]Prime examples of this type of drama are Hauptmann's The Weavers and Before Sunrise, which capture the multiple tensions brought about in communities and families during times of economic difficulty. Skrine, 8.

[14]Though Wedekind generally avoids allusions to Germany, it is clear that Lulu's career coincides with the reign of Wilhelm I and the chancellorship of Bismarck. We first meet her during the economic boom which followed the Franco-Prussian War and created a self-confident new plutocracy in Germany. Capitalism began to dominate public life and penetrate the public mind at all levels of society; men worked hard to acquire wealth and to improve their social station, and were not afraid to flaunt their success.

Von Wiegand described the play:

> The story of the "Box of Pandora" is thin and without plot complications. It is its gallery of modern types--products of a rotten civilization--which holds the interest. It had its prologue in "Ergeist," that much more powerful play, where the human menagerie was exhibited in all its bare-faced brutality. At the end of "Ergeist," Lulu, the beautiful snake, who represents the supreme illusion of flesh, the end of all desire, is thrown into prison for the murder of her lover, Dr. Schön. When the "Box of Pandora" opens, her friends have arranged her escape. It is the Countess Geschwitz (whose perverse passion for Lulu prompts her to infect herself with cholera, and, entering the prison, to go through a mock death in Lulu's name.) Lulu returns to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

During this year, 1922, von Wiegand wished to communicate to an American audience the brilliance of Wedekind's work, The Box of the Pandora, and to show Americans the relevance of his message to their own lives.[15] She described the three-hour horror as a portrayal of life, "bitter, cynical, robbed of illusion, in which all the

---

her friends and freedom. Everyone is enamored of her: Rodrigo, her fiance, who wants to make an artist of her, Schön, who is writing a drama about her, and even old Schigolch, her supposed father, a slimy old reprobate, the most degenerate of them all, who understands her nature thoroughly. Lulu uses their passions to play them out one against another until they scream and claw each other like wild beasts. She cannot resist the fascination of loving the man whose father she murdered, and so she capriciously yields herself to Schön, eager for a new sensation to spur her jaded senses to a new climax of emotion.

We follow her in her escape to Paris, where we meet more types of the modern world: Magelone, the prostitute, and her innocent young daughter, who has the seeds of degeneracy in her too; the pimp, Marquis Casti-Piani, who wants to sell Lulu to an Egyptian brothel; the banker Puntschu, a speculator, who swindles the whole company with bad stocks; the journalist Heilmann, an unbelievable libertine, etc. Lulu, with the aid of the Lesbian countess and old Schigolch gets rid of Rodrigo, who wants to betray her to the police.

In the last act, we follow her to an attic in London, where she is supporting her faithful followers by bringing customers up from the street. Schön is killed when he attempts to defend her from a negro's embrace. At the end comes Jack the Ripper, and though the Countess, in a last act of love, sacrifices her life, Lulu is murdered.

Von Wiegand, "The Box of Pandora," 197-198.

[15]Ibid., 198.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

perversities and cruelty of humanity are paraded naked."[16] Von Wiegand pointed out that though the play was written in 1901, before the atrocities of World War I, and took place in London, Paris, and Berlin, it attacked all three cities for their immoral acts toward humanity.

> With the eyes of a seer, Wedekind, long before the war, peered at European culture, and with the knowing touch of the scientist, put his finger on its two running sores--lust and greed. He saw the abyss before Europe plunged. His is the desperate cry of a man unable to save, of a physician unable to heal; the cry of a man who knew the danger, but whose cry was lost in the unheeding laughter of the multitude. He is a prophet in the wilderness of materialism, a madman gnashing his teeth in utter impotence.[17]

Von Wiegand wondered if the fourth act took place in New York City would not the same disgust for humanity manifest itself:

> It is not without malicious satire that the first act is laid in Berlin, the second in Paris, and the third in London. It is thus Wedekind smashes his fist in the face of hypocrisy. It is among the English, in the capital of Anglo-Saxon Puritanism, that lust and depravity reach their lowest and most inhuman form. One wonders what a fourth act in New York would have been like, and to what horror it might have inspired Wedekind.[18]

Von Wiegand's early exposure to different cultures and political views gave her writings a global perspective. Throughout her reviews, she critiques Western values and ideals, particularly materialism. Her praise for this play

---

[16]Ibid., 199.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., 198.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and its commentary on western civilization offers one of the earliest examples.

Before selling the article, she sent it to Hart Crane. In August 1922 he responded: "'Pandora's Box' is a good piece of 'general' criticism. It is more social then literary and is the kind of thing, above all, that Americans need to read. I hope you find a good market for it. You must let me know where and when your things are published so I can look for them and get them."[19] He wrote to her on the publication of her article in October, 1922: "Congratulations on your Double Dealer debut! But say farewell to peace from hence forth, fair lady. Once you have seen yourself between the covers of the magazine you will never be content again without burning oil for it--by which I mean, 'encores.'"[20]

Poetry

In 1923 von Wiegand published a work of her poetry in the journal Casements.[21] In it, there are connections between her writings from the post-Columbia years and her later critical essays and paintings. The poems, for

---

[19]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 15 August 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[20]Hart Crane, Cleveland, OH, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, 9 October 1922, HC Papers, Yale University.

[21]Charmion von Wiegand, "Spring Night," Casements 2, no. 1 (November 1923): 10.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

example, reveal precise construction and word choice, bolstered by the restraint in content and style--evident in her early drawings and paintings. She focused on classical culture, spiritual themes, and oriental imagery. The principal of simultaneity, often used in her paintings, took flight in her poetry. Von Wiegand used different scents to describe color. In her poem "Spring Night" she associated the colors of a setting sun with the scent of balsam wood:

> But, on a night as this,
> When the sky is a painted mummy-case
> Of scented balsam wood,
> Inlaid with gilded hieroglyphs
> I pry off the cover
> And sniff the queer, dried odor of dream-dust.[22]

Her poems often exhibit a style inspired by the work of Malcolm Cowley, literary critic and New Republic editor, whose poetry von Wiegand became familiar with through Crane and the publication, Secession. The tone of von Wiegand's poem, "Portrait," is probably derived from Cowley's work, a poem published in the second edition of Secession.[23] Where Cowley evoked the intimate physical link between two people through the sense of hearing and musical terms, von Wiegand used the sense of smell to describe these same physical sensations.[24] In the poem "Portrait" Von Wiegand wrote:

---

[22]Ibid.

[23]Charmion von Wiegand, "Portrait," Buccaneer 1, no. 4 (December, 1924): 30.

[24]Malcolm Cowley, untitled, Secession no. 2 (August, 1922): 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> ...Assailing the senses
> With a perturbing, permeating perfume
> Too sweet for comfort;
> Laying palpitating, languid fingers
> On my drowsy temples;
> Intoning the rhythms of forgotten odors
> In my uneasy blood.[25]

Cowley described the same sexual act as:

> ...I have heard melodies that stilled the hammer of the heart against the boxed ribs,
> that played like caressing hands along the spine,
> but theirs is a facile beauty which you despise,
> whose long prehensile fingers grope for expression painfully along the keys.[26]

Oriental Art

Von Wiegand referred to Eastern art throughout her poetry, but a prime example of her early interest in oriental art is a piece entitled "Flame and Mist: A Contrast," that von Wiegand published in Double Dealer, in 1924.[27] She compared Persian painting to Chinese painting. According to von Wiegand, Persian art communicates with the spectator physically, seducing the senses, whereas Chinese painting functions in the spiritual dominion, leading the spectator to a meditative state. She described Persian art:

> The moonlight on the fragile terraces of Mughal painting evokes no meditation, but stirs the sense to voluptuous fancies.....A Persian who inhaled the

---

[25]Von Wiegand, "Portrait," 30.

[26]Cowley, 5.

[27]Charmion von Wiegand, "Flame and Mist: A Contrast," Double Dealer 6, no. 37-39 (August - September 1924): 193-194.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> fragrance of a rose; who drained a draught of amber wine from a chaste glass goblet; who embraced the slender waist of a girl, did each of these as a connoisseur with intelligent and gracious appreciation. His voluptuousness was always delicate his passion refined though, perhaps, artificial...[28]

By contrast, one finds the greater consolation in Chinese images.

> Chinese painting is like an old man, who has outgrown the passions of his youth, the evanescent joys of the flesh...Its greatest philosophy might well be epitomized in a small brown painting on silk of the Sung dynasty: a wrinkled sage sits on a hill under a pine tree, and looks down on the valley below. Before him, he sees the great drama of Nature; the rise of mists, the driving wind, the soaring of birds, the passing of the seasons, and, as he sits there with the world at his feet, he contemplates the world of Life. And he sees Man not as the chief actor in this drama but as an integral part of Nature and the universe. He sees Nature herself and how each plant and animal and flower and human being are related to each other and how they together make a perfect whole. And he sees how Thought goes through all of it, giving a divine reason to existence.[29]

Von Wiegand proceeded to describe the sage: "He has become utterly detached from life. He knows neither joy nor sadness, but the wisdom of ripeness and completion." This is the first evidence of von Wiegand's understanding and passion for Eastern thought.[30] Her later writings and paintings often contrasted the seduction of the material world with the wisdom of spiritual life.

Reifstahl, von Wiegand's college professor and mentor,

---

[28]Ibid., 193.

[29]Ibid., 194.

[30]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

compared Chinese and Persian art throughout his book Persian and Indian Textiles, From the Late 16th Century to the Early 19th Century,[31] which was published in 1923 the year before von Wiegand's article. Von Wiegand adopted Riefstahl's poetic and flowery rhetoric for her writing on this similar subject. Reifstahl wrote:

> The love of Chinese Ming painters for flowers and plants impressed Behzad and his pupils so deeply that they, too, began exploring nature. The foregrounds of the miniatures, where a capricious brook runs over varicolored pebbles and polished stones, between emerald banks dotted with manifold flowers, delights the modern beholder no less than it delighted the persian prince, pictured reveling with his musicians and dancers in the shadows of the flowering almond trees and dark cypresses and the exquisite tenderness with which the life of the flower is expressed, has an undying appeal. And something of that appeal was carried over into the field of textile design by the Persian artists who penetrated the intimate life of nature.[32]

Reifstahl influenced von Wiegand not only in terms of the subject, but also the style in which she composed her essays.

Plays

The majority of her plays of 1923-1926 focused on unrequited love. Von Wiegand's plays are based on the single act format first introduced to her by Hatcher Hughes and used in Hughes's plays Ruint and Hell-Bent Fer Heaven. The

---

[31]Rudolf Meyer Reifstahl, Persian and Indian Textiles, From the Late 16th Century to the Early 19th Century (New York: E. Weyhe, 1923).

[32]Ibid., 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

incidents of the story Emilia Viviani: A Romantic Drama in One Act, written in 1925 by von Wiegand,[33] are wholly imaginary, but derived from an historical relationship between Percy Bysshe Shelley and Emilia Viviani. It is a matter of history that Shelley drowned off Leghorn on July 8, 1822. Emilia Viviani, to whom he dedicated the ecstatic poem, the "Epipsychidion," survived him by six years. Thomas Medwin left a touching description of his last interview with Viviani, shortly before her death. "She has broken the ties of her hated marriage and retired to Florence. Here, in a dilapidated, old mansion, stretched on a couch, she received him putting out a small white hand in greeting. Suffering from consumption, and broken in heart and spirit, she was stoically awaiting her end."[34] The story of Shelley and Viviani attracted von Wiegand's attention because of her own lack of fulfillment in her marriage and her quest for passion with various members of her circle of writers in Greenwich Village.

Von Wiegand opened with the words from "The Epipsychidion: "..Love's very pain is sweet, But its reward is in the world divine, which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave.." Many of von Wiegand's fictional characters derive the meaning of their existence from the unhappiness

---

[33]Charmion von Wiegand, "Emilia Viviani: A Romantic Drama in One Act," Poet Lore 36 (December 1925): 552-68.

[34]Thomas Medwin, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley (London, 1847).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of their circumstances. They are married to a person who neither understands them nor has their best interests at heart. Often they love another who is unattainable. In this work Emilia is committed to her husband, Guido Biondi, but loves Shelley, who has recently died and cannot reciprocate her feelings. Emilia's unhappiness mirrored von Wiegand's in 1925. Charmion von Wiegand was married to Hermann Habicht, a man she did not love, and longed for the love of her friend, Max Eastman, a man who refused to return her devotion.[35]

Jasmine and the Poet: A Play in One Act, a romance appeared in Poet Lore September, 1926.[36] The influence of Japan and China on American culture pervades this tale. The setting has many oriental references: "Above the console, a small Chinese lacquer mirror. On either side, on the wall, hang long panels of Chinese cut-velvet in a rich old gold."

---

[35]In the Max Eastman Autobiography, Love and Revolution: My Journey Through an Epoch (New York: Random House, 1964), there are a few mentions of Charmion von Wiegand (Habicht), but no reference to their love affair. Von Wiegand does mention Eastman in her letters to her soon to be ex-husband, Hermann Habicht throughout her first year in Russia. Moreover, the author's interviews with von Wiegand's close associates, Elaine Wrong, Anne Feinberg Williams and Kay Hillman all support and verify that von Wiegand did indeed have a year long romance with Eastman. (Anne Feinberg, Interview by author, 14 June 1994, New York, tape recording, Collection of the Author, New York; Kay Hillman, Interview by author, 8 August 1994, New York, tape recording, Collection of the Author, New York; and Elaine Wrong, Interview by author, 20 May 1994, June 21, 1994, New York, tape recording, Collection of the Author, New York.)

[36]Charmion von Wiegand, "Jasmine and the Poet," Poet Lore, 37 (September, 1926): 418-31.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There is also a Japanese butler, Tito, who represents the deeply introspective East and its anti-materialistic culture. The correspondence between von Wiegand and her father during his trip to Peking and Japan in the fall of 1925 rekindled von Wiegand's interest in Asian cultures. Karl von Wiegand sent her many photographs of the country and its people, as well as gifts of jade and porcelain.[37] Von Wiegand wrote in a September letter: "...Many thanks for your pictures. You look positively Chinese in the one with the officials. Also you look fattish--part of the Buddhistic calm cultivated no doubt in Peking..."[38] Von Wiegand often read travel books about the cultures and countries that her father visited. In particular, she read much about Japan and China during the fall of 1925.

Jasmine and the Poet expressed von Wiegand's own views on contemporary poetry. Early in the play the main character Jasmine asks Tito, her Japanese butler, his views on a book of poetry. While he understands the poems, his employer does not. Tito says to Jasmine, "[The poet] feels that the younger generation of poets are not articulate enough in expressing their disgust with our civilization. They are too occupied with the old themes...love, bravery, beauty--all the old themes, which we honor in our poetry in

---

[37]Photography file, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[38]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Karl von Wiegand, Germany, September 1925, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Japan. The young man feels that machinery, pessimism, and expression of the abstract--these are more suitable."[39] Von Wiegand presented a playful contrast in the play between materialism, represented by Jasmine and her lush surroundings,[40] and the anti-materialism, illustrated in the character of the poet. Von Wiegand further explored the themes of the machine, the abstract form, combined with a cynical perspective in her work of the 1930s.

[39]Von Wiegand, "Jasmine and the Poet," 421.

[40]Von Wiegand described Jasmine's sitting room as "an exquisite room quite out of the ordinary, but impeccable as to taste. There is a jewel-like perfection about the selection and arrangement of everything." She goes on to describe the Empire furniture, porcelain jars and Venetian glass bowls. Ibid., 418.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER III

EARLY PAINTING--1926-1929

Introduction

A full analysis of von Wiegand's early paintings is difficult because only a dozen oil sketches from the 1920s survive in the artist's estate. The majority of information obtained about the early paintings was taken from letters between Charmion von Wiegand and her husband, Hermann Habicht, her father, Karl von Wiegand, and her friend, Hart Crane. Hart Crane's comments to von Wiegand about her work were extremely helpful in determining the paintings' influence and visual appearance.

Psychoanalysis

Charmion von Wiegand began psychoanalysis in 1926 under the care of Dr. L. Pierce Clark.[1] Psychoanalysis had become a common practice among artists and writers, but had not yet

---

[1]Dr. L. Pierce Clark is listed as one of 31 New York City members of the International Psycho-analytical Society in International Journal of Psycho-analysis, ed. Ernest Jones, 7,(Baillière, Tindall and Cox, London, 1926), 149.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

been accepted by the general population.[2] Through psychoanalysis von Wiegand hoped to shape the direction of her life. She often found herself paralyzed by the fear of failure, which prevented her from writing her poems and plays. After several months of analysis, a liberated von Wiegand emerged. On March 23, 1927, she wrote her father in Germany:

> But I know you are radically opposed to analysis, so I won't say any more. You shall see me and see what it has done for me, if we meet this Spring. There was nothing wrong with me to all appearances before this, yet there was plenty of room for improvement. I am not through yet... I know one thing--no one ever thought to offer me a job before this. I feel I can handle any situation that arises with much more ease. Dr. Clark thinks I have been going wrong--writing plays, when I should be doing stories and novels. I have written nothing all winter, but do not worry over. I have so much writing for the analysis, that I couldn't do more anyway.[3]

Each week Dr. Clark required von Wiegand to write several thousand words on her feelings and experiences. For the short term this work took her away from her plays and

---

[2]Clark, like other American psychoanalysists, modified psychoanalysis to solve a conflict between the radical implications of Freud's views and the pulls of American culture. The Americans simplified psychoanalysis, taking little interest in Freud's system as a coherent theory. They muted sexuality and aggression. They emphasized social conformity. They were more didactic, moralistic, and popular than Freud. Americans also tended to question, explain and interpret more than Freud. Nathan G. Hale, Jr., Freud and the American: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876-1917 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[3]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, 23 March 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

poetry. In a letter dated March 29, 1927 von Wiegand described her process of analysis:

> I am still going to Dr. Clark for analysis. He wants me to stay put here and finish up. I had it dragged out so long on account of mama. I would like to finish, as it is a frightful drain on the exchequer...
>
> My time is so taken up, that I get up at seven or seven thirty every morning, take my hour with Clark between nine and ten...Clark expects about five thousand words a week too. Not much, but it takes time.[4]

In late 1927 during a session with Dr. Clark, she confronted her feelings of emptiness, while discussing her dreams and aspirations. The doctor asked von Wiegand what she would do if she could do anything she desired. Without hesitation von Wiegand responded "Why I'd paint, of course."[5] She admitted that her career as a writer was only partially satisfying; she harbored her deepest feelings for painting--for visual art. From her early childhood on, von Wiegand drew as an extra-curricular activity. She found a great deal of pleasure in doodling, but had never envisioned it as a worthwhile pursuit, much less a profession. The analyst asked her if she wanted to be a painter, why wasn't she painting? "It's too late in life to be a painter," von Wiegand responded.[6] She went home and digested what she

---

[4]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, 29 March 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[5]Rubinstein, 297.

[6]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 10.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

termed "an enormous surprise."[7] Her unconscious communicated to the conscious mind a deep need to express herself visually. She never felt being an artist was possible.

Several days later, summoning up her nerve, she visited Rosenthal's art store, a small basement shop near her home in Greenwich Village. When she walked into the store the woman behind the counter asked what would she like to buy. "I'd like some crayons," von Wiegand replied. The merchant gave her a box of crayons, but that didn't satisfy von Wiegand. She changed her mind and handed back the crayons, requesting some paints. The sales woman asked "Well, whom do you want them for?" "For a little girl about the age of thirteen," von Wiegand replied. The young woman began to pick out some watercolor tubes, but when von Wiegand saw all those rows and the labels in color with the variety of hues of blue, red, yellow, green, and violet, she grew excited, "Oh no, I want that and I want this, and I want this and I want that." "Why isn't this too much for a young child of thirteen?" the sales lady asked. "I think I'll take all of that just the same. This is a very precocious child," gushed von Wiegand, red in the face and out of breath.[8]

The following weekend, with paints in tow, she drove to their country home, a pink stucco house on a hill about a

---

[7]Ce Roser, The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand.

[8]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 10-11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

mile and a quarter from the Long Island Sound in Darien, Connecticut. As von Wiegand described:

> ...there is a pretty garden with trees that hide the surrounding houses, and a large apple tree, (the biggest I've ever seen) with a swing. We have a little patio where we eat outside. There are six rooms; the living room, kitchen, Chin's room, and upstairs, three bedrooms and a study.[9]

She decided to begin with a landscape composition in the backyard of her Darien home. Von Wiegand took a little stool out in the yard under the apple tree. The tree was enormous, so she filled the canvas with the trunk, limbs, and leaves. The fledgling artist painted virtually every single leaf of the apple tree. The Chinese cook, Chin, who watched her work came out into the garden. Placing both hands over his eyes he suggested that she should look at the tree, but do the painting from her mind.[10] Years later when she ran across that first painting she found that it was not rendered realistically but was quite expressionistic, full of bright colors and exaggerated lines. As she reported later: "under therapy, I got colors I had seen in Chinatown as a child in San Francisco. I remembered the confetti (pink and green) and the red dragons and firecrackers...when I sat in the garden to paint the apple tree."[11]

---

[9]Charmion von Wiegand, Rowayton, CT, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 2 September 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[10]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 11-12.

[11]Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," Woman's Art Journal (Fall 1983/Winter 1984): 30.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

She wrote Karl von Wiegand eight weeks after starting to paint:

> I've been spending all my time painting of late. I never had a brush or pencil in my hand till about eight weeks ago and now I can't wait to get up in the morning to paint. And you would be surprised that I can make things look so good, when I had no inkling that I could draw anything..[12]

Von Wiegand described this period in an interview:

> I never showed. I kept right on painting... This was my sort of secret pleasure, more or less. I never thought of it professionally. But all my life I [had] learned from artists 'whose work I admired.'[13]

Although von Wiegand sought no formal training in art, her first lessons in painting came from Leo Katz, a New York society painter.[14] She wrote her father on September 2, 1927 while staying at her country home:

> Leo Katz is doing my portrait. I have had several sittings but haven't seen the picture. Of course we'll never be able to buy it--he just asked me to sit--as he

---

[12]Charmion von Wiegand, Rowayton, CT, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 2 September 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[13]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 13.

[14]Leo Katz was born near Vienna, Austria in 1887 and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and Munich. His first exhibition was in 1912 in Vienna. Among his prominent sitters: Prince Albert of Monaco, Prince E. Schwarzenberg, Ermete Novelli (Italian actor). He came to the United States in 1921 at the invitation of Mr. Frank A. Vanderlip to paint the Vanderlip family. Many members of New York society sat for Katz in the 1920s and 1930s. He was described by the press as a symbolist painter of portraits, but he also painted murals. He was famous in New York in the 1930s for his lectures on modern art and the psychology of form. Artist file of Leo Katz, New York Public Library, New York; and E.E. Washburn Freund, "Leo Katz--'Freud of the Easel,'" International Studio 77 (1923): 12-16.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> always charges several thousand. He was out here once and gave me my one and only painting lesson. He wants me to go on--says I have a fine sense of color and of rhythm. I am going to practice on the doors of our new studio---do some really big designs. I have never had so much enjoyment out of anything..."[15]

Once von Wiegand and Habicht moved permanently to the village, her painting evolved from country landscape paintings to religious subjects. Although initially closer to more writers than painters, her circle gradually widened. She met Mildred Baker of the Newark Museum, who was married to a German painter. A member of the writers' circle introduced her to Joseph Stella, Jules Pascin, and Ernest Fiene.[16] Many artists began to drop by her studio.[17]

As von Wiegand painted more seriously, she took Joseph Stella and Jules Pascin's advice to heart. Stella, a mentor, shielded her from criticism. At times, the artist would grow so animated in von Wiegand's defense that he would pound his big Hawthorne cane on the floor. Von Wiegand felt deeply honored because she regarded Stella as the greatest living painter at that time.[18]

---

[15]Charmion von Wiegand, Rowayton, CT, to Karl von Wiegand, Berlin, Germany, 6 September 1927, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[16]For more information on Ernest Fiene see: William Murrell, Ernest Fiene (Woodstock, NY: Harold Waid, 1922).

[17]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 12-13; and Ce Roser, The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand.

[18]Rubinstein, 297; and von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 12; and Ce Roser, The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

During the 1920's, when von Wiegand was close to Stella, he painted pictures in the pared-down style of the Precisionists, a method which he introduced to von Wiegand. He also exposed her to the artists of the Société Anonyme,[19] of which he was an exhibiting member by 1920. Stella acquainted von Wiegand with the Italian Futurists. He had spent from 1909-12 in Italy and France, where he came under the influence of the Futurists: Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, and Carlo Carrà. Stella was known as America's leading Futurist, exhibiting a style comparable to the Italian painter, Gino Severini. Using his Futurist technique, Stella painted a romanticized image of the industrial townscape of New York. Celebrating New York in his paintings as the spirit of America's new industrial/technological civilization, Stella passed on his

---

[19]The Société Anonyme, Inc. was found in 1920 in New York by the collector Katherine Dreier and the Dada artists Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. An educational endeavor intended to elevate public taste by showing high quality modern artworks, it was propelled by its founder's faith in modern art as a force in advancing human consciousness. For an in depth description of the organization see: Ruth Bohan, "The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition 1926-1927: Katherine Sophie Dreier and the Promotion of Modern Art in America" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1980), 34-42; Ruth Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 15-21; and The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest of Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné, Robert L. Herbert, Eleanor S. Apter, Elise K. Kennez, eds.; contributing editor, Ruth L. Bohan; assistant editor, Rosalyn M. Deutsche (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

optimism of the industrial townscape to von Wiegand.[20]

Years earlier von Wiegand had known the French painter, Jules Pascin. While she struggled as a playwright in the late teens, Jules Pascin introduced her to artists working in Paris. Pascin had made his way from Paris to New York, via England. After the outbreak of the First World War, he spent five years in the United States, before returning to Paris in 1920. When von Wiegand was in France during a trip in 1922, Pascin introduced her to the work of Marc Chagall, Chaïm Soutine, and Amedeo Modigliani.[21] Von Wiegand later wrote of her rejection of Pascin's art:

> The one mid-European painter to leave his stamp on recent American painting was Jules Pascin, who spent some years in New York in the golden age of the twenties. His style, a fragile modernist Rococo of prewar Europe, affected such diverse painters as George Biddle, Emil Ganso, and Yasuo Kunyioshi. His influence was, in part, due to the pleasantly sensuous nature of art, his frivolous avoidance of serious subject matter of experimental problems. Possessing a dexterous technique, he was fated to enchant the painters of American prosperity with a surface charm, which became his nemesis; while those more serious exiled artists, who had suffered all the agonies of the post-war epoch, could of necessity not be appreciated until the

---

[20]For more information on the art and life of Joseph Stella see: John Ireland Howe Baur, Joseph Stella (New York: Praeger, 1971); Irma Jaffe, Joseph Stella (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970); and Barbara Haskell, Joseph Stella (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1994).

[21]For more information on the art and life of Jules Pascin see: Yues Hemin, Pascin (Paris: Avel Rambert, 1984); Luis Seonane, Jules Pascin (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón, 1944); and Horace Brodzky, Pascin (London: Nicholason and Watson, 1946).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> American artist had experienced some equally disturbing social upheaval. This was furnished by the economic catastrophe of 1929.[22]

Von Wiegand's familiarity with Pascin's work expressed itself in her early color and compositions. She consulted Pascin during her several trips to Paris in the late twenties regarding the progress of her own painting.[23]

During the summer of 1927, the Habicht's rented a house at Croton-on-Hudson where on the weekends they entertained many friends, including Hart Crane. The spot was quite beautiful. A country flower garden stood at the center of the large U-shaped home. Fields and apple orchards stretched down toward the Hudson and out beyond the house as far as one could see.[24]

Hart Crane arrived during the summer of 1927 just as von Wiegand's interest in painting started to flourish. She hadn't seen Crane in a number of years, although they corresponded on a regular basis. When he arrived that summer..."his hair was white; he'd lost weight; he'd aged tremendously." He was insistent that he still wanted to write, but was clearly so exhausted that the task proved nearly impossible. He did, however, manage a few fitful work sessions, the good food and company doing a great deal

---

[22]Charmion von Wiegand, "Expressionism and Social Change," Art Front (November 1936): 10-12.

[23]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 12.

[24]Unterecker, 551.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to restore his spirits.[25]

Throughout Crane's adult life he yearned to produce the "Great American Poem." For a time, he seemed the most promising poet of his generation, and the small body of work he left behind, mostly written within a single decade, testifies to major talent and tragic curtailment. From 1923 to 1927, the years of a close friendship with von Wiegand, he wrote his finest poetry. In 1926, he composed ten of the fifteen poems that were to comprise his masterpiece, The Bridge. Crane wrote a large portion of The Bridge while staying with the Habichts in Croton-on-Hudson.[26]

Here, in the gentle hilly country above Croton-on-Hudson, Crane and von Wiegand discussed at length modern painting, focusing on technique and form. She urged him to search out the Brooklyn Bridge paintings of Joseph Stella, some of which were housed in the Brooklyn Museum. Stella, she felt, captured the same forces Hart Crane

---

[25]Unterecker, 552. "You don't know what a good time I had with you!" he wrote Charmion a week later,"...and how fortunate I feel to have had your cheerful company at a time when I felt the impulse toward anything but gaiety!" Hart Crane, New York, NY, to Charmion von Wiegand, Croton-on-Hudson, NY, 9 August [1927], HC Papers, Yale University.

[26]For more biographical information on Hart Crane see: Philip Horton, Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1937); John Unterecker, Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969); Susan Jenkins Brown, Robber Rocks: Letters and Memories of Hart Crane, 1923-1932 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969); and Paul Giles, Hart Crane: The Context of the Bridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attempted to draw on in his poem. One afternoon, he and von Wiegand went out to work in the orchards, he to write and she to paint. But, instead of writing, he spent the afternoon reading aloud from The Bridge, pausing now and then to comment on the structure of "The River" and to praise the painting on which von Wiegand was working.[27]

The sight of the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge visible from his window in New York stirred Crane to write his spiritual quest for a mythic America, The Bridge. The "catenary curve" of Roebling's architectural genius overwhelmed all who viewed it. The painters John Marin, Joseph Stella, Georgia O'Keeffe, and the photographer, Alfred Stieglitz, as well as others who attempted to capture its emotional effect, depicted its arch as a symbol of light and energy.[28] The aesthetic value of the suspension bridge was described by architectural historian, Elizabeth Mock: "The suspended cable reverses the arch curve and grows wings. Impatient of gravity, it achieves strength without mass or weight...these extremes of lightness, length and height are in themselves sufficient to arouse emotion."[29]

Crane reported that the formalized compositions of Stella's paintings of the Brooklyn Bridge's architectural

---

[27]Unterecker, 567.

[28]Maria Bennett, Unfractioned Idiom: Hart Crane and Modernism (Peter Lang: New York, NY, 1987), 194.

[29]Elizabeth Mock, An Introduction to Modern Architecture (New York: Penguin Books, 1947), 115.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

patterns moved him deeply. Moreover, Crane identified with Stella's essay: "The Brooklyn Bridge (A Page of My Life)." Crane told von Wiegand that it was the richest single gloss on his "sentiments" regarding the bridge.[30] Crane's request to reprint the essay as an introduction to his work The Bridge and to use a Stella painting of the Brooklyn Bridge for a frontispiece, suggests how much Crane identified himself with Stella.[31]

Joseph Stella wrote: "Brooklyn gave me a sense of liberation. The vast view of her sky, in opposition to the narrow one of New York, was a relief--and at night, in her solitude, I used to find, intact, the green freedom of my own self."[32] Crane, von Wiegand, and Joseph Stella all saw bridges as a common feature of the iconography of

---

[30]Joseph Stella, "The Brooklyn Bridge (A Page of My Life)," (Privately printed; reprint, Transition, June 1929). Philip Horton, Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1976), 111.

[31]Hart especially wanted as a frontispiece a full-color reproduction of one of Joseph Stella's Brooklyn Bridge paintings. Though neither of the Crosbys (Crane's Paris publisher) were familiar with Stella's work, they were caught up in Hart's enthusiasm. Hart suggested that they try to secure an essay Stella had written and the rights to reproduce three of his paintings. The essay--a privately printed monograph--had been given to Hart by Charmion von Wiegand; its publication in transition, he felt, would be one way of attesting to the aesthetic standards he and his friends shared. In the end, Stella's painting was not used as the frontispiece. Sherman Paul, Hart's Bridge (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 185.

[32]Joseph Stella, "The Brooklyn Bridge (A Page of My Life);" quoted in Paul Giles, Hart Crane: The Contexts of "The Bridge" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), 119.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

transition. The bridge implied the freedom attained by technological progress, fueled by human imagination. It also represented for von Wiegand and Crane a historical bridge, a bridge to the future and to the past. Crane in his poem The Bridge presents a heroic quest, at once personal and epic, which is carried out in several directions. Like his work Song of Myself it moves westward in imagination from Brooklyn to California; it also harks backward in time to early American history, upward in response to hopes and exaltations, and downward into the depths of the psyche. Different historical and legendary figures make their appearances to guide the poet-quester: Pocahontas, Columbus, and Rip Van Winkle. The bridge, in various metaphorical meanings, fuses these quests, thus unifying the poem.

Crane arranged The Bridge in separate stanzas like music, with recurring and modulated themes rather than a narrative or expository sequence. As in most modernist poems, the verse is open and varied, the syntax complicated and often ambiguous, and the jumps in reference abrupt and often dependent on a personae, hence obscure, logic. All this makes the poem difficult to apprehend; yet for some of its readers, like von Wiegand, it accomplishes just what Crane intended--that is, it restates an American tradition in modernist terms. Not coincidentally von Wiegand shared the same objective in her early painting.

After von Wiegand and Hart Crane discussed The Bridge

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

at length, von Wiegand herself set out to do a painting based on the poem--not of the Brooklyn Bridge, for that was obviously Stella's territory, but of the symbolic early American landscape invoked in Hart Crane's The Bridge. Crane wrote: "You couldn't have tickled me half so much by painting my feet (alias Mr. Buddha's) as by the news that you've painted my Indian Maid in symbolic repose by the Mississippi. I'm dying to know more about her; to see her!"[33] The section of The Bridge which von Wiegand found visually inspirational was part two, "Powhatan's Daughter."

> There was a bed of leaves, and broken play;
> There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bride--
> O Princess whose brown lap was virgin May;
> And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride.
>
> I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe
> Tugging below the mill-race, I could see
> Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue
> First moth of evening take wing stealthily.[34]

This section presents Crane's imaginary consummation of his adventure westward and quest into the past. Crane intended to be identified with the Indian and his/her world before it ends. Pocahontas, the continent, is the common basis of the meeting of human beings, she survives the extinction of the Indian, who finally after being assumed into the elements of

---

[33]Hart Crane, New York, NY, to Charmion von Wiegand, Croton-on-Hudson, 20 August 1928, HC Papers, Yale University.

[34]Hart Crane, The complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane, edited with an introduction and notes by Brom Weber (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1933), 53.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

nature, persists only as a kind of 'eye' in the sky, or a star. Von Wiegand tried to create very much the same psychic exploration in a visual form, incorporating the elements of river--the Mississippi, land as an Indian maiden, and sky with the ever-present, all-seeing star. The geometric forms of her later paintings build on this early symbolic quality.[35]

Through 1928, von Wiegand corresponded with Hart Crane about the progress of her paintings. In August, she sent Crane one of her apple orchard series, brightly colored and loosely drawn, these paintings were created outdoors among the fruit trees at her home in Croton-on-Hudson. Von Wiegand had begun the apple orchard series when Crane visited several months earlier. Crane wrote: "The canvas with the apple orchard certainly enlivens this little triple-cubicle of my apartment and I'm mighty glad to have it...."[36]

Symbolic overtones fill von Wiegand's early figurative work of religious themes executed in a modernist style, which are similar in their use of bright colors and abstracted forms to the work of the Fauves and the artists associated with the Blaue Reiter and Die Brücke. She drew

---

[35]The painting inspired by Crane's The Bridge is unlocated. The description and content of the painting is taken from the letters between von Wiegand and Crane. Ibid.

[36]Hart Crane, New York, NY, to Charmion von Wiegand, Croton-on-Hudson, 9 August 1928, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

inspiration from the early Italian "Primitives"--particularly Cimabue, Duccio, and Giotto, inspired by their strong severity of design bereft of superficial details or central narrative. In addition to these artists, von Wiegand drew inspiration from the Egyptians, early Greeks, and the Byzantines whose variety of cultures she united "as those who subordinated all to the control of the design."[37]

Spiritualism

Nothing inspired von Wiegand more in the 1920s than her discussions with Hart Crane on the occult, spiritualism, and religion. Crane was one of several writers, including D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Jean Toomer, and Waldo Frank, who expressed great interest in the occult.[38] The work of Russian occultist, P.D. Ouspensky, whose Tertium Organum strongly influenced the symbolism of The Bridge, fascinated Hart Crane. Crane discussed Ouspensky's work extensively

---

[37]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 104.

[38]There arose a distinctive native literary mysticism, which found expression in the particulars of American history and culture. It can be distinguished first in Ralph Waldo Emerson's rediscovery of the potential for wonder in the heterodox ideas of God and nature that he worked out of his New England heritage. After Emerson, the mystical company includes, to greater or lesser degree: Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Waldo Frank, Jean Toomer, Hart Crane, Thomas Wolfe, Henry Miller, Kenneth Patchen, Theodore Roethke, and among more recent writers, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. Raymond Nelson, Kenneth Patchen and American Mysticism (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

while working on The Bridge.[39]

Von Wiegand responded to Crane's interests. She had a lifelong, but not doctrinaire, interest in various occult and spiritual movements. Beginning in childhood, von Wiegand's parents exposed her to several religious points of view, including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. As a girl she attended and participated in the Theosophical Society of California, known as the Dante Church.[40] The independent nature of von Wiegand's poetry and painting was intimately linked to a free spiritual attitude.

Of course, von Wiegand was not exceptional. Many artists, writers, and intellectuals within the New York vanguard followed the occult and spiritualism. Katherine

---

[39]For more information on Crane's understanding of Ouspensky see: Charles I. Glicksberg, "Mysticism in Contemporary Poetry," Antioch Review 3 (1943): 233-45.

Her friendship with Marsden Hartley may have offered another avenue of exposure, although she never spent the extended time with Hartley that she did with Crane. Mystical thought influenced Hartley's work. On Hartley's mystical orientation and related influences see Barbara Haskell, Marsden Hartley,(Whitney Museum of American art, New York, 1980), 11-18, 26-34. Gail Levin discusses Kupka's and Hartley's meeting in August 1913, as well as the parallels between Hartley's thinking and theosophy, "Wassily Kandinsky and the American Avant-Garde, 1912-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1976), 95-99; and Levin and Marianne Lorenz, Theme and Improvisation: Kandinsky and the American Avant-Garde, 1912-1930 (Boston: Little Brown, 1992).

[40]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 31.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Dreier, of the Société Anonyme,[41] Hilla Rebay, founder of the New Museum of Non-Objective Art,[42] and Walter Arensberg,[43] whose apartment on West 67th Street in the 1910s and early 1920s served as a lively meeting place for artists, all explored the occult's various spiritual movements and writings.

Von Wiegand read Ouspensky's Tertium Organum on Hart Crane's recommendation.[44] In the work she found a mystical

---

[41]On Katherine Dreier, see Ruth Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," Arts Magazine LI (May 1977): 97-101; and Ruth Bohan, "The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition 1926-1927: Katherine Sophie Dreier and the Promotion of Modern Art in America" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1980), 34-42; and Ruth Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 15-21.

[42]Joan M. Lukach, Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art (New York: Braziller, 1983), 144; and Linda Dalrymple Henderson, The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 222.

[43]On Walter Arensberg and mysticism see: Francis Naumann,"Cryptography and the Arensberg Circle," Arts Magazine LI (May 1977): 127-33; and Naumann "Walter Conrad Arensberg: Poet, Patron, and Participant in the New York Avant-Garde, 1915-20," Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin LXXVI (Spring 1980): 2-32. For the Arensberg Circle see: Francis Naumann, "The New York Dada Movement: Better Late Than Never," Arts Magazine LIV (February 1980): 143-49; Dickran Tashjian, Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); Francis Naumann and Beth Venn, Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York (New York: Whitney Museum of American art: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1996); and Francis Naumann, New York Dada, 1915-23 (New York: Abrams, 1994).

[44]Von Wiegand read Ouspensky shortly after Crane. Hart Crane, New York, NY, to Charmion von Wiegand, Croton-on-Hudson, 9 August 1928, HC Papers, Yale University.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

philosophy based on the evolution of consciousness to comprehend higher-dimensional space. What appealed to both Crane and von Wiegand was Ouspensky's belief that "art, [including music, poetry, and the visual arts,] is a path to cosmic consciousness," and "a sensation of infinity." Ouspensky described the experience of the artist:

> The sense of the infinite is the first and most terrible trial before initiation. Nothing exists. A little miserable soul feels itself suspended in an infinite void. Then even the void disappears. There is only infinity, constant and continuous division and dissolution of everything.[45]

Ouspensky's Tertium Organum (1912) dismissed scientific positivism's obsession with the concrete world and historical progress, arguing that human's apparently three-dimensional universe was no more than an optical illusion arising out of an inability to perceive ulterior spheres. Everything that seems fragmented is actually part of some greater whole.[46]

---

[45]P.D. Ouspensky, Tertium Organum, the Third Canon of Thought: A Key to the Enigmas of the World (1911), trans., Claude Bragdon and Nicholas Bessaraboff, 2d American ed. (New York: Knopf, 1922), 331, 257. Also see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 208-9, 264-71, 368-70; James Webb, The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdijieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers (New York: Putnam, 1980).

[46]"If we put down the five fingers of one hand on the plane of the two-dimensional being they will be for him five separate phenomena," said Ouspensky, whereas evidently man as a three dimensional being can see that all five fingers are components of the same structure. Similarly, "it is impossible to convey to a dog the idea of the sphericality of the earth" because a dog is dull-witted and trusts only to the evidence of his senses; but man, whose psyche is one

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Einstein said that space was a construction of the human mind, and Ouspensky applied the same criticism to time, claiming that we think time is passing because we are passing it. The dog, said Ouspensky, thinks we are greeted with a new sun every morning, but man knows it is only the old sun which the earth has gone round in a circle to meet again. By extension, Man talks about a "new" morning or a "new" spring, but the superior intelligence realizes it is only the old spring coming round once more; nature seems to be in perpetual motion but is, in fact, static at heart.[47]

Ouspensky's analogies between past and present resemble Emerson's; but Ouspensky owed a more direct allegiance to Eastern thought, citing with approbation the Hindu notion of "Karma," where by each phenomenon was seen as a link in an infinite and unbroken chain stretching from the past to the future and from one sphere to another. Metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls, represented another aspect of the

---

degree more elevated, can understand what to the dog would be a fathomless mystery." Ouspensky proposed a superior zone which man ignored only because he is in the same relation to his fourth dimension as the dog is to Man. P.D. Ouspensky, Tertium Organum (1912), trans. Nicholas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 63, 214.

[47]In the vision of Tertium Organum, time must be cyclic because it can go nowhere else; and Ouspensky quoted approvingly from H.P. Blavatsky's Isis Unveiled: "all those great characters who tower like giants in the history of mankind...were but reflexed images of human types which had existed ten thousand years before." Ibid., 108.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

circular processes of time.[48]

Ouspensky believed that invisible threads bind earthly objects together. For the philosopher or artist to cultivate an inner eye capable of penetrating the hidden meanings in these earthly objects, he or she must cultivate "new parts of speech" and an infinite number of new words."[49] Both Crane and von Wiegand searched for a new vocabulary and for the hidden connections between earthly objects and the spiritual realm. The way in which Crane used factory sirens as a pun on Homeric sirens, and the transmutation of Brooklyn Bridge into a ship, a woman, a harp could be explained in terms of an Ouspenskian willingness to discover analogies (philosophical bridges) between one time and another, and so to move towards a higher dimension where all time would cease. Von Wiegand modeled the visual symbolism in her painting The Bridge after Crane's images, also striving to achieve a new symbolic language that moved beyond visible reality. Von Wiegand chose to juxtapose the early American Indian maid with a modern bridge and skyline creating, like Crane, a thread of connection between the past and the present. The star in the night sky with the light of day on the figure below defied the passing of time and created a new plane of

---

[48]Henderson, The Fourth Dimension, 114-15, 249-252, 280, 262-283.

[49]Ouspensky, Tertium Organum, 19, 137, 108-9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reality based on von Wiegand's understanding of Ouspensky.

Einstein also influenced von Wiegand's and Crane's perceptions of time and space. Hyatt Howe Waggnoer claimed that Ouspensky's work was actually "Crane's chief source of information about the new world pictured by Einsteinian physics"; and certainly Einstein's concern with the shifting nature of objects, which had previously been thought fixed in space and time, shared similarities with Ouspensky's ideas; the main difference of course being that the scientist's skeptical and materialist temper disregarded any possibility of higher consciousness or final truth.[50]

Crane and von Wiegand encountered Einstein's theories in popular culture. In the 1920s, Einstein became a familiar figure for music-hall comedians who espoused him as the champion of a world where appearance and reality never quite matched up. A popularized version of Einstein's ideas spread to all sections of society, so much so that in 1924 the French philosopher Maurice Sachs complained that bourgeoisie talked of nothing except golf and relativity.[51] And Einsteinian ideas were further disseminated by A. N. Whitehead's Science and the Modern World, which put

---

[50]Hyatt Howe Waggoner, The Heel of Elohim (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 169.

[51]Malcolm Haslam, The Real World of the Surrealists (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 99.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

relativity into a broader philosophical context.[52] Crane mentioned to Gorham Munson that he was reading the book on 5 March 1926, and suggested to von Wiegand to read it in the same year.[53]

Gurdjieff

Through Crane and the writings of Ouspensky, von Wiegand was introduced to George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff's philosophy--a mixture of Western occult, Platonic, and Rosicrucian traditions driving a spiritual movement espoused by Ouspensky.[54] Gurdjieff's teaching incorporated elements

---

[52] A. N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (1925).

[53]Williams quoted in Mike Weaver, William Carlos Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 48.

[54]The obituary in the New York Times stated his accomplishments as:

> ...In a rented chateau thirty miles from Paris, Mr. Gurdijieff presided amid Oriental trappings, over a congregation of seekers after peace and happiness from many lands. Katherine Mansfield, the novelist, spent her last days under his roof, and the late P.D. Ouspensky, mathematician-philosopher, was among his pupils...Mr. Gurdjieff brought forty of his pupils to this country in 1924, and gave demonstrations of cult dances and exercises in New York and Chicago. He planned to establish an institute here, but abandoned the project after he had been injured seriously by an automobile. He continued the Fontainebleau establishment for several years...His last years were devoted to writing about his philosophy, which held that every man was made up of three different men who did not understand one another. One of his works is to be published this winter in New York...

New York Times, 31 October 1949, in JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

from numerous spiritual and religious traditions.[55] Gurdjieff was particularly drawn to Tibetan Buddhism because of its unique blend of Tantric, Mantric, and Mudra practices, and its mixture of Sivaite mysticism, magic, and demonolatry.[56]

Von Wiegand met Gurdjieff when he visited the United

---

[55]George Ivanovitch Gurdijieff, one of the most charismatic figures of the 20th century, attracted legends as easily as disciples. It is believed that Gurdijieff's search for spiritual truth was carried out in the regions of Mongolia and Tibet where he absorbed mystical practices and teachings of the Sufis, Yogis, Melewi, Rufiah, and Persian dervishes. Gurdijieff traveled through Turkey, India, Tibet, Iran, Aremnia...(There is no question that Gurdjieff was influenced by Islamic mysticism, but at the same time he was also in a region of strong Greek and Russian Christian spirituality. His ancestry was Armenian and it is likely he was influenced by the very ancient Armenian tradition of which Nakhichevan is the sacred city. This Armenian tradition is blended with other, older, pre-Christian traditions. Not only that, there are the Assyrians, the descendants of the Chaldeans, the Aisors as they are called there. Various communities still exist which have preserved traces of the ancient Babylonian, Zoroastrian, and Mithraic mysteries and which Gurdjieff came into contact, with their own form of the Babylonian dualistic belief in the conflict of two powers in the world--the powers of good and evil, which is the basis of the Zorastrian tradition.) Thirdly, he was himself half Armenian for his mother was an Armenian. That part of the world was really more Armenian than anything. The Armenians began to preponderate as soon as you cross over the valley to present-day Armenia. The Armenians have quite separate traditions from either the Western or the Greek and Russian Orthodox Christians. J.G. Bennett, Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma (Ann Arbor, MI: McNaughton & Gunn, 1990), 10-11.

[56]Gurdjieff climbed the Mustagh pass in the spring of 1901 and lingered in Upper Tibet, preoccupied with the 'Red Hat' lamas for more than a year. He studied the Tibetan language, ritual, dance, medicine, and above all psychic techniques. James Moore, Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth, A Biography (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element, 1991), 33.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

States in 1924.[57] With thirty-five pupil-dancers, Gurdjieff sailed on 4 January 1924 on the S.S. Paris for America, where public demonstrations in New York (January-February), Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago (March) secured the interest of significant new pupils. Von Wiegand and Hart Crane attended his troup's performances in the Neighborhood Playhouse of Greenwich Village.[58] She further learned of Gurdjieff from Margaret Anderson, the founder of The Little

---

[57]In 1922 he appeared in Western Europe with a band of followers whom he had rescued from the chaos of the Russian Revolution. He established himself in a chateau in the Forest of Fontainebleau, where he founded "The Institute for Harmonious Development of Man." Gurdjieff's ideas and the lectures, which his leading follower, P.D. Ouspensky, delivered in London, attracted writers and intellectuals. In 1924, Gurdjieff and his pupils traveled to New York, where they created a sensation, leaving the celebrated editor A. R. Orage behind to preach the gospel. Then, in the middle of the 1930s, Gurdjieff appeared to quarrel with all his oldest followers. He disappeared from sight until after the second World War. In his few years remaining he emerged again the enigmatic prophet and darling of the intellectuals of Europe and America. Von Wiegand became reacquainted with his work. He died in 1949, leaving behind an enormous book published under the title All and Everything: First Series, but more usually known as Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson. James Webb, The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 18.

[58]Gurdjieff moved his troupe to the small Neighborhood Playhouse in Greenwich Village that had been lent to him by a wealthy family who were friends of Mary Mowbray-Clarke of the Sunwise Turn. Here, he began to concentrate on screening likely candidates for the Institute. The Neighborhood Playhouse was well known to New York intellectuals--Gorham Munson's wife, Elizabeth Delza, had danced there--and admission was by invitation only. Gurdjieff stood in the foyer of the theater scanning his audience. The Neighborhood Playhouse demonstrations separated the likely candidates from the less hopeful prospects. Moore, 35-37.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Review, who later published an entire book called The Unknowable Gurdjieff in 1962.[59] The friends of The Little Review made Gurdjieff's name a byword in the studios and studies of cosmopolitan Bohemia.[60]

Von Wiegand and Crane practiced Gurdjieff's theory of role playing. This technique was believed to aid in detachment from the external world. Outwardly one plays the role in which one is cast, inwardly one becomes free from the role: the object is to detach the sensation of "I" from the experiences and reactions of the person, while at the same time extending one's range by adopting unfamiliar parts. The role player must always remember the motto--"'I' am not 'it'"--he must, as Gurdjieff said, "self-remember."[61]

---

[59]Margaret Anderson, The Unknowable Gurdjieff (New York: Weiser, 1962; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). In this work Anderson described her periods of work with Gurdjieff between 1924 and 1949 in a group that consisted at different times of A.R. Orage, Jane Heap, Georgette Leblanc, Solita Solano, Kathryn Hulme, and Dorothy Caruso.

[60]Margaret Anderson, "A Letter from 'The Little Review' to 'The Little Review'," The Little Review 10 (2), Autumn and Winter 1924-1925. In correspondence between Anderson and Jane Heap the co-editors of The Little Review, Anderson and Heap comment on Gurdjieff.

Von Wiegand read Anderson's published autobiography of 1930, My Thirty Years' War: An Autobiography (New York: Covici, Friede, 1930). Here Anderson recounts her years in France with Gurdjieff, stating how her life was transformed by Gurdjeiff's teachings.

[61]The body of activity deriving from Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and Orage has become known as "the Work," and it has spread to every continent and been extraordinarily influential. Neither a church nor a sect nor a school of philosophy, it is extremely difficult to define. Webb, 20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(In von Wiegand's earlier theatrical studies with Minor White Latham she experimented with role playing.)

Von Wiegand believed the most important aspect of Gurdjieff's teachings was that knowledge existed in the form of secrets handed down among "genuine initiates," and in works of art constructed according to a definite purpose by the ancient guardians of the esoteric tradition. In Beelzebub's Tales he described an imaginary club called "The-Adherents of Legominism" dedicated to passing on wisdom by artistic means. The members of this club are supposed to have decided that they should construct their works of art--be they paintings, statues, or dances on the basis of the universal "Law of Sevenfoldness," one of the laws on which Gurdjieff based his cosmology.[62] Into works made according

---

[62]Gurdjieff said that from the absolute, the original Triad, all realities proceed. But their sequence is not the fruit of chance. The order in which they appear is determined by the fundamental Cosmic Law of Heptaparaparshinokh or Law of Seven. For Gurdjieff life is based on a series of vibrations and these movements or vibrations are controlled by the Law of Seven.

Gurdjieff compared the Law of Seven to the musical octave. The first note of the octave corresponds to the Absolute. As this is a descending scale, a shock is necessary between *do* and *si* in order for it to develop correctly. This shock is given by the very will of the Absolute. Then from *si* (all worlds) we go without difficulty to *la* (all suns), then to *sol* (sun) and *fa* (all planets). In other words it requires an 'additional shock' for the influences of the higher worlds to pass from *fa* (all planets) to *mi* (earth). Without the shock there would be a break between the earth and the other worlds. Gurdjieff states that this shock is provided by 'organic life on earth' and now the octave ends in re (the moon), then again do, which is Nothing. 'Between *All* and *Nothing* passes the ray of creation.' P.D. Ouspensky, In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching (New York:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to this system of relation and proportion, the artists would introduce deliberate departures from the rules of the system devised. These were intended to emphasize the message which the work of "objective art" was designed to convey.[63] Gurdjieff's chief concern was with the potentialities of human beings--or, more specifically, of human consciousness, by making art one could obtain a higher state of being.[64]

Von Wiegand later associated the system of relation and proportion described by Gurdjieff to the principles of Neo-plasticism. An important message in Gurdjieff's teaching for von Wiegand was that to fully emphasize the meaning of the work, one must break with the system that one had begun to emulate, thereby calling attention to the system and the true meaning of the work. Von Wiegand set out to do just that by breaking with the tenets of Neo-plasticism. (Later, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Gurdjieff became an important spiritual guide for both von Wiegand and her second husband, Joseph Freeman, who visited Gurdjieff in

---

Harcourt, Brace, 1949), 132.

Like Gurdjieff, who used the Law of Seven to create musical compositions, von Wiegand used a color theory based on the Law of Seven, a seven tone color scale, for many of her abstract compositions. For more information on Gurdjieff's Law of Seven see: Michel Waldberg, Gurdjieff: An Approach to His Ideas, trans. by Steve Cox, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 102-117.

[63]Webb, 19.

[64]Colin Wilson, The War Against Sleep: The Philosophy of Gurdjieff (Wallingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press Limited, 1980), 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

France in 1936.[65])

The mystical experience as described by Ouspensky and Gurdjieff,[66] rejected institutional allegiances and emphasized locating the source of spiritual authority in the self. This mysticism, largely associated with nature instead of sacred scripture or the church, was given a naturalistic interpretation without reference to any single religious leader or doctrine. In contrast to the East, individualism figured prominently in the Ouspensky/Gurdjieff version of Western mysticism.[67]

---

[65]Von Wiegand wrote to Freeman in 1946 shortly after Gurdjieff's death: "I was much grieved of the saint's death. You know I thought of him the last week in New York very intensely and twice started to phone. I was reading the Rmo Krishna biography. But then I said, oh he is at Lake George, I will write from Europe. Please tell me what date he died and where--I am curious if it was around that time..." (Charmion von Wiegand, Paris, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 29 August 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.)

Freeman responded: "...I have no time now to look up the date of the Saint's death--but it must have been about the time you thought of him, for the letter from his family came just after you left... The last time I saw him I think I told you it would be the last...." (Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Paris, 2 September 1949, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.)

Gurdjieff's writings were collected by the Freemans, who visited him several times in Europe. In Gurdjieff's life time he produced four books, one ballet, 300 piano pieces and some 100 Sacred Dances or 'Movements'. Moore, 1-3.

[66]Gershom Scholem, "Religious Authority and Mysticism," On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 16-17; and Raymond Nelson, "American Mysticism," in Kenneth Patchen and American Mysticism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3-23.

[67]The roots of American mysticism of the later 20th century developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, partly in reaction to Positivist

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Telegraph Pole

Crane described von Wiegand's painting, The Telegraph Pole, 1928, as a series of linked poles around the edge of the canvas with a circle of depth in the center.[68] The appearance of the telegraph pole in von Wiegand's early paintings signaled her profound interest in the occult. Hart Crane wrote on 20 August 1928: "You are energetic, Charmion! And what became of those telegraph poles on the

---

thought. The writings of William James, Edward Carpenter, and Richard Maurice Bucke expressed a strong interest in mysticism. In fact, the American avant garde widely read Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness, 1901, which provided the foundation for speculations on the relation of art to a higher reality. Richard Maurice Bucke, Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind (Philadelphia: Inns & Sons, 1901). Henderson, 179-180.

William James corresponded with the Englishman Charles Howard Hinton, who wrote The Fourth Dimension in 1904. Their letters are a record of the appeal of the fourth dimension in scientific as well as philosophical circles. As a psychologist James studied Hinton's perceptual method of realizing the fourth dimension by means of a highly developed "space sense." James was equally curious about abnormal psychology, as manifested in psychic phenomena such as clairvoyance and apparitions. For more information on Williams James see: Gay Allen Wilson, William James: Biography (New York: Viking Press, 1967); and Henderson, The Fourth Dimension, 164-172. Also see James, The Variety of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1902); and James, "The Confidences of a 'Psychical Researcher,'" American Magazine LXVIII (October 1909): 589.

[68]Hart Crane, New York, NY, to Charmion von Wiegand, Croton-on-Hudson, 20 August 1928, HC Papers, Yale University.

The location of von Wiegand's painting The Telegraph Pole of 1928 is unknown. The visual description came solely from the correspondence between Hart Crane and Charmion von Wiegand.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

edge of the crater?"[69] Theosophists and psychic researchers used the telegraph or the "wireless," as it was called, as an analogy for mental telepathy because it required the invisible field of force to overcome the finite. For example, in Man Visible and Invisible, the British Theosophist C.W. Leadbeater wrote:

> We have here (in the thought process) a kind of system of telegraphy between the physical plane and the soul; and it is important to realize that this telegraph line has intermediate sensations. It is not only from the physical plane that impressions can be received...but it is also quite capable of receiving impressions from the surrounding matter of its own plane.[70]

Two other American artists also used this subject with similar intent. Charles Burchfield, influenced by Theosophy, painted a large watercolor called The Singing Telegraph (1917). A long line of poles and quivering wires receded into a highly animated landscape.[71] Arthur Dove, influenced by Theosophy and psychic research, in 1929 painted Telegraph Pole. In his painting brightly colored yellow leaves covering the pole suggested its hidden energy,

---

[69]Hart Crane, New York, NY to Charmion von Wiegand, Croton-on-Hudson, 20 August 1928, HC Papers, Yale University.

[70]C.W. Leadbeater, Man Visible and Invisible 2d ed. (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925), 15. See also Claude Bragdon, Four-Dimensional Vistas (New York: Knopf, 1916), 110; and Rudolf Tischner, Telepathy and Clairvoyance (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1925), 191.

[71]Nancy Ketchiff, "The Invisible Made Visible: Sound Imagery in the Early Watercolors of Charles Burchfield" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

demonstrating the eternal disparity between what seems and what is.[72]

The Independent Show of 1928

Von Wiegand first exhibited The Telegraph Pole and several other occult-inspired works at the large annual salon show, The Independent Show in 1928. She vividly remembered the opening. Von Wiegand, wearing a batik blouse, talked at length with David Burliuk, who was clothed in a Chinese robe and wearing one earring. The artist, who stood lecturing in front of his pictures, quickly seduced von Wiegand to his way of viewing art and life.[73]

David Burliuk, a Russian born artist, active both as a painter and a poet, educated von Wiegand about the painters and the sources behind Russian modernist art.[74] Studying in Munich from 1902 and later a friend of Wassily Kandinsky, he exhibited in the first Blaue Reiter exhibition of 1911. In Russia he had worked in close association with Elena Ivanovna Goncharova and Mikhail Feodorovich Larionov,

---

[72]Sherrye Cohn, Arthur Dove Nature as Symbol, Studies in the Fine Arts: The Avant-Garde, No. 49, ed. Stephen C. Foster (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 57.

[73]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 13.

[74]For more information on David Burliuk see: Katherine Dreier, Burliuk (New York: The Société Anonyme, Inc., n.d.); Color and Rhyme, 1944, the publication which Burliuk founded; and Charmion von Wiegand, "A Rare Painter," Color and Rhyme 12 (January-February 1940): 7-8.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exhibiting at the first "Knave of Diamonds" show in 1910.[75] Together with poet Vladimir Mayakovsky and his brothers Vladimir and Nikolai Burliuk, David Burliuk was instrumental in creating a Russian variant of Futurism in 1911.[76] He left Russia in 1920, and after a brief residence in Japan, settled in the U.S. in 1922. In 1930 he launched an art magazine Color and Rhyme, for which von Wiegand wrote several articles, including one of the few comprehensive articles on Burliuk's philosophy of art. Burliuk, who also owned an art gallery, the Burliuk Gallery in Hampton Bays, N.Y. and exhibited with the Société Anonyme, identified with

---

[75]The Knave of Diamonds, formed in Moscow in 1910, was an artists' association and exhibition group and was for a short time an important avant garde art association. Its first exhibition, in December 1910, brought together the Burliuk brothers, Larionov, Goncharova, and Malevich. In addition, the core of the first exhibition was formed by four young artists Aristarkh Lentulov, Pietr Konchalovsky, Robert Falk, and Ilya Mashkov, who had been expelled form the Moscow Academy in 1909 for excessive devotion to the works of Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse. In 1911 Larionov, Goncharova and Malevich broke away from the Knave of Diamonds group, accusing it of being too dominated by the 'cheap Orientalism of the Paris School' and the 'Munich decadence', and founded their own association, the Donkey's Tail, to promote an art based upon native Russian inspiration. The Knave of Diamonds continued to function as an exhibition society until 1918. For more information on the Knave of Diamonds consult: Dagobert D. Runes and Harry G. Schrickel, eds. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture Encyclopedia of the Arts (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), s.v. "Russian Art," by Charmion von Wiegand.

[76]"David Burliuk introduced the simultaneous movement of the Futurists into his colorful painting designs. He was one of the first propagandists of modern art in Russia, traveling and lecturing on the subject in many cities along with the Futurist poet, Mayakovsky. In his work, primitive, mystical, revolutionary, and modern were combined in a personal symbolism of revolt." Ibid., 118.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

von Wiegand's interest in the occult, particularly Theosophy. Von Wiegand found in David Burliuk her first important contact with Russian modern art.[77] Between 1929-1932 von Wiegand, while she lived and worked in Moscow, would have ample time to study Russian art first hand.

---

[77]Charmion von Wiegand, "A Rare Painter," Color and Rhyme 12 (January-February 1940): 7-8.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER IV

RUSSIA 1929-1932

Separation

By 1929, the problems between Hermann Habicht and Charmion von Wiegand had finally reached a breaking point. Von Wiegand, spending all of her time in Greenwich Village with artists and intellectuals she had befriended over the years, virtually ignored her husband. To make matters worse, Inez Royce von Wiegand, Charmion's mother, circulated damaging rumors about her daughter. Von Wiegand wrote to her father during this difficult time:

> ...now that I have been freed from her [Mama] emotionally by the analysis, [she] has no use for me. She has spread the worst reports--equal to the ones about you in Berlin. [She says] I am living with Dr. C[lark], who has inveigled me into the situation to get our money. The fact that the doctor is as homely as a mud-fence and is a grandfather makes no difference. Also that mama wanted to marry him at first, plays a role. What makes her talk pernicious is that the doctor happens to be in the courts over an alienation of affections suit, brought by the husband of one of his patients...[1]

Von Wiegand's mother, besides accusing her of a romance with

---

[1]Charmion von Wiegand, Rowayton, CT, to Karl von Wiegand, Germany, 2 September 1927, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her psychoanalyst, Dr. Clark, also publicized Charmion's extramarital affair with Max Eastman.[2] Although her alleged relationship with Dr. Clark was false, Hermann Habicht could not ignore his wife's infidelity with Eastman. Habicht and von Wiegand, after ten years of a troubled marriage, finally

---

[2]Von Wiegand learned a great deal about Max Eastman's ideas on Marxism during her year and half relationship with Eastman. Max Eastman always considered himself a Marxist, whether writing in 1925 or in the 1930s; yet his character was not such as to encourage any profound study of Marxist doctrine. His Marxism, like himself, was fluid, simplistic, predictably unorthodox. Eastman looked at Marxism as he looked at the world about him. He rejected all dogma; he turned from all absolutes, finalities, fixed principles. Von Wiegand was consistently attracted to men who embraced ambiguity, who opposed dogma, and who were constantly searching for a sense of truth. Upon returning to America from Russia in 1927, the disillusioned Eastman found himself isolated by those who retained their enthusiasm for Socialism and for Russia. The Communists expelled him from the Workers Party; and they ostracized him with a slogan which would become an iron law: no fraternalizing with Trotskyites. "Not a single friend of mine in the revolutionary intelligentsia or among Socialists or IWW's, or the political left anywhere, took firm sides with Trotsky in his conflict with the new ruling class." Hence, like his flawed hero, Trotsky, he stood in splendid isolation, estranged from the left and from the right. Only after the Great Trials and the Russo-German pact would any significant group vindicate Eastman's early opposition and pay him homage. Von Wiegand offered Eastman friendship and support. She supported Trotsky too, although she never openly came out in defense of Trotskyism. Max Eastman wrote: "...I had a friendly meeting in the home of Charmion von Wiegand and Hermann Habicht on MacDougal Alley--a center of warm gay life that for a time became almost our home when Eliena and I came to the city. Only the strict active Communists, the party militants and finished bigots like Bob Minor, then regarded the barrier against me as absolute." Max Eastman, Love and Revolution: My Journey Through an Epoch (New York: Random House, 1964), 72.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

separated.[3] Von Wiegand choose to take the path of many intellectuals of the time--she sailed for an extended trip to Russia.[4]

Russia

Von Wiegand first participated in an organized tour by the Open Road, Inc., specially arranged for teachers from the United States to study the Russian people and culture.

---

[3]The letters from von Wiegand to her husband, Hermann Habicht, indicate that she was indeed having an affair with Max Eastman, and from all accounts von Wiegand was emboldened to end her marriage because of the more passionate affair with Eastman. Shortly after she left Habicht her relationship with Eastman ended. She wrote in 1929: "Enclosed is a letter for Max. I can't take it to Russia. Don't give it to him. Maybe I never will. Keep it safe for me, in case I should want to let him have it...."(Charmion von Wiegand, Leningrad, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 23 July 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.) "Please let me know M[ax]'s plans. I don't think I shall attempt to cross his path. But I do want to know how he is feeling and what he is doing. Hope it's work and not flirtation. All my life at home seems to have slipped away..."(Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Europa, Leningrad, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 31 July 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.) ...As far as M[ax] is concerned, I am all right when he's not there. I don't understand that I don't miss him very much. I should like someone to love but I don't feel a personal loss over him. Perhaps it's because he never gave very much or very often. I miss mostly his beauty--just the joy of seeing his lovely face--and its more an aesthetic loss than the emotional one...(Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 8 August 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.) With the end of the marriage and a bad love affair behind her von Wiegand looked to Russia as a logical place to renew herself.

[4]Open Road, Inc. was a travel bureau based at 20 West 43rd Street in New York that organized educational and cultural tours of the USSR. For more information on Open Road and its specific tours see: Open Road Inc., The Open Road in Soviet Russia (New York, 1932).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand reported at the beginning of her journey:

> The tour is going to be awful. There are 16 people... It is all badly organized. We have five school teachers--and one of the most dreadful females I've ever known--the loud-mouth cantankerous American at her worst. More time is wasted trying to keep such a crowd together.[5]

The six-week venture focused on the major cities--Leningrad and Moscow, and included a boat tour through the Upper Volga region with stops at Nizhni-Novgorod, Kazan, Samara, and Saratov.[6] The boat trip ended in Stalingrad and continued on by rail to Rostov-on-Don with a visit to the State Grain

---

[5]Charmion von Wiegand, Helsingfors, Finland, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 29 July 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[6]"The first time as a tourist I traveled clear to the Black Sea and spent six weeks on the Black Sea. And it was wonderful to see. I think Russia has many wonderful things just as a landscape, you know, the size, the enormous feeling of that tremendous sky. And I liked Georgia very much. It's beautiful because it's so Oriental. I saw all that. Went through the Ukraine. And then as a correspondent I went with about twenty other people and we had a tour. We covered pretty nearly the same route. I mean we went to Kiev and through the Southern Ukraine. And we went on down, we went on the Georgian highway and we went to the Crimea that time, to Yalta. That was very fascinating because there's an old Tartar city right back of Yalta that made a great impression on me. It's like a miniature Alhambra. Pushkin wrote about it. It's very beautiful. Bakhehisaray it's called. And next to it was a very fascinating Jewish cemetery with old stones with the Hebrew and leaning and they all had something like turbans on the top which I thought was very strange. That country is absolutely fascinating in a way that I feel about Italy, that it's sort of a God-given land just physically. And the customs of the people were nice that way. They had all that old formalism of a feudal life which I'm sure is completely obliterated by now, but still existed then. So to me Russia was a great experience. Also the people were very interesting." Charmion von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 94.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Farm "Verblud," on to Vladikavkaz and then by automobile across the Caucasus Mountains on the Georgian Military Highway to Tiflis. By rail the group traveled to Batum, with a Black Sea steamer trip to Yalta, and from Yalta by car to the Southern Coast of the Crimea to Sevastopol and then by rail to Dniepropetrovsk with a visit to Dnieprostroi Hydro-Electric Development before ending in Kiev.[7]

At the time of von Wiegand's trip, Josef Stalin had just gained the upper hand over his last opponent, Nikolay Ivanovich Bukharin, former editor of Pravda and a leader in the Bolshevik movement.[8] Bukharin failed to uphold a peasant economy, a failure marked by the destruction of the wealthier peasants and by the collectivization of agriculture. The newly collectivized peasants, because of their innovative farm machinery, were now considered by the Stalinists to be industrialized, and therefore to have developed a point of view like that of the proletarian class--a fact which now made them worthy subjects for Stalinist art. This renewed emphasis on the proletariat brought about a revival of the proletarian culture movement.

---

[7]Open Road, Inc., The Open Road in The Soviet Union, 21.

[8]In this same year, 1929, Jay Lovestone and Benjamin Gitlow were removed from the leadership of the American Communist party and expelled with their friends as Bukharinists and Right deviationists. For more information on the history of the Communist party in the United States see: Theodore Draper, American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period (New York: Viking Press, 1960).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand in her journalism pieces of the 1920s recorded these changes within the Communist party--its art and literature.[9]

Leningrad

On her arrival in Leningrad, von Wiegand wrote Habicht:

> ...I have never seen a more beautiful city--architecturally speaking. The buildings are 18th century or Baroque chiefly--but of such freedom and delicacy of design and of such lovely color--orange and ochre and Venetian red and pale blue and fading pinks that I can think only of Venice to compare it with, but it is less oriental, less intimate, more stately and more elegant. You can imagine how lovely the straight lines and the play of fanciful ornament with color is against this blue sky with great mother of pearl clouds rolling up in huge banks from the Gulf of Finland. But it is all in a state of dilapidation--crumbling to pieces--the first visible and tangible evidence of the collapse of the old regime. And through the elegant wide streets parades the motliest and most proletarian crowd I have ever witnessed. The contrast is appalling and amazing. There are no fine people on the streets, no style, few autos, only funny little red street cars crowded and dingy threading their way around. And it is uncomfortable as the devil.[10]

She continued describing the Russian and his way of life:

> ...Really the Russian is a different human being....the Russian is absolutely unaesthetic...life is greater always to them than art, concrete reality to geometric abstraction...They are as careless in their buildings as in keeping up their households--cheap plaster--no

---

[9]For more information on Russia's Communist party and the art and literature it produced in Stalinist Russia see: Vera Dunham, In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and Victor Arwas, The Great Russian Utopia (London: Academy Editions, 1993).

[10]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Europa, Leningrad, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 31 July 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> construction and lots of decoration. But it's all so loving, so human, so tender--they have emotional capacities that our mob would never dream of. The faces of the people in the cattle cars were so real, so human today. They suffer and it leaves no trace of cynicism, no hard lines. The face of a beggar I saw today made me feel humble--he did not beg of me, but in his pocket he had sunflower seeds and he fed the pigeons. A beggar feeding the birds. I thought of St. Francis. He might have been somewhat the same--blue eyes and a scraggly blonde beard and scrawny features. I thought of Alyocha today and that wonderful scene in the monastery in Brothers Karamazov...[11]

Several weeks in Russia, encountering the difficulties in daily life, did not squelch von Wiegand's passion for the country Russia and its people.[12]

The group took part in many activities in Leningrad. Von Wiegand saw the Pavlov Institute--where she witnessed a dissection of a dog's head. She also spent time at the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Museum of Revolution--where she viewed models of prisons and cells and life-like effigies of prisoners, the opponents to Stalin, in captivity with photos of all the exiles and the various groups who worked

---

[11]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 16 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[12]"The more I see, the more I know it would take months and years to understand this land. And the idiots who come and write books in a few weeks stay [and] simply never scratch the surface. I think the whole thing is incomparably great in history. Our thing we never think of--its a young movement--its really collegiate in atmosphere. That combined with the scenery and timelessness of Asia, it is utterly theatrical." Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 19 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

underground for years.[13] When she went with the tour to the Hermitage they were under the strict supervision of a guide and other Soviet officials. Von Wiegand wrote her complaints about the program and her first trip to the museum: "Every time you stopped to look at something you wanted to see you were prodded along and told not to hang back and you had to look at the case the guide selected."[14] Von Wiegand managed to break away from the group to view many modern works in the collection that were not a part of the standard tour. Through her perseverance, she engineered more trips to the Hermitage alone for study and contemplation.[15]

Volga

During the middle of the Russian sojourn, von Wiegand and Billy Lyons were the only two members of this American group to spend a week traveling through the Volga region. Lyons, twenty-five years old, the wife of a United Press correspondent, and a former actress and dancer, shared von Wiegand's love of the theater. Lyons assisted von Wiegand on the trip by speaking fluent Russian. (Von Wiegand only spoke

---

[13]Charmion von Wiegand, Leningrad, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, 31 July 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Charmion von Wiegand, Leningrad, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 4 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

what she referred to as kitchen Russian. Sufficient vocabulary to shop and order in restaurants, but not accomplished enough to communicate on an intellectual level.) Suspecting that they would enjoy each other's company on the journey, Floyd and B. Marie Dell had introduced Lyons and von Wiegand before they went to Russia.[16] (Floyd Dell was an editor of The Masses and lived near the Habichts in Croton-on-Hudson.)

The rest of the tour group had opted out of the Volga adventure due to the difficulties and hardship of the travel. Von Wiegand wrote to Hermann Habicht on her return to Moscow after their trip:

> It was wonderful if hard. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Most Americans find it is a bore and so uncomfortable. The latter is true but if you want comfort you might as well move on to Berlin. So I say comfort be damned--I love this place--and even if I have had my weak moments, the more I stay the better I like it. I think two years here would spoil me for any other country in the world!!! If I knew the language I don't think I should want to leave.[17]

In Nizhni-Novgorod, the first stop on the boat tour, the passengers spent four hours touring the Kremlin. Although this would have been an important site for the majority of the travelers, von Wiegand filled that day's letter with paragraph after paragraph about the small Russian towns seen from the boat. Von Wiegand preferred a distant

---

[16]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 29 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[17]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

idealized view of Russia to the up-close exploration of the towns and cities:

> ...seen in the distance they are fairy cities enchanting as magical mirages with their golden domes against the wide turquoise sky--and how wide the sky is here! But seen close they are a mess of dusty and dilapidated buildings with courts full of refuse and streets thronged with ragged and dirty masses. [18]

The boat they took on the tour was "a poor edition of a Hudson steamer, but really very clean" reported von Wiegand to Habicht.[19] With no bedding on the ship, each night the two women went to bed wrapped in literally everything that they had brought along. Part way through the journey Lyons grew very sick and became bed ridden. When von Wiegand wasn't having to look after her companion she turned to the Russian passengers for conversation and friendship. Many she found spoke a little English. One of the most important events of the trip was meeting a young official in the Stalin government, known only in von Wiegand's letters as Sergeii, "who looks like a real mujik with his carroty hair and red face with a snub nose and almond green eyes out of which all the goodness and humor in the world shines."[20] He, like von Wiegand, was on a holiday. Von Wiegand befriended

---

[18]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 19 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[19]Charmion von Wiegand, Leningrad, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 27 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[20]Charmion von Wiegand, Leningrad, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 29 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

this young man because he was one of the few Russians who spoke fluent English. Of their first evening together von Wiegand wrote: "In his queer and broken and very proletarian English he made me understand something of the nature of the Russian people."[21] This was the first of many evenings together, and Von Wiegand and Sergeii became lovers shortly after their return to Moscow.

Von Wiegand made many literal pencil sketches of the changing scenery, but it was difficult with the boat going twenty knots an hour.[22] Her descriptions from letters reveal the content of these sketches:

> I shall always carry these scenes [of the Volga] with me...it is lovely--first the great monotonous stream wide and heavy between low banks at first and then later quite high hills forested and finally, and endless steppe. And such a sky that stretches out into infinity and the smell of the earth and a billion stars over monasteries and churches dotting the immense wastes! Later in the Samara region came the wheat fields and villages--brown drab herds of cottages folded in the hollows of the banks around a big church--looking often like a herd of brown cattle following after a great white steer.[23]

A few of these pencil, watercolor, and oil sketches made on the boat survive today in the artist's estate.

Untitled (Volga), 1929 (Fig. 2) depicts the brown cottages located along the banks of the river. A white domed

---

[21]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 29 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Charmion von Wiegand Moscow to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 18 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cathedral looms in the background. The sketch is roughly executed in violet, sienna, green, and white oil paint on canvas. Minimal consideration is given to an accurate depiction of the perspective of the buildings. Instead, von Wiegand contrasts the straight, strong lines of the tower and dome of the cathedral with the leaning structures of the small cottages and buildings on the shore, accentuating their imperfections. Their rickety construction pales in the shadow of the church's elegance and strength.

One of von Wiegand's favorite memories of the trip was swimming in Samara. She wore only bottom trunks and a cap. The naked peasant women on the beach tittered, and rolling over commented "what a costume," quite unaware of their nakedness. Her companion, Sergeii, explained that it was like going swimming in a necktie only. Von Wiegand wrote: "Russian modesty is awfully strange and incomprehensible to a foreigner."[24] Untitled (Volga), c. 1929, (Fig. 3) depicts small nude female figures bathing along the river's edge, oblivious to the gaze of a stranger on a passing boat.

Black Sea

After the Volga adventure, von Wiegand continued on the tour south with Billy Lyons, Sergeii and other friends to Caucasus on the Black Sea. Von Wiegand reported:

---

[24]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 29 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> ...That first trip of mine I went with Russians to the Black Sea. Some were Poles, some were Russians, most of them must have been Communists. They were intellectuals. I didn't even know that some of them held very high positions in the government. It didn't mean a thing to me...[25]

Von Wiegand's Untitled (Black Sea), 1929 (Fig. 4) depicts an agricultural village, probably Baku, which was inspired by a side excursion on the Open Road tour. The white domed church stands out on the drab sienna-brown landscape with its dark gray windmills and small tan and brown cottages. In this work no people are present, only the hay mounds indicate the worker of the field.

The absence of people in von Wiegand's drawings and paintings troubled her and her Russian friends who viewed her work. Von Wiegand felt stifled by the lack of privacy in this vast country. She had difficulty adjusting to the Russian way of life:

> This Russian life without privacy is the hardest thing to get used to...Only they have no need of separateness, no use of keeping their ego in a little tight compartment. They really feel close to each other.[26]

Von Wiegand, who could not maintain a comfortable distance from others in her daily life, refused to include the people in her landscapes, allowing the solitude she craved to be present in her paintings.

Russian friends of von Wiegand sharply criticized her

---

[25]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 91.

[26]Charmion von Wiegand, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 31 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for not making the subject of her drawings and paintings people. She had difficulty accepting her friends' disapproval, but explained her position to Habicht:

> I just couldn't have born it five years ago, nor the art due to an utter indifference to the object. All our world is built on the cult of the object--it explains capitalism, possessions, also our lovely art. You can't have great art really unless you love the object outside of yourself--at least you can't have plastic arts--and in this the Russians fail. Literature is different. It deals with man and in this the Russian is superlative. I'm just so excited about this different attitude and if I hadn't been analyzed I never would have stood it...[27]

Although von Wiegand intellectually accepted the importance of the human subject in Russian art, she had no interest in creating figurative compositions.

Von Wiegand's new friendships--particularly her love interest Sergeii--and material for her writing and art held her in Russia for another six months. She wrote to Hermann Habicht, her ex-husband and financier of her original trip: "Tomorrow the tour ends and I haven't the vaguest notion what I shall do or where I shall stay. I have only the desire--painting."[28] Habicht assisted von Wiegand financially so she could continue living in Moscow, while she stayed with friends and studied her art.

---

[27]Ibid.

[28]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 8 August 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Six Months of Painting

Moscow became an important source of inspiration for her paintings:

> Moscow is a beautiful city--not as exquisite as Leningrad by any means because it never was planned so perfectly but the churches are divine. They simply set me wild with their color and form. I think there are 1600 here. Some have been pulled down. It's a divine place to spend 6 months. It will take four weeks to get into the ropes.[29]

Von Wiegand traveled outside of the city of Moscow in search of contrasts of past and future, a continuing theme in her painting and writing during her Russian period. She juxtaposed the modern factory, against the life of the agrarian peasant. After von Wiegand's Volga trip she wrote some of these impressions, which formed the basis for her visual expression during 1929:

> I love the arid looking but really fertile plains of the Ukraine--tawny gold against a great grey sky and broken by patches of ploughed fields jetty black and coal. Here and there was a field bright emerald green where the new sprouts of the late crop were darting up the little Ukrainian houses with their thatched steep roofs, their white plaster walls and usually 2 windows painted around with bright blue look like wide eyed children peeping over the fence. They reminded me of the fairy-books of my childhood--especially when they nestle where the willows grow. They look exactly like the house the old witch lived in. And there suddenly in the midst of those grains, the tall chimneys of a great factory arise or the pyramidal core of a slag mountain and a black coal mine would slide by, or great fires would glow out of the busy kilns. That's what I love--the theatric contrasts here--rural life of the middle ages where the people still huddle in villages and go out to till the soil--and modern industrial life with its great flaming chimneys and its barracks of working men's houses. The fifteenth century and the

---

[29]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> 20th century shake hands and all that's happened in between drops away. You hear the factories--the new ones and they are chiefly new ones--are more modern than ours and they rise unimpeded on the plain and can be seen for miles like new and strange giants.[30]

Von Wiegand painted the factory and peasants in the field right on the spot. Her work was fairly realistic, but had a colorful abstract style related more to the work of Germans, such as Kirchner and Nolde, than to her Russian contemporaries. Her industrial scenes, the subject matter of social realist art, were always executed in an expressionistic style, romantically conceived and devoid of people.

The paintings of the official leader of the Russian romantic style Karl Bryullov (1799-1852), often called the "Russian Delacroix," inspired von Wiegand's romantic spirit.[31] Viewing Bryullov's work in Moscow at the Hermitage, von Wiegand particularly admired his large historical canvas, *The Last Days of Pompeii*.[32]

By studying painting in the various museums and befriending artists whose work she admired, von Wiegand continued her unconventional art training in Moscow. Jure

---

[30]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 19 October 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[31]The son of a skilled carver, Bryullov entered the Academy at an early age and was sent to Rome by the newly founded society for the Encouragement of Artists. For more information on Karl Bryullov see: Charmion von Wiegand, "Russian Arts," 117.

[32]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Labas was one of the Russian painters whom von Wiegand emulated. "The one painter I was anxious to meet here--Labas--is in white Russia and won't be back for a month. You probably don't remember his work but he had several in the New York exhibition--one a very amusing rail road station."[33] She met Labas and other painters and sculptors, not only from Russia, but also from America, France, and Germany. One of the first friendships she developed was with the American sculptor, Adolf Wolff. "I've met a sculptor, Wolff, who plays around the village. We are going sketching together. He asked me to share his room (it's done in Russia) but I declined naturally. He is going to introduce me to some painters..."[34] Wolff was an academically trained artist whose works expressed traditional images of nude female figures in marble and bronze. Von Wiegand was not interested in Wolff's sculptures, but he was an entrée to the Moscow art world, introducing her to the four established artist societies of Moscow.[35]

---

[33]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 13 November 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[34]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 19 October 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[35]For more information on Wolff see Francis Naumann and Paul Avrich, "Adolf Wolff: Poet, Sculptor and Revolutionist, But Mostly Revolutionist," Art Bulletin 67 (Summer 1985): 486-500.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Moscow Art World

During von Wiegand's six-month residence in Moscow she met and befriended a large portion of the city's artistic community:[36] "I have now got in connection with them [the art community] and know where to go." On November 11, 1929 von Wiegand relayed:

> Today I had a very interesting morning with one of the heads of the artists organization and saw some lovely pictures too. Of course the situation of the artists here is entirely different. No one could dream of living from selling pictures. There is no one to sell to unless to the government and that immediately limits the subject matter and the freedom of expression. No artist can afford to live and go his own way in experimentation. Some now do illustration on children's books--the latter are quite lovely and much superior to ours. They also experiment in printing--using different size letters and placing them at very curious angles on the page...[37]

Since 1927, naturalistic representation was in vogue again and abstract and expressionist tendencies in art were declining rapidly. An emphasis on easel painting led to the formation of new groups such as The New Society, Four Arts (OST), and the Society of Easel Painters (NIJ). The formation of the Artists' Association of Revolutionary Russia (AKKhR) was at odds with the avant-garde art, and it tended to identify with the New Economic Policy, the reintroduction of capitalism in order to restart the

---

[36]Von Wiegand through friendships and her museum research learned the history of Russian art, which later formed the basis of her essay, "Russian Art and Architecture." 115-120.

[37]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 11 November 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

shattered economy begun in March 1921.[38] It had the largest membership of any group and embraced artists of all schools and tendencies. Many members of former groups like the Jack of Diamonds[39] and the World of Art[40] joined AKKhR and thereby received a yearly income for doing pictures that could be bought and reproduced by the government for wide distribution among the people. These pictures were necessarily illustrative and propagandistic.[41]

---

[38]For more information on the interrelationships of the various art societies in Russia consult Natal'ia Adaskina, "The Place of Vkhutemas in the Russian Avant-Garde," in The Great Utopia, 290-292.

[39]Four years after Cézanne's death, his first Russian followers founded a group called "Jack of Diamonds," which included Kontschalovsky, Rodestvensky, Lentulov, Yakulov, Falk, Larionov, and Burliuk. Charmion von Wiegand, "Russian Arts," 115.

[40]Von Wiegand described the "World of Art" group as organized as a protest against the Wanderers in 1890 and originally included both the fantastic and realistic Impressionists. Its leader, Alexander Benois, as well as many of the others, had spent time in Paris. "Art for art's sake" was the slogan of the group, and they stood for interpretation rather than imitation of nature. The decorative artists included Leon Bakst, Somov, Golovin, Benois, Nicholas Roerich, Debuschinsky, Sudeikine, Stelletski, and Remisoff. Schoukhaev, Jacovlev, Sorine, and Boris Grigoriev were interested in portraiture. In Russia this new decorative art had an important influence on the graphic arts, book illustration, mural painting, as well as on the theater. Ibid., 120.

[41]The first five years of the Soviet regime were the most creative period of artistic activity in the history of Russia. But the increasing difficulties resulting from the Civil War and the economic upheaval, led to the New Economic Policy of 1921 (the NEP). Private buyers and patrons reappeared and a market for traditional art was re-established. The growing demand for portraits, landscapes, and genre brought the older schools to the fore again. The change was also apparent in the public exhibitions where

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The aesthetics of AKKhR revived that of the old Wanderers.[42] The main difference lay in the choice of theme. This government-sponsored movement's program exalted revolution, its history, struggles, and triumph in the style of 19th century naturalism. It became known as "heroic realism." Von Wiegand saw the exhibitions sent by the AKKhR all over Russia on a great scale, attracting thousands of people who had never before visited an art gallery. The

---

traditional art was again displayed.

Von Wiegand learned that the government, in need of funds for more vital necessities, withdrew a great deal of its support from the modern artists. Many were forced into the applied arts in order to live. Others, like Kandinsky, Gabo, Pevsner, Chagall, and Burliuk went abroad. Only a few returned to Russia like Lissitzky. The artists belonging to the extreme left were gradually pushed in the background, lost their official positions, and their work was withdrawn from public view. Ibid., 118.

[42]The Wanderers were part of the progressive social movement in Russia which was directed against the growing absolutism of the Czar. But following the assassination of Alexander II by the Nihilists, his son, Alexander III inaugurated a period of reaction and repressions. Censorship put a stop to all social propaganda in art. An era of official slavophilism and a return to orthodoxy began. The reactionary atmosphere was reflected in painting by a change of theme. Religious subject matter, national and historical scenes and landscapes became popular. The program of the Wanderers was didactic and social. Realism was to them a means to an end: to bring art to the people and to inspire and enlighten them, just as the various radical parties in Russia were seeking to enlighten them politically. For this reason, the Wanderers attached far more importance to the moral and literary aspect of art than to the aesthetic. In their outlook they were part of the whole social tendency of the time which had such a significant impact on the visual arts. For twenty years they dominated the scene and exercised a great educational effect by sending exhibitions into many cities where prior to this art was unknown. The chief painters of the group were V.V. Vereschagin, Ilya Repin, Vladimir Makovsky, W. Polenov, and Lebediew. Ibid., 119.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exhibitions were often dedicated to a single theme; they depicted subjects like May Day, factory workers, Red Army life, collectivisation. AKKhR also arranged travelling scholarships for artists, who were commissioned to visit different parts of the country and to set down their pictorial record of contemporary life.

The First Five Year Plan initiation was considered so important that it became the main theme for Soviet art. While some of the artists still painted in styles reminiscent of the now defunct modern movements, the main current of art rolled backward with the same swiftness as it had gone forward, moving from Cubism back to Expressionism and Impressionism to Realism in which naturalistic and romantic elements were combined. The pictures of modern artists like Malevich, Kandinsky, and Lissitzky gradually disappeared even from the state museums like the Tretyiakov Gallery in Moscow.

Von Wiegand spent most of her time with the Artists' Association of Revolutionary Russia (AKKhR)Society.[43] She

---

[43]Early in 1922 a group of artists among them Aleksandr Grigorev, Evgenii Katsman, Sergei Malyutin and Pavel Radimov, organized the Society of Artists of Revolutionary Russia. After their first group exhibition in Moscow, Exhibition of Pictures by Artists of the Realist Direction in Aid of the Starving, the Society was renamed Assotsiatsiya Khudozhnikov Revolyutsionnoi Rossii (Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia), i.e., AKhRR. The primary aim of its members was to present revolutionary Russia in a realistic manner by depicting the everyday life of the proletariat, the peasantry, the Red Army, etc. In restoring these themes to the pictures they returned to the traditions of 19th century Realists and came

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

wrote:

> They are god-awful painters and I saw some terrible frescoes in one of the caserines--feeble, inept, and imitative. The young man who took me was so nice and naive and he explained everything with enthusiasm. Their point of view is different entirely. The subject alone is valuable--the subject must relate to life of today. They are communists--and "keep a strict political line" as he said. They carried not long ago in a parade 3 banners--a nude, a still life, a church--each crossed out. The old subjects are dead. The idea is grand but as long as they have no tradition developed the pictures are terrible. But they point the way and I like them better than the more expert ones, who follow the church tradition here.[44]

Von Wiegand thought oil painting was doomed as an art, being a product of capitalistic society and saw the AKKhR's focus on fresco painting as a logical outgrowth of a communist society.[45] Like so many in the Russian avant garde, von

---

out in opposition to the Leftists. In order to acquaint themselves with proletarian reality many of the AKhRR members visited factories, iron foundries, railroad depots, shipyards, etc. By the mid 1920s AKhRR was the most influential single body of artists in Russia, having affiliations throughout the country, its own publishing house, and enjoying direct government support. In 1928 its name changed to Assotsiatsiya Khudozhnikor Revolyutsii (Association of Artists of the Revolution), i.e., AkhR, and in 1929 it established its own journal, Iskusstv'o v Massy, (Art for the Masses). In 1932, together with other art and literary groups AkhR was dissolved. For more information consult: The Great Utopia; The Russian & Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932 (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992); and Dimtrii Vladimirovich, Russian Art. From Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990).

[44]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 17 November 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[45]Anyway I believe oil painting...will die with the decay of the system that produced it. The attempt to do fresco again shows an instinctive feeling that oil easel pictures have no place here." Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand did not see why easel pictures, a product of capitalistic society, should exist at all in a communistic community.[46] They belong to the Renaissance and the rise of individualism. Von Wiegand felt some other new artistic technique would arise representing the Communist ideals, such as mural painting.[47]

Von Wiegand was invited to exhibit with the Artists' Association of Revolutionary Russia (AKKhR), whom she referred to as the "real soviet society." She described them as: "efficient, energetic and enthusiastic and they want to be Russian and proletarian. But they are terrible painters--most of them. They are only interested in the subject."[48] She liked their ideas and believed that they were right in endeavoring to break away from European tradition, but their philosophy was extremely dogmatic.[49] Von Wiegand's experience with the Russian avant garde molded her aesthetics. On her eventual return to the United States she found that the Mexican muralists, the social

---

[46]According to von Wiegand, the Russian really had no need for art in the present culture. "The artistic person is necessarily of the old regime no matter what his convictions are, even if he is a communist. The only source of his art is the past--the only roots. The new has no roots." Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 3 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[47]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 25 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 23 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

surrealists, and many of the young American abstract painters were producing her ideal of "Communist art."

Plein Air Painting

Von Wiegand always used her free days to go out and paint.[50] She painted primarily landscape subjects, influenced by late 19th and early 20th-century modern artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and André Derain--whose works were prominently displayed in Russian collections.[51] Von Wiegand also studied the works of the Western artists Cézanne and Picasso. She wrote:

> I see the gorgeous pictures of Cézanne, of Picasso what a technique! Picasso is my new love--a really tragic great artist--and I never found him before. Too cerebral, too sophisticated and trying to find the way to the new. Trying to be a pioneer but with all the finesse and cultivation of the end of a civilization...[52]

Von Wiegand had developed a new appreciation of Picasso

---

[50]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 93.

[51]The Moscow collection of the Western Museum contained numerous works by Pablo Picasso, Vincent van Gogh, and André Derain. For more information see A. Loginova, Art Treasures of Moscow Museums, trans. Neilian and Angus E. Roxburgh (Moscow: Sovetsky Khudozhnik, 1980); and Boris Ionovich Brodskii, The Art Treasures, trans. Vladimir Friedman (Moscow: Izabraziklnoye Iskusstovo, 1991).

According to art historian Virginia Rembert, Street Scene in Black Sea, 1930 (fig. 4) oil on canvas, was influenced by Derain's Drying of Sails (fig. 5), which the artist saw in the Morosof Collection in Moscow. Virginia Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," Woman's Art Journal (Fall 1983/Winter 1984): 30.

[52]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 3 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

because of her exposure while in Moscow to the contemporary European art trends. Her exposure to these modern artists came from the journal Der Sturm available in Moscow.[53] From reading this publication she also came to admire the works of the German expressionists Kirchner and Nolde.[54]

Although von Wiegand was quite productive during these six months, many obstacles stood in the way of plein air painting. She wrote in a letter:

> I have only the desire--painting. The difficulties are almost insurmountable and the possibilities in the way of subject matter endless. But I can't walk or get on a street car with my painting things (they are jammed) and the taxis are scarce as hare's teeth. They say there are about 19 in town.[55]

It was easier to carry pencils and paper on the street car than oil and canvas. Most of her Moscow work is in the more portable mediums of color pencil and watercolor: "I can't do oil here on the streets and have become quite expert with a

---

[53]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 11 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[54]Der Sturm was a journal founded by Herwarth Walden in Berlin in 1910 and ran until 1932. The magazine was a leading organ for avant garde art in Germany. Walden supported and promoted German Expressionism, publishing reproductions of the works of the Brücke and the Blaue Reiter. He helped to introduce Futurism to Germany, publishing translations of the Futurist manifestos. He also introduced Cubism and included in the journal a statement by Delaunay of the Orphist theories. For more information on Der Sturm consult Rose-Carol Washton Long, German Expressionism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 55-56, 64, 141, 181; and Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting (Berkeley: University of California, 1957, 1974), 250-66, 271-3.

[55]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 8 August 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

pencil its [sic] the driest medium, you know, I always detested it."[56]

Whether due to the change of surroundings or her medium, much to von Wiegand's own surprise abstract forms appeared in her work. Here in Russia, surrounded by an art that emphasized the human subject in a realistic style, von Wiegand wrote:

> I have no interest in the human scene as such, here where I should rejoice in the wealth of material, but keep looking for abstract forms only--great simple shapes--devoid of detail and of human interest, even of decoration. The avid relish I got out of the Harmon-machine shops has vanished utterly. Well no use worrying--only its a shame just here in a milieu which was suited to my style as nothing else could be...[57]

Her subjects, largely churches and factories devoid of the human element, were laid out in broad areas of color and broken down into geometric forms of rectangles, circles, and triangles:

> ...I am painting a small picture--the combination of churches and factories is simply enthralling. I sit in the courtyard of the Deuss's--the Hearst man here--and an iron fence protects me from the public. But there are at least a dozen children inside so it doesn't go so well.[58]

Symbolic influence filtered into Von Wiegand's oeuvre:"...I'm doing a good picture at last. Denis's secretary arranged to get me on a balcony in a Russian

---

[56]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 16 August 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 27 August 1929, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

family. Its a little circle in the arms of a great fantasy--Modern Russia embracing the old..."[59]

The Factory

Von Wiegand's painting in the spirit of AKhRR flirted with "social realism," a term not yet coined in Russia in 1929, but a popular Russian style of the time. This kind of realism (which so largely reflected Stalin's attitude toward art) meant art suited to socialism, the period which Marx called the first stage of communism. Such art is expected to have both national and international connotations and to be realistic enough for the masses to understand it without just copying nature. Furthermore, by definition it is to be socially useful, socially dynamic, and educational; so that--as Stalinists insisted--it can be produced only by socially-minded artists, each of whom is participating in the daily activities and emotions of the community as a whole.[60] Von Wiegand later described this period of art:

> In answer to the universal demand created by the "new stress on the individual," portraiture has again become popular. There are countless portrait painters who make a living painting portraits of Soviet leaders, workers, Red Army men, Soviet heroes and even pretty Soviet girls in the style of Soviet Realism. These portraits are often inclined toward heroic and dramatic

---

[59]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 16 August 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[60]For further information on Russian "social realism" consult James D. Bloom, Left Letters: The Culture Wars of Mike Gold and Joseph Freeman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 67-75.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> gesture. Many of the works reveal so little knowledge of modern composition and color that they are close to American magazine illustration and have the same appeal of saccharine sweetness and anecdotal detail.[61]

Von Wiegand felt great disappointment when her art did not meet the Communist standards. Often she wrote that her work was too realistic, a copy of nature, without being instructional or socially useful. Von Wiegand's letters record her constant questioning of her style and subject. "What right have I to paint unless I say something about life?"[62] With issues of style foremost in her mind, she wrote: "I can't accept the French technique fully--developed from a completed civilization--the last flower of its culture. I can't follow Matisse."[63] Instead von Wiegand looked to Russian artists of the present and of the past for role models.

She described her first works created in Moscow as a reaction against her new hostile environment. Von Wiegand created what she called "a little girl's fantasy, an escape built in the remnants of the past--a past beyond France, beyond the Renaissance."[64] She went back to the medieval

---

[61]Von Wiegand, "Russian Arts," 118.

[62]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Gagarapisch, Gagri on the Black Sea, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 25 September 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Gagarapisch, Gagri on the Black Sea, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 26 September 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

origins of Russian art leaving the traditional subjects of still life, landscape, and figure far behind. But painting the small Russian medieval village buildings in an expressionistic style did not please her, nor did it fit with a communist view of the role of art.

She announced to her Russian friends that her work must look to the future. Her subject matter shifted from the small medieval Russian village to the new large 20th-century factories of Russia. Von Wiegand composed this new center of life, the factory, in colored pencil on thick sheets of watercolor paper. Untitled (Factory), c. 1929 (Fig. 5) is one of a few watercolors von Wiegand created of the Russian factory outside of Moscow.[65] The buildings of the factory are simply laid in with planes of red, and sienna rectangles and triangles. A cylindrical smokestack rises above the horizontal buildings of the factory. No smoke or people give any indication of life or operation to this industrial site. The building through its earth tone coloration and horizontal orientation appears to harmonize with the landscape. The factory functions as another striation within the composition, which moves from the horizontal band of water, to a brown horizontal ribbon of earth, to a lush green streak of grass with the sienna factory wedged between the earth and the sky. In 1929, von Wiegand, like many of

---

[65]This is one of ten works from her Russian period, which survives today in the artist's estate.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Russian artists, struggled to find a content and form that represented the ideals of Communism.

It was not until 1932 that the label "Socialist realism" was first applied to art. Stalin is said to have first used the term late in 1932 when a group of writers promised him that they would not make formalistic experiments, but would hold high the flag of realism. "Say rather of socialist realism," replied Stalin.[66] Stalin's combination of nationalism and an international "socialism" gave rise to his insistence that all of Soviet culture must be "national in form and socialist in content," the definition applied to the social realist style of art and literature.[67]

The conversations von Wiegand had with her lover, Sergeii along with his writings, influenced her attitudes. He told her that when one enters a factory, he is "going home."[68] Von Wiegand wrote to Habicht of her enthusiasm for industrial Russia: "Everything radiates from there [the factory]. Our group [referring to their collection of

---

[66]According to Juri Jelagin, Taming of the Arts, trans. by Nicholas Wreden (New York: Dutton, 1951), 75, the new Soviet theory of socialist realism in art and literature was first formally introduced by Maxim Gorky in a speech before the First Convention of Soviet Writers in the fall of 1934.

[67]Stalin, Problems of Leninism (10th Russian ed.); quoted in Jean Freville, Une Grande Figure de la Revolution Russe (Paris: Editiones Sociales, 1957), 133.

[68]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Gagarapisch, Gagri on the Black Sea, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 25 September 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

friends in New York] away from industrial life, away from political life, cannot produce. It has no roots to find it. It is parasitical--living on a capitalistic foundation--and repudiating it merely with criticism."[69]

Mirrored by the revival of the proletarian culture movement,[70] von Wiegand's opinions on "socialist realism"

---

[69]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Gagaraipsch, Gagri on the Black Sea, to Hermann Habicht, New York, 26 September 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Sergeii's attitudes in regards to the importance of the factory reflected the general attitude of Russian during Stalin's Five Year Plan administered by a supreme planning agency, Gosplan. Within the framework established by the Communist Party Line, Gosplan determined how much of every article should be produced, what wages each worker should be paid, how much of the total economic activity should be used to produce articles for daily consumption. The First Five Year Plan was begun in 1928 with the primary aim of building up heavy industry without the use of foreign loans. For more information on the attitudes of the time and the importance of industry and technology see: Art Into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932 (Seattle: The Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1990); and Christina Lodder, "The Transition to Constructivism," The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932 (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992), 266-281.

[70]The Congress of Proletarian Culture held in Kharkov late in 1930 formally signalized the proletarian culture movement. It was attended by delegates from the United States under the leadership of Michael Gold, writer and editor of the New Masses, based their slogan on a statement by Lenin: "art is a weapon" in the class war, a weapon to be used only under "the careful yet firm guidance of the Communist Party." This point of view had tended to limit Soviet art to proletarian subjects. Consequently, after its supporters were defeated in 1931 in a series of philosophical and artistic debates, a somewhat wider range of subjects in the arts was made possible. Then on April 23, 1932 a government decree abolished all proletarian art groups, so that once more the Proletcult movement declined in Russia and there was centralized control of the arts. Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

continued to be positive in the early 1930s.[71] Decades later, von Wiegand commented on the subject of the factory and the style of her paintings:

> When I was very young I thought it was marvelous to paint factories. I wanted to paint factories. Well, I was very, very involved, you know, in feeling that the revolution was going to change everything and that I was part of it. But my factories I'm afraid looked very old fashioned.[72]

She described the works as not being anything like her friend and contemporary Charles Sheeler's paintings. "No, they're not so chiseled. I don't know--they have a kind of homey, earthy look I'm afraid, a little bit lopsided. And of course the Russians didn't like them at all because they said there are no people in them."[73] Von Wiegand's style was far removed from the smooth surfaces and dramatic perspectives of Sheeler's works. In her composition she distorted forms of factories, peasant shacks, and churches

---

[71]Stalinists, in the late 1930s, disapproved of the works of certain conservative academic artists (already long under attack by the more abstract artists of the Left) for their "photo-naturalism," that is to say, for their mechanically literal reproductions of nature. Even Isaac Brodsky, although he had been one of Lenin's favorite artists, was nevertheless accused by some Stalinists and Leftists alike of being a "photo-naturalist." And practitioners of this photographically realistic kind of painting were criticized as "passive observers of life," who therefore denied the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that within the fixed framework of the Marxian laws of historical development man is not only free to create history, including art history, but bears a responsibility to do so. Jack Chen, Soviet Art and Artists (London: The Pilot Press, Ltd., 1944), 53-54.

[72]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 90.

[73]Ibid., 91.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in a strong expressionist fashion so that scale, size, shape, and color were all altered for the sake of the emotional and formal depiction of the scene.

Von Wiegand, later accounting for the failure of her painting during this period in Russia and the "social realist" style in general, said: "Since they were going to change the world they wanted to [impose] these theories on art work, my art work... You can make cartoons or cliches but you can't make art where these [views are] integrated with the landscape and the people."[74] She never fully adhered to the demands on the Russian artist to produce art work that was instructive and realistic; and yet she believed her own work to be closely molded by her Russian contemporaries.

The Church

Von Wiegand painted Russian churches on the weekends. She wrote of her experience:

> ...My painting still makes me unhappy because I can't find the way. I'm painting the little church with cypresses--Byzantine, about 100 years old. But in the midst of it yesterday I stopped and asked myself "What does this church mean to you and why are you doing it?[75]

---

[74]James D. Bloom, Left Letters: The Culture Wars of Mike Gold and Joseph Freeman (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992), 79.

[75]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Gagarapisch, Gagri on the Black Sea, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 14 October 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand struggled between her enjoyment of painting the structure of the churches and searching for meaning. An early drawing of the church, Untitled (Church), c. 1929 (Fig. 6), rendered in a realistic fashion, depicts one of the narrow medieval roads of old Moscow. Three studies of a Russian Cathedral also exist in the artist's estate. Each explores the abstract patterns created by the architectural and natural forms of the surrounding landscape. The first of the series contrasts the domes of the Cathedral with a grove of cypress trees. The figuration of trees echoes the pattern of the domes. The second frames a modern tower in an arch, linking modern Russia with her past. Study three (Fig. 7) is the most abstract and geometric, framing the three towers of the cathedral in a single archway.

Growing dissatisfied with the subject of the church, von Wiegand wrote: "I know all the old life is slipping away. My painting is rotten--natural too with this terrific ferment that goes on. Its [sic] going to suffer a sea-change or else--I don't know which. I think I must go over to doing people and I can't yet--even the factory as the symbol of the new isn't enough..."[76] Several weeks later von Wiegand wrote of further difficulties:

> ...It is my work that suffers. I'm on my fourth picture but my heart is not in it. Not that I paint worse--I've done two of the factory and church in contrast and not badly--but my interest fails me.

---

[76]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 31 August Saturday, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Painting suddenly seems remote and I'm scared I may lose it altogether here. Or else I must go to people. This morning again in the Museum of Western Art, these pictures seemed beautiful but remote--Our Van Gogh stood the test, a few of Cézanne too. Here in Russia only the human being is of value--the abstract has no meaning. Our individualism--the struggle above for some end is unreal. Only the brotherhood of man--man in his relation to his fellow beings. This is the living reality of Russia. This is the faith on which bolshevism is founded. If you refuse to think in terms of the human being here you cease to exist....[77]

Further difficulties of painting on site contributed to von Wiegand's change in subject. She wrote Habicht: "I went to sketch but was firmly but politely asked to quit. I don't know why but the red soldier said I couldn't sketch the river..."[78] In her attempts to do painting outdoors she had many trying moments following the regulations of the Russian government. Toward the end of her stay in Russia, she was arrested for painting a church.[79] Von Wiegand was painting on a Soviet Sunday, when a policeman came along and tapped her on the shoulder. "Come with me", he said. "Where is your passport?" Von Wiegand, accompanied by the Russian official, crossed the street and went up to her room to get her passport, then went to the police station. As she walked the five blocks to the police station, she learned she was being arrested for painting a church. After

---

[77]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 6 September 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[78]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 31 July 1930, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[79]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 15.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

arriving at the station, the policeman in charge called all over Moscow, demanding to know who Charmion von Wiegand was and why was she painting a church. He finally phoned the foreign office. Von Wiegand reports in her own words what occurred.

> He phoned this way and phoned that way. And finally I could hear from that phone he had [called] the foreign office. And who was I and what was I doing the painting for? And I could hear the foreign officer say that's the crazy girl we can't do anything about her because we want her father to be friendly to us. And they said let her go.[80]

After her arrest von Wiegand, growing tired of the crowds surrounding her during her plein air painting, turned to painting pictures from the window of her apartment in Moscow. This allowed her to explore the use of geometric shapes and bright colors to compose the forms. In one of her early compositions, she depicted a large rectangular table with a light triangular blue cloth, a circular bowl full of asters, a carafe and a triangular-shaped, striped shawl. Completing the scene are pyramid- shaped trees in the distance.[81] These still-lifes and the scenes drawn from her window used transparent and opaque paint with various warm and cool color harmonies. Von Wiegand believed her

---

[80]Ce Roser, "The Circle of Charmion von Wiegand," First telecast Paris, summer, 1978. Second telecast, New York, WNET Channel 13, 5 November 1978 at 12:00 Noon. Ce Roser, narrator and producer, Fay Lanser, co-producer. 5 November 1978.

[81]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Gagaraipsch, Gagri on the Black Sea, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 25 September 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

factory and church paintings to be serious works, while the still-lifes were studies for future compositions. She continued her search for an important subject.[82]

Von Wiegand spent several weeks at a time outside of the city in the country home of a Russian girl friend, Sophie, in an unpainted wood home of huge dimensions. A stained glass lookout station and tower was the focal point of the house. It was set deep in the woods with a wood fence court in the back. The house belonged to a communist commission and was used by the families of the commission. Sophie's family took many friends on holiday to the sea. Von Wiegand enjoyed the communist-altered plan of the house--halls with no windows, rooms divided into smaller units of similar size, and no reference to the bourgeois past, other than the stained glass windows. She often painted the interior spaces of the house along with views from the window. Von Wiegand's painting, My Window, 1932, depicts a curtain on the left pulled to the side to reveal a double window with a bowl of lemons; in the foreground a Matisse

---

[82]Von Wiegand also did a series of pictures, which she referred to as the "kitchen paintings." All the works were created in the kitchen of her closest girlfriend, Sophie. She described the kitchen as completely medieval, where seven families cook, each has their own sink with one facet and no ice boxes. Using watercolor as a sketching medium, she limited her palette to just a few colors. The lack of daylight as winter approached troubled her, but she managed to produce four paintings of the seven communist families cooking side by side. (None of the kitchen paintings are known to have survived.) Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 3 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

painting sits on the window sill. Out the window von Wiegand paints the Russian winter. Von Wiegand wrote to Habicht: "It was 2 o'clock when we got there so we had little daylight but the sun came out just in time to make a nice red sunset over the birches and deep-shadowed pines. I did a little sketch in oils from the window."[83] Later, she wrote:

> I am painting a new picture. Again a view from the window. I love that window and like to sit and draw by it. Always the sounds of the sea come in the room and the trees below are so green--palms and poplars and pines and the sunsets are gorgeous. The new picture has a yellow sun-set, grey sea, a little red sailing ship and on the sill is a vase with yellow leaves, brown-eyed susans and little straggly mauve flowers also a dish with 2 red apples and green grapes. The green leaves in the park and the green grapes, the yellow leaves so pale with the yellow sky and the red apples and the red ship...The sea has mauve in it, also the clouds. I have only canvas for one more--a landscape, the little church with cypresses--over four hundred years old--in the village....[84]

Her paintings contrasted the view of the interior room--a small cubical with a simple bed and dresser, with the vast view of the Black Sea out her window.

Von Wiegand increasingly worked from her imagination.[85]

---

[83]Charmion von Wiegand, Gagri on the Black Sea, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 11 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[84]Charmion von Wiegand, Gagri on the Black Sea, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 3 December 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[85]"Well I've managed to start a sketch on canvas--imaginative and I guess revolutionary. My first imaginative one in a long while. Probably will block out tomorrow." Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 26 October 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

One of the few works she painted, that included a figure, was a surprisingly emotional work. She painted, from memory, the wind's effect on the trees as a man lost in a snow storm presses forward carrying a red flag. She viewed the work as a metaphor for Russians' continuous struggle with communism. The use of symbolic content von Wiegand hoped would lead her to a new direction in her art.[86]

Von Wiegand Chooses to Remain in Russia

Von Wiegand spent a great deal of time trying to locate the painter, Vladmir [Kouznetsov] Kouzvetzoff. She and Hermann Habicht followed his development through his New York exhibitions. Von Wiegand wrote:

> Don't you remember the paintings of the steppes--lovely colors and very Persian in effect--in the exhibition? I went to his studio and met his wife, who is also a painter. They are very charming but do not speak anything but French. It was a severe tax on me to talk two and a half hours in French. They showed me their pictures which are of course in the French tradition--not at all Russian. There is no Russian tradition as of yet--unless one calls the picture postcard school of the 80ties Russian. Really that is French too. K[ouznetsov] then asked me to show some pictures. I had them all rolled and off the stretchers in preparation to leaving but took them yesterday morning. He was much interested in a foreigner's conception and offered to show them in the 4 arts society exhibition--

---

[86]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 5 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> all of them, if you please. That is why I am remaining a few days longer. I have to get them restretched and do a little work on two or three. Not one is really finished.[87]

Kouznetsov's offer to exhibit von Wiegand's work presented her with an important incentive. She had to find a job quickly that would bring her back to her beloved Moscow and to an exhibition of her factory and church paintings at the annual arts society exhibition.

As von Wiegand prepared to depart Moscow questions of a personal nature troubled her. She desired to be financially independent from her ex-husband, Hermann Habicht, who had supported her through her long stay in Moscow. Von Wiegand wrote Habicht: "...what bothers me at present is that I am living on you."[88] Von Wiegand believed for the sake of her artistic production she must fully support herself. If she could not immediately return to Moscow, then Scott Nearing would find her a job in a factory in the United States. Working as part of an assembly line production crew, von Wiegand believed would put her back in touch with herself.[89]

Later in life during an interview von Wiegand said: "I lived in Moscow. And I thought Moscow was a fascinating city, it was very fascinating. And of course I started out when I was very young. I adored Scott Nearing and I wanted

---

[87]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 25 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to be a Socialist. But I don't think I ever joined anything. I'm not a joiner. But I used to go and listen to lectures. And I heard Bertrand Russell early and Scott Nearing."[90] Von Wiegand thought revolution was a wonderful for the whole world. She wanted to witness the transformation and be a part of it.[91]

Russian Correspondent

Von Wiegand's finances finally ran out after a period of six months, so she decided to leave. She vowed to her Russian lover, Sergeii, she would return to the country as soon as she had managed to land a job. Von Wiegand approached every American paper with foreign correspondents in Russia for a post in Moscow. After two months of searching, she managed to secure a job with Hearst Press. On September, 1930 von Wiegand returned to Moscow as a correspondent for the Universal Service.

Since approaching the European Hearst Service without her father's knowledge, she never suspected that they hired her because she was the daughter of one of their most famous and powerful journalists.

> I came to New York and I wrote a couple of articles about Russia. And I went to see the head of the Hearst Service here. And they hired me, I thought for my great intelligence of course. I didn't know how to write a cable. But I had had a year of journalism at

---

[90]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 89.

[91]Ibid., 90.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Columbia University. I mean I had a smattering of it. And so I got that job and then I went back and was there for about a year and a half.[92]

Von Wiegand was one of three correspondents in Russia. Her post covered the cultural scene of Moscow. She endured the frigid nights of Moscow, traveling on unheated streetcars through winter darkness to wire her stories. "I was in Moscow. I was the only woman correspondent there. I had cable privileges. And that was my first job. And I wrote a lot. I wrote on everything without knowing too much about anything. They say that is the best way to do journalism. You have no prejudices."[93] Although she wrote nearly 10,000 words a week, very little of her writing actually appeared in any of the Hearst publications of the time and of what cultural news of Moscow does appear in the press, none of the articles have her byline and thus cannot be attributed to her hand.[94]

---

[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid., 15.

[94]"And then for the International you had to get your stuff in the daytime. I had to get mine in before one o'clock at night. That's all I remember. So I wrote regular newspaper articles with a byline. And every Friday I sat up on a heating pad in my one-room suite and wrote about 10,000 words for feature stories. I always kept putting it off till the last minute, it was a night job. I had to get it in by one a.m., so on a bitter cold night I would go in a street car, the inside of the street car was blue with frost, across to the Foreign Office because everything was censored and you had to hand it in. And then it got mailed. I wrote about anything, what people looked like, and the street scenes, the markets, everything, anything that came along I wrote for those feature stories. Ibid., 90-91.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Writings on Russia

Von Wiegand managed to turn the material gathered for Hearst into articles for other publications in the United States. An article, written for The Nation in 1930 titled: "Sex, Puritanism in Russia,"[95] describes the life of a young Bolshevik, who, taking advantage of Russia's new social freedom, acquired four girlfriends simultaneously. Von Wiegand making no moral judgement on this worker, details the potential obstacles to his fulfillment, lack of motor cars; the overcrowded street cars; and the party salary of $110 a month which he must use for the expenses of everyday existence, including the costs of courtship.

The young man's heavy schedule of dating forced him to do without sleep. Overstrained and inefficient, he became a drain on the Communist party. So the matter was reported to the local party leaders and investigated. The young man received a warning that his private life was his own choice but if he could not fulfill his duties he must resign. The young man reformed his way of life at top speed and picked one woman to marry, bowing to his belief in the primacy of the state.[96]

Von Wiegand, like many Americans of the time who went to Russia, grew steadily disillusioned by what she found.

---

[95]Charmion von Wiegand, "Sex, Puritanism in Russia," The Nation 131, no. 3393 (16 July 1930): 62-64.

[96]Ibid., 63.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hearing of the nationalization of women, the decay of legal marriage, the legalization of abortion, the ease of divorce, she had assumed the Russian life was one long orgy free from societal constraints. Instead she found a nation of workers "laboring from seven to seventeen hours a day, emotionally and physically absorbed in the superhuman task of turning the world's greatest agrarian land into a modern industrial center."[97] Love, luxury, leisure, and art took second place, reported von Wiegand.[98]

This article was based on Charmion von Wiegand's personal experience. While vacationing with her beloved Sergeii, he became drunk on their vacation, and she exclaimed; "How can you do it?" She had always known him to be an idealist with an almost fanatical faith in the Revolution, and a most conscientious worker. He answered: "I wouldn't' dare in Moscow. I never touch it there. It would interfere with my work. But here, after four years without any rest, I can let go."[99]

Von Wiegand questioned her own morality and purpose during these months in Russia. In the environment around von Wiegand, she found Russian friends and acquaintances all pledging their waking hours to the service of the state.

---

[97]Ibid., 64.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Charmion von Wiegand, Gargi, Russia, to Hermann Habicht, New York, NY, 11 November 1929, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand wrestled with her own inability to contribute to a collective whole, not knowing to whom or what should she dedicate her life--Russia, Socialism, Communism, or Art.

Moscow Daily News

In 1932 von Wiegand left Hearst and briefly made her living by writing for the Communist publication Moscow Daily News, which was published as a weekly and as a daily in English to report political, economic, and cultural events of the Soviet Union for Americans in Russia, the United States, England, and other English speaking countries. Von Wiegand wrote regularly for the publication from February through July 1932. Topics ranged from theater and art to the opening of new factories and the life of the factory workers.

Years later, when a historian asked von Wiegand if she had ever been an actual member of the Communist Party, she like many others of her era, denied her association.

> I never joined any--as I say, I didn't join the Socialist Party. I didn't join the Communist Party. The only thing I've ever joined in my life is a couple of art organizations. And I don't attend the meetings either. But my feeling about politics is only that I'm for humanity first, last, and forever. And anything that I think helps humanity I'd like to help; then I put my shoulder to the wheel. But general politics doesn't interest me at all, the intricacies of it. I don't like it in anything. And every area has politics...I think when we can do with less and less politics, life will be better. I don't mean I'm an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> anarchist. I'm far from it. You have to have organizations and forms of government when there are so many people.[100]

It is this author's belief that Charmion von Wiegand, living in Russia for three years, spending the majority of her time there with one of the high ranking officials in Stalin's government, and writing for The Daily Worker, deeply believed in the Communist way of life at the time and supported the party, even if, technically, she was not a party member.

The Factory

The majority of von Wiegand's articles in The Daily Worker reflect her idealized view of the arrival of the factory community in Russia. Von Wiegand in her first story focused on the glory of the assembly line, after visiting the first typewriter factory in Ligovo, just outside of Leningrad. Von Wiegand described the town as a "past summer colony with former vacation homes transformed into nine large apartment houses, vegetable gardens, poultry farms, a whole community around the first of many factories to be built in the area."[101] On March 8, 1932, von Wiegand

---

[100]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 94.

[101]Charmion von Wiegand, "First Soviet Typewriters Now Made in Leningrad," Moscow Daily Worker, 27 February 1932, 2 in the Special Collections, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas. (The Special Collections, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin will be referred to as SC, University of Texas.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

enthusiastically wrote of the new pipe connection from the oil fields of Grozny in the Caspian region to the Ukraine to fuel the tractors of agriculture. Von Wiegand praised the pipe line as a great success, employing 2,500 men, 60 percent being unskilled labor.[102]

She also composed a series of eight articles on Kusnetsk, the new Siberian steel plant. Again she described the transformation of the rustic community into a thriving metropolis since the factory's arrival:

> For the lay person, the best way to judge the situation, is to go to the top of the hill above the town and look down on the valley. Three years ago this enclosed valley was a wilderness with only two villages located in it. The bottom of the valley was chiefly a big swamp, encircled by the Talga, or dense forest. Today that swamp and that wilderness house a city of 180,000 people. Roads cut through the clay mud. Telephone poles and street lamps have civilized the place. Gradually the adobe and mud dug-outs--the first line trenches in the war on the wilderness--are giving way before modern apartment houses built by the best German architects. Sixty-five thousand workers toil at the building of the steel plant, which rises slightly away from the center of the valley on the slope.[103]

Von Wiegand described Kunsnetsk as more than the first steel city in Asia but as the first Siberian university. "Here the youth of USSR is learning to handle tools, to become machine conscious, to understand and master industry."[104]

---

[102]Charmion von Wiegand, "Oil Fields of Grozny," Moscow Daily Worker, 8 March 1932, 2, SC, University of Texas.

[103]Charmion von Wiegand, "Mastering the Factory in Kuznetsk," Moscow Daily Worker, 1 June 1932, 3, SC, University of Texas.

[104]Charmion von Wiegand, "Kuznetsk," Moscow Daily Worker, 8 June 1932, 5, SC, University of Texas.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> They are living and studying at the same time. They need less amusement and distraction than bourgeois youth because they have the tremendous advantage of learning to work, produce and create instead of only playing at it in adolescence. More than that, they are conscious of their historic place and task in society and they are striving deliberately to fulfill the task to the best of their ability. No youth was ever more politically conscious.[105]

Through her rosy-tinted lenses von Wiegand failed to notice what would constitute in the United States violations of the child labor law.[106]

The Arts

Von Wiegand believed that the role of the arts supported the production of the factory. In one of her reviews of the cinema she gave high praise to the artistic films of industry made by Moscow cinema production company known as Soyuskino. Soyuskino filmed the factory assembly lines in action. Von Wiegand suggested the purpose of the films, shot on location in a number of factories, was to improve factory efficiency.[107] This film met the current definition of art by Stalin; Soyuskino produced films for instruction and the good of society.

---

[105]Charmion von Wiegand, "Twelve Thousand Young Communists of Kuznetsk are Mastering Technique," Moscow Daily Worker, 15 June 1932, 2, SC, University of Texas.

[106]For information on the conditions for children in Stalinist Russia see: Deana Levin, Leisure and Pleasure of Russia's Children (London: Mac-Gibbon and Kee, 1966).

[107]Charmion von Wiegand, "Soviet Industry Finds New Use For Cinema," Moscow Daily Worker, 10 July 1932, 2, SC, University of Texas.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand's cultural articles focused on fashion, household decorative objects, and the art and cultural treasures of Russia, as well as various Festivals. In her fashion review, "Five Year Plan's Designs for Summer Dresses,"[108] she described the important new symbols of industrialized Russia in the chintz fabric. Hammers, sickles, tractors, electric light bulbs, radio zig-zags, wire coils, autos, transmission gears, airships, and airplanes adorn the fabric manufactured for women's dresses. One of von Wiegand favorite patterns, called "Turksib"-- in honor of the new railway, produced in the Eastern section of the USSR--reflected the local oriental culture. Bright reds, oranges, greens, and blues created an all-over pattern of flowers on dark red with an inset of a rising sun, as a caravan of camels walked sedately beside a fast running express train. Von Wiegand reported "its attempt to combine oriental florid effects with machine-age design does not entirely come off, but the effort is valiant."[109] She credited Lenin's teachings on collective production as the inspiration for all the new cottons.

Another area of interest was the design of childrens' toys. Von Wiegand praised the new assembly line toy, the "Conveyor." "It can be made any length to accommodate any

---

[108]Charmion von Wiegand, "Five Year Plan's Designs for Summer Dresses," Moscow Daily Worker, 30 May 1932, 3, SC, University of Texas.

[109]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

group of children. It is to teach children to play together and encourage the ability to work collectively."[110] Models of tractors, boats, farm implements, tanks and machines, made out of separate parts of wood, were designed so that the child learned to put them together on the "Conveyor." The toy was operated by one child, stationed at the head, who turned the crank which moved the belt. Each child was given a part of the machine. The leader gave directions, and piece by piece, as the model moves along, the children built the boat or the tractor.[111] Von Wiegand stressed the need for more instructional toys to aid the children in their new life of work in the factories.

Joseph Freeman

While working for the Moscow Daily News von Wiegand met writer and editor Joseph Freeman, who was briefly in Russia recuperating from his failed marriage to Ione Robinson, Diego Rivera's model. Scott Nearing had suggested that Freeman contact von Wiegand while in Moscow. Von Wiegand and Freeman shared an idealistic faith in the Communist Party and a belief that one could find in Marxism a cure for the nineteenth-century romantic sensibility they thought

---

[110]Charmion von Wiegand, "Toys that Reflect Epoch for Soviet Children: Industrial Playthings Dominate; Develop Collective Spirit," Moscow Daily Worker, 6 April 1932, 5, SC, University of Texas.

[111]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

inappropriate to twentieth-century social problems. Joseph Freeman (1897-1965) appears throughout the cultural histories and literary annals of the 1920s and 1930s as one of the most prominent literary Communists of the era. He succinctly articulated his beliefs as an editor of the New Masses; as contributing editor to the landmark 1935 anthology Proletarian Literature in the Untied States;[112] as author of the acclaimed autobiographical narrative, An American Testament (1936),[113] and in numerous essays. He desired to bring "revolutionary literature and criticism...out in the open world of the living American."[114] Freeman declared in 1930 that "American literature is going through a violent war."[115] Five years later, he devoted much of his introduction to Proletarian Literature in the Untied States to establishing the connection between art and class struggle.[116] Even after leaving the Communist party, Freeman retrospectively endorsed the literary leftism of the thirties as a "popular

---

[112]Joseph Freeman, Proletarian Literature for the United States (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1935).

[113]Joseph Freeman, An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1936).

[114]Joseph Freeman, "Ivory Towers--Red and White," New Masses (September 1934): 24.

[115]Joseph Freeman, "Social Trends in American Literature," The Communist (July 1930): 15.

[116]Ibid., 12, 14.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

movement for the preservation of the nineteenth century democratic ideals against the onslaught of fascism."[117]

At the end of her stay on March 21, 1931, von Wiegand wrote to her new friend and comrade, Joseph Freeman: "Spring is certainly coming. The streets are a mess and the skiing is ruined and I've taken to painting a picture--the first in almost a year. Its simply grand to jump over the trenches and forget about newspapers and politics, which never could excite me much."[118] After a year and a half von Wiegand returned to her first passion of painting as artist and critic and followed her new love interest, Joseph Freeman, back to her native country, the United States.

---

[117]Joseph Freeman, "Biographical Films," Theatre Arts Monthly (December, 1941): 902.

[118]Charmion von Wiegand, Moscow, to Joseph Freeman, New York, NY, 21 March 1931, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER V

THE CRITIC'S VOICE--1930-1940

Introduction

Joseph Freeman suggested to Charmion von Wiegand on her return to New York that she write about what interested her the most, art. Freeman had been impressed with her cultural coverage of Russia and believed the United States was ready for von Wiegand's social and political views on art and theater. Von Wiegand regarded experimentation in the arts or modernism as representative of the democratic principles of individuality and freedom. She raised issue with the popular style in America at that time, Social Realism. Thanks to Freeman's connections and influence von Wiegand became a major critic of modern art for the magazines New Masses and Art Front. She had the greatest control and editorial choice in her essays for Art Front, published by The Trade Union, for three years--1934-1937--with the assistance of American Contemporary Artists galleries.

Von Wiegand applied aesthetic criteria, based on political and literary sources to the work of visual artists, particularly abstract painters. Her intellectual

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

training in classical Western culture--combined with the expressionist theories of Sheldon Cheney, the formalist theories of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, and a Marxist ideology based on the writings of John Howard Lawson--provided the foundation for her ideas. Like the British critics Fry and Bell, she sought to educate artists and the public to raise the level of taste from the practice and appreciation of illustrative art to an understanding of modernism. Unlike the formalists, she became a self-appointed apologist for a unique Marxist defense of art, based on the writings of Engels and Trotsky. What Albert Eugene Gallatin had achieved with the Gallery of Living Art--introducing the American public to the modern art of Europe,[1] von Wiegand wished to accomplish through her essays. She, the writer, felt the burden and responsibility of explaining the underlying principles of classical Western culture as embodied in modern art.[2]

---

[1]For more information on A. E. Gallatin and the Gallery of Living Art see: Debra Bricker Balken, Albert Eugene Gallatin and His Circle (Coral Gables, Florida: Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1986).

[2]By comparison, Stuart Davis was another artist/writer who wrote defenses of abstract art during the 1930s. Most of his writings were never published, since they were in notebooks and journals. Davis developed a unique abstract theory and method in great detail. Like von Wiegand, when he wrote about abstraction in general, his criteria for defending it were specific, limited to contemporary social and aesthetic issues without historical generalizations. Davis, like von Wiegand, put energy into fighting for artists' rights and urging artists to assume political responsibilities in the 1930s rather than developing a programmatic stance on abstraction. For a well-written

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

To study Charmion von Wiegand's development in the context of the cultural crises she witnessed is to study a woman forced to modify her beliefs. The optimism she acquired from her father, Karl von Wiegand, was challenged by what she saw in the Russian village; the democratic ideal she absorbed in American public school was tempered by what she came to learn about American political history; and the Marxist ideology she shared with Joseph Freeman was undermined by what she witnessed of the Communist Party and Stalinist Russia. Nevertheless, through the 1930s von Wiegand kept her faith that justice was imminently possible in this world.

By 1932, the year Charmion von Wiegand returned to the United States, one third of able-bodied adults were unemployed and drastic wage cuts curtailed the purchasing power of those still working.[3] Von Wiegand turned her

---

account of Stuart Davis's writings consult: John R. Lane, Stuart Davis: Art and Art Theory (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Museum, 1978); and Karen Wilkin, Stuart Davis (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987).

[3]In an attempt to appreciably halt the depression the Democrats and progressive Republicans created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.) to loan money to banks and railroads on the theory that stability at the top of the business structure would eventually benefit all people. In total the R.F.C. loaned $11,000,000,000 with no success at halting the depression, although presumably its aid saved many enterprises that would otherwise have failed. For more on the economic condition of the 1930s consult: T. H. Watkins, The Great Depression: America in the 1930s (Boston: Little Brown, 1993); John Arthur Garraty, The Great Depression: An Inquiry into Causes, Course, and Consequences of Worldwide Depression of the Nineteen Thirties (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986); and Garet Garrett, The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attention to reviewing political protests by artists, in her essays on theater and the arts. She wrote criticism: reviewed plays by Eugene O'Neill, the films of Charlie Chaplin, the murals of the Mexican painters, the geometric constructs of American abstract artists, and the avant-garde creations of Europe.[4] Throughout the 1930s, brightly colored landscapes dominate the subjects of her art. Still fascinated with factory life, industrialscapes appear in her painting, but with less frequency.

Von Wiegand's ongoing work as both artist and writer proved a real asset. In her own words she described the relationship of her two roles:

> There exist two popular superstitions which are closely related; one that the critic is always a frustrated

---

Great Depression and New Deal Monetary Policy (San Francisco, CA: Cato Institute, 1980).

[4]"I will start an article on Chaplin next week. My two articles on the theater in New Theater have gained me more publicity than anything I have done in the last 3 years..." Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Karl von Wiegand, Germany, 3 January 1935, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute

> ....I wrote a very critical article on Reinhardt's filming of the Midsummer Night's Dream. It will come out in New Theater. I was very shocked at how he has become merely commercial--rather he has remained where he was in 1913, which means complete artistic reaction. Did you get my article I sent you on O'Neill? It elucidated a headline in a Pittsburgh negro paper as well as a letter from Lucille Morre Martin, whom I have not seen in 18 years, also some comment in the press. Since I wrote the Reinhardt piece, I see that Mr. WRH has decided to finance Reinhardt in a film of Twelfth Night with Marion Davies as star!

Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Karl von Wiegand, Germany, 39 September 1935, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> artist and that therefore criticism is inevitably destructive; two, that the creative artist who invades the realm of criticism runs the risk of sterilizing his inspiration. This dual prejudice is based on the inspirational notion of art, which holds that it is produced solely out of instinct, intuition, and emotion without any conscious rational thought or logical development. The truth is that in certain periods of history, criticism actually plays the first creative role in art--it must assume the pioneer task of clearing the ground in the no-man's land between two cultures--of destroying the debris of old ideas and old forms and constructing the unseen but necessary structural foundation on which future artists will build the beautiful edifices of a new world. The best critics have always been creators--Michelangelo, Goethe, Poe, Shaw, Eisenstein. The creative artist turns to criticism, when he comes to a turning point in his creative work. Arrival at such a cross road involves the need to sum up and analyze the past in relation to his own work and to the contemporary historic moment. By a method of resume and analysis, the artist achieves a necessary clarification, which enables him to take the next step forward in his creative work.[5]

Von Wiegand's painting in the studio lent her writings an authenticity of experience. She managed a certain degree of objectivity in her selection and commentary on art. Often she chose topics quite different from her point of view as an artist; this challenged and shaped her artistic vision.

Expressionism and Sheldon Cheney

Von Wiegand, strongly swayed by the ideas of the critic, Sheldon Cheney,[6] relied on the emotional state of

---

[5]Charmion von Wiegand, "Playwright into Critic," n.d. in JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[6]Sheldon Cheney was born in Berkeley, California and as a college student at the University of California, attended performances of Greek dramas at the open air Greek theater, then a "modern" concept in theater. This experience appears

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the artist as the primary source of meaning in a work of art, which she labeled as "expressionist."[7] In the late teens, von Wiegand consistently read Theater Arts Magazine, edited by Cheney, an important publication which introduced the ideas of Gordon Craig, a stagecraft theorist who believed human emotions to be the main animating element of the play.[8] The magazine supported the views of the new

---

to have profoundly affected Cheney. He was impressed with the simplified settings, the emotional impact, and the democratic aspect of the open air theater that made it accessible to a wider spectrum of the public. Sheldon Cheney comments on the aspects in The Open-Air Theater (New York: Kennerley, 1918), 30-38.

[7]Another American writer on modern art who utilized Expressionism, particularly drawing on Kandinsky, and may have influenced von Wiegand was Arthur Jerome Eddy, Cubists and Post Impressionism (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1914).

The best analysis on the origins of the term "Expressionism" and its early meaning in the history of modernism is Rose-Carol Washton Long, German Expressionism, Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 3-5.

[8]Shortly after college, Cheney, through a Berkeley friend, was introduced to the radical stagecraft theories of Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966). Craig, a prophet more than a technician, advocated the elimination of detail in stage settings and the use of suggestion rather than description to capture the mood of a play. He also called for unity in acting, lighting, and movement. All of these innovations allowed the human emotions to be the main animating element of the play. His aim of simplifying the scene and emphasizing the actors was too advanced for England, but he was acclaimed in Germany, Italy, and Russia, where he produced Hamlet (1912) at the Moscow Arts Theater. His ideas were profoundly influential on the avant-garde theories of expressionist stage design in Russia, Germany, and America in the teens. Gordon Craig, On the Art of the Theater (London: Heinemann, 1911). For more information on Gordon Craig consult: Janet Leeper, Edward Gordon Craig: Designs for the Theater (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1948); Charles Lyons, "Gordon Craig's Concept of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

theater artists who were adopting more expressionistic methods in their stage designs.[9]

Formalism

Many of the ideas in Cheney's writings and von Wiegand's criticism were based in Formalism, or the analysis of art in terms of its stylistic elements rather than its story. American critics were familiar with Formalism almost from its earliest formulation as a critical method in England. Clive Bell articulated the idea of "significant form" and aesthetic emotion" in his book Art written in 1913 in response to the Grafton Gallery exhibitions of Post-Impressionism arranged by Roger Fry in London in 1910 and 1912.[10] (Bell comments in this book on the debt that he owed to Fry in the formulation of his ideas.[11]) The most

---

Actor," Educational Theater Journal, (Columbia, MO), 16, no. 3 (October 1964): 258-269; and Christopher Innes, Edward Gordon Craig (Cambridge, England, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[9]Cheney wrote of them as early as 1914 in his first critical book. Sheldon Cheney, The New Movement in the Theater (New York: Forum, 1914), 302-303.

[10]Clive Bell, Art (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1913; reprint, New York: B.P. Putnam and Sons, 1958), 7, (page references are to reprint edition).

[11]For further insights into the interrelationship of Fry and Bell see Frances Spalding, Roger Fry--Art and Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 164.
Bell formulated his ideas in reaction to the literary and moral approach to art criticism that prevailed in the nineteenth century, particularly in the writings of the English critic John Ruskin.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

important idea presented in the book was the separateness of aesthetic experience from day-to-day life. Bell created the term "aesthetic emotion" to suggest that separateness. During the early 1920s Bell also wrote for American periodicals, thus increasing awareness of his ideas.[12] His terms became widely used by art critics by the mid-1920s.

Von Wiegand probably encountered Roger Fry's ideas through his own writings or through the writings and teachings of Arthur Wesley Dow and Sheldon Cheney. Fry wrote articles for various American periodicals and published his collected essays in New York in the early 1920s.[13] Fry's subtle and more poetic use of the formalist method to analyze a range of different types of art generally found a response among the more intellectual critics such as Arthur Wesley Dow, professor of art at Columbia University, or Hamilton Easter Field, the first editor of the Arts.[14] Fry's writings were already recognized in the 1920s as more

---

[12]See for example Clive Bell, "Modern Art and How to Look at It," Vanity Fair (April 1924): 56, 58; and Clive Bell, "The Place of Art in Art Criticism," The New Republic (15 September 1920): 73-74.

[13]Roger Fry, Vision and Design (New York: Brentano's, 1921), 11-25 and Roger Fry, "London Statues," The Dial (December 1925): 469-473.

[14]For example see Arthur Dow's "Modernism in Art," American Magazine of Art (January 1917): 113-116. Field supported Fry by featuring two lengthy reviews of Vision and Design; see Alan Burroughs, review of Vision and Design, by Roger Fry, In The Arts (May 1921): 57-58 and Hamilton Easter Field, review of Vision and Design, by Roger Fry, In The Arts (August-September 1921): 51-54.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sophisticated than Bell's easily understood concepts.[15]

In 1921, Cheney wrote a major article under the title of "Expressionism" linking the formal properties of avant-garde theater with the aesthetic concerns of painting and sculpture.[16] In this work Cheney defines "Expressionism" as including the artists of France (Matisse and Derain) and Germany (Marc and Kandinsky), who he believed largely produced experimental, irrational, and subjective works. Cheney's essay confirmed von Wiegand's predisposition toward a view of European modern art based on the same concerns and influences as Expressionist theater. It is important to note that Cheney's interpretation of "Expressionism" lacked any political or social aspect; a political interpretation was fundamental to von Wiegand's definition of both German Expressionist theater and European "Expressionist" art.

A far more comprehensive view of the history of modern art was Cheney's Primer of Modern Art published in 1924.[17]

---

[15]For a more complete documentation of the importance of Fry and Bell in the 1920s see Susan Noyes Platt's article "Formalism and American Art Criticism in the 1920s," The Journal of the Theory and Criticism of the Arts 1:3 (1985): 20-30.

[16]Sheldon Cheney, "Expressionism in Art: Art's Latest Revolution," Shadowland (October 1921): 59-61.

[17]Cheney's earlier contacts with the art world included seeing the Armory Show of 1913 in Boston and the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1916, for which he wrote a guide. (Sheldon Cheney, An Art-Lover's Guide to the Exposition [Berkeley: At the Sign of the Oak, 1915], 76, 86.) The guide praises such artists as Robert Henri, William Glackens, and George Bellows. In creating an exhibition of "Modern American Stage Designs" at the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cheney's book, which von Wiegand owned,[18] was the first survey of modernism published in this country that attempted a complete historical overview.[19] The same year Cheney's

---

Bourgeois Gallery he moved into an environment that was supporting avant-garde visual art. Bourgeois was showing the work of Georgia O'Keeffe, John Marin, Joseph Stella, Albert Gleizes, and others at this time. In 1920 Cheney also joined the Société Anonyme and was part of its library committee. ("Report 1920-21," Selected Publications, vol. 1, [New York: Société Anonyme, 1920-21], 28.) Cheney and Dreier shared a similar sense of mission: that modern art could be a catalyst for change, although Cheney looked for social as well as spiritual change. (Susan Noyes-Platt, Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism [Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985], 43.) In the Société Anonyme library Cheney would have had the most recent literature on visual aesthetics available to him.

As a result of his contacts at the Société Anonyme, Cheney combined his understanding of expressionism with the ideas of Clive Bell and Roger Fry, coining the term "expressive form." Sheldon Cheney, A Primer of Modern Art (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 41.

[18]Von Wiegand's early art criticism shows the influence of Cheney's 1934 Expressionism and Art, which included the theories of Hans Hofmann. Cheney's early awareness of Hofmann's important theories came through his friendship with Glenn Wessels in Berkeley. Wessels was Hofmann's sponsor and translator. Sheldon Cheney, Expressionism in Art (New York: Liveright, 1934).

[19]The organization of the Primer can be confusing. For example Chapter 11 "Expressionism" includes Cézanne, Matisse, Derain as well as such artists as Franz Marc. Kandinsky is treated in a separate chapter, "The Swing Toward Abstraction" (Chapter 9). Ibid.

While Cheney continued to consider expressionism as the central concept of modernism, he added to this a consideration of structural theories:

> Expressiveness...arise[s] from three sorts of intensification: of the essential or structural quality or 'rhythm' of the object as against its outward aspects; of the artist's subjective emotion, of the "image" emotionally conceived out of his passion for absolute...aesthetic form; and of the essential characteristics of his materials. The significant

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Primer appeared, Dreier published Western Art and the New Era[20] and Walter Pach produced his Masters of Modern Art.[21] Cheney's articles and books constitute a major contribution to the interpretation of modern art in America, a contribution which influenced generations of students of modern art, especially Charmion von Wiegand.[22]

Expressionism and Social Change

Von Wiegand declared the significance of the

> form....is doubtless achieved ordinarily out of the virtues of all three elements...but it is the second, subjective, emotional expression, which is at the heart of the matter.

Cheney, Primer, 196.

[20]Dreier's book epitomizes an underlying commitment to Kandinsky and is thus an important record of that particular artist's influence but it is of little use as an overview of modern art. Katherine Sophie Dreier, Western Art and the New Era: An Introduction to Modern Art (New York: Brentano's, 1923).

[21]Pach's book is biased toward an intellectual formalism based on his close affiliations with the French Cubists. Walter Pach, Masters of Modern Art (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924).

[22]The Primer went through numerous editions and remained in print until 1966, influencing generations of students of modern art. Clement Greenberg acknowledged that Sheldon Cheney's book on modern art was more familiar to him than those of Fry and Bell in the early years of his career. Platt, Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism, 44.

In the later 1920s, Cheney continued to play a pioneering role in the promotion of avant-garde art. By the end of the 1920s he was familiar with the new architecture of the Bauhaus and Constructivism, because of his connection with stage design. Sheldon Cheney, The New World Architecture (New York: Longman Green and Co., 1930).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Expressionist aesthetic in her article, "Expressionism and Social Change," in 1936 in the November issue of Art Front.[23] She observed that after seven years of economic stagnation and widespread unemployment, the American artist rebelled against the conditions of capitalist society with a new-found appreciation of Expressionist art in the United States. She cited the new interest in Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (exhibiting at the Westernman gallery) by American painters to support her thesis on the significance of Expressionism. She traced the history of Expressionism from the Dresden painters of Die Brücke--Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Erich Heckel, later joined by Max Pechstein and Emil Nolde--to the Blue Rider artists-- Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and later Paul Klee.[24] "Schmidt-Rottluff's richly composed patterns, Pechstein's reflections of primitive South Sea art, Nolde's religious vision, Erich Heckel's nervous lyricism, Otto Mueller's angular maidens, Ernest Ludwig Kirchner's dynamic drawing--nothing reached beyond a personal protest and Bohemian rebellion," stated von Wiegand.[25] She felt that only the work of German artist

---

[23]Charmion von Wiegand, "Expressionism and Social Change," Art Front (November 1936): 10-12.

[24]Von Wiegand noted that Die Brücke painters belonged to the bourgeoisie as did the Impressionists from whom they sprang. She believed the German Expressionists had failed because they sought to "shatter the foundations of the old world, but could not break even the shackles of their own class." Ibid., 10.

[25]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

George Grosz, who had received little attention in the United States, was successful because he came to an understanding and espousal of the social struggle in political terms, there by giving his protest "expressive form."[26] Although Grosz is not classified today as being part of German Expressionism, von Wiegand defined his work as expressionistic and considered him to be the most successful German Expressionist.[27]

Von Wiegand turned to U.S. politics to make her final comments on Expressionism. She stated:

> Neither abstract art nor academic pictorialism are satisfactory means to embody the social struggle of our time as it assumes ever more dramatic and violent form in the Untied States. While the religious mysticism of German expressionism is alien to us, its activism is a vehicle suited to American vitality.[28]

Von Wiegand cited the work of Helen West Heller, David Burliuk, Benjamin Kopmari, Milton Avery, Herbert Kruckman, Alice Neel, and John Vavak as part of the new American

---

[26]Most of the American art historical accounts and reviews of German Expressionism focus on the Blaue Reiter and Die Brücke artists with little attention, if any, given to the later developments in Expressionism. Platt, Modernism in the 1920s, 58-69.

[27]The current understanding of Grosz's relationship to Expressionism can be found in Long, German Expressionism, 275: "Actively opposing the Expressionists (who had "discovered" him), Grosz refers to their work as "soul tapestries" and offers the artist as engineer in contrast to the Expressionist mystical prophet."

[28]Von Wiegand, "Expressionism and Social Change," 11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Expressionist movement.[29] "American democracy is changing under our eyes. As the process gains momentum, whatever its direction, the situation for the rise of Expressionism in the arts will be born," announced von Wiegand.[30]

Marxism

By the mid-1930s, von Wiegand embraced Marxism. Her understanding of Communisim was based on the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Lyov Davidovich Bronstein--Trotsky.[31] Although Marx never found time to develop a detailed philosophy of art based on his doctrines, he was interested in the arts and in the late 1850's had even made some annotations for a projected work on aesthetics.[32] In

---

[29]Vavak's picture Whirling Dust Storm, in the recent exhibition New Horizons in Art of the W.P.A. Federal Art Project at the Museum of Modern Art, von Wiegand wrote, demonstrated how a contemporary American subject may be realized in expressionist form. Ibid.

[30]Ibid., 12.

[31]During the mid-thirties von Wiegand was strongly influenced by Freeman's views that "art must be developed by the proletariat as one of its weapons," which he wrote in his introduction to his anthology. Joseph Freeman, "Introduction," in Proletarian Literature in the United States (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1935).

[32]Marxians believed that humans, like animals and insects, are a product of nature and are subject to the laws of nature including those of the geographical environment. However, unlike animals and insects, "man produces independently of physical needs." Karl Marx, "Okonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844," Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe, pt. I, vol. 3, 88; translation from Literature and Art, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (New York, 1947), 14.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the absence of his general philosophy we have the occasional and brief statements about art made by himself or by his friend and colleague, Friedrich Engels. Engels, the strongest influence on von Wiegand's Marxist orientation, stated that Marxism is a form of philosophical materialism. "The material sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality," wrote Engels.[33]

Von Wiegand also sympathized with the ideas of Trotsky.[34] She was strongly influenced by his Literature and Revolution, which discusses pre-revolutionary art; literary 'fellow-travelers' of the revolution; contemporary developments in futurism; and communist policy towards art. Von Wiegand was also impressed with Trotsky's manifesto for revolutionary art written in 1935 with Diego Rivera and

---

[33]Chief among his contributions toward the arts were Marx's economic and historical materialism, his emphasis on historical and social organicism and on the dialectical process, and his doctrine of a class struggle eventuating in a classless society after the triumph of the proletariat in its revolution. Friedrich Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy," in Karl Marx, Selected Works (New York, 1936), I, 435.

[34]Lyov Davidovich Bronstein (1879-1940), pen-name 'Trotsky,' was a leading figure in the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. After 1923 until his assassination by an agent of Stalin he led the left opposition to Stalin and Soviet bureaucracy, forming the Fourth International in the 1930s. His theoretical influence primarily occurs as a critic of Stalin, who developed a theory of uneven economic development and permanent revolution. For a philosophical critique of Trotsky see M. Merleau-Ponty, Adventures of the Dialectic, (1973).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

André Breton while he was in Mexico.[35] Where Marx claimed that the true significance of social processes went on behind the backs of the individual agents, Trotsky argued the importance of the individual. This struck a chord of truth in von Wiegand who had struggled while living in Moscow with Communism's lack of need for individual expression. Through Trotsky's writings von Wiegand embraced the importance of art to a lead a social and cultural revolution and thus interpreted art through a political framework.

Many of the art critics during the 1930s could be separated into two schools of thought: those who interpreted a work in terms of its background and life of its creator or its conditions of production, and those who stuck to a close formal analysis. Von Wiegand, as a Marxist, rejected the art historical method proposed by Heinrich Wölfflin, an art historian whose book The Principles of Art History was highly regarded in the 1930s,[36] and who argued that external considerations are irrelevant:

> There is a conception of art-history which sees nothing more in art than a 'translation of life' into pictorial terms, and which attempts to interpret every style as an expression of the prevailing mood of the age. Who would wish to deny that this is a fruitful way of

---

[35]Von Wiegand read Leon Trotsky's Literaturai and Revolutsia (Moscow, 1926) in its original language and read the "Manifesto" in the Partisan Review of Fall 1938.

[36]Heinrich Wölfflin, Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe, (Munich, 1915); English ed., Principles of Art History, trans. M.D. Hottinger,(London, 1932).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> looking at the matter? Yet it takes us only so far--as far, one might say, as the point at which art begins.[37]

Unlike Wölfflin, von Wiegand demanded that the work of art be socially and historically situated. She emphasized the relation of class to style in accordance with Marxist thought. Von Wiegand was systematic in her application of social determinism to art history. By investigating iconography against the backdrop of political, economic and social events of the time as well as literature and science, philosophical thought and religious sentiment, von Wiegand raised questions of fundamental importance for the understanding of modern art.

John Howard Lawson, a pivotal figure in contemporary drama in the post-war period,[38] wrote The Theory and Technique of Playwriting.[39] Von Wiegand described Lawson's work: "I can think of no manual of playwriting in English which attacks the problems of drama so basically at their root and relates so conclusively the social, economic, and philosophic thought of a given era to the specific field of

---

[37]Heinrich Wölfflin, Classic Art (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), 287.

[38]Von Wiegand knew John Howard Lawson as the author of seven plays. She was very familiar with his first play, Roger Bloomer--one of the earliest native American expressionist dramas. Von Wiegand had seen the premiere of Roger Bloomer in 1923. Charmion von Wiegand, "Playwright into Critic," n.d. TMs, in JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[39]John Howard Lawson, The Theory and Technique of Playwriting (New York: Putnam, 1936). For more information on Lawson consult: Otto Friedrich, City of Nets: A Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940s (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

drama."[40] Lawson never joined the Communist Party, but from the 1920s on his work exemplifies the theory and practice of Marxist aesthetics based on the writings about art by Engels. Von Wiegand observed: "With his Marxist searchlight, Lawson has lit up many dark corners in the history of dramatic criticism and has shown the underlying connections between the drama, criticism, philosophy and history of a given period."[41] Lawson presented a concise historic summary of each important dramatic critic set against the social and philosophic background of the time.[42] Von Wiegand, using Lawson's model, developed her brand of Marxist aesthetics with a strong utopian and socialist flavor.[43]

---

[40]Charmion von Wiegand, "Playwright Into Critic," 3.

[41]Ibid., 4.

[42]For instance, he shows the importance of German playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729-81) work as a critic in uniting the social thought which led to the American and French revolutions and the philosophic thought which ended in Kant and Hegel. Ibid.

[43]Von Wiegand compared Lawson's ideas on theater to the visual arts:

> We are living today in a period when the contemporary dramatists, like the plastic artists, is faced with basic confusion--both in himself and in the external world. It becomes increasingly difficult for the sensitive creative individual to function at all. Everything which he had learned to consider as fixed and eternal seems to be undergoing rapid change and this change often appears destructive and disintegrating. It is not strange, therefore, that the play of today, when it ceases to be merely formal imitation, is breaking its old form and thereby mirroring in miniature the stages in the collapse of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Five on Revolutionary Art

In support of her utopian socialist philosophy of art, von Wiegand reviewed a Communist pamphlet on the role of art in society, "Five on Revolutionary Art," published by Wishart in London, England[44] for her second piece in Art Front.[45] All the authors believed, like von Wiegand, that art grows out of the social environment and is an expression of the society and the class in which it is produced. Von Wiegand quoted Eric Gill: "...to be a really good novel from a Christian point of view, it has got to be such that no one but a Catholic could have written it."[46] All the authors included in the pamphlet used various forms of socialist or marxist criticism to analyze modern art.

> bourgeois society. It is for this reason that the modern dramatists lack the progression and the sense of unity which make for great art. But before the new generation of playwritings can achieve any progression or unity on a creative level, they must make a basic choice. This is none other than the choice between an old world system in a state of decay and the new world which is just coming into existence. Hence the new playwright must leave the shell of the old well-made play behind and advance into new territory in search of the new content, which only in time can determine the new form.

Ibid., 7.

[44]Eric Gill and others, Five on Revolutionary Art, ed. Betty Rea (London: Wishart, 1935). In addition to Eric Gill, the essays were contributed by Herbert Read, F.D. Klingender, A.L. Lloyd and Alec West.

[45]Charmion von Wiegand, review of "Five on Revolutionary Art," Art Front (September-October, 1936): 14-18.

[46]Ibid., 14.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand was emboldened by the fact that many English critics had reached a similar point of view as herself. She used the various essays by Herbert Read, Francis Donald Klingender, A.L. Lloyd and Alec West to outline her own agenda for art and art criticism. Herbert Read in his essay "What Is Revolutionary Art?"[47] raised the issue: "Is not a painter who makes revolutionary experiments in his own craft more revolutionary than the artist who paints revolutionary subjects in a reactionary technique?" and he answered it affirmatively. According to von Wiegand, Read took up the "cudgels for abstract art as the only living art today whose forms are proper to be taken over and filled with the new wine of social content for the future socialist society."[48] He repudiated the "anecdotal and literary art" of Diego Rivera and the official surrealists and offers Miro and Mondrian as the only "true revolutionary artists," quoted von Wiegand. Von Wiegand took issue, noting:

> In the present moment in Mexico it is correct for the artists to devote themselves to the technical problems

---

[47]Herbert Read, "What is Revolutionary Art?" in Five on Revolutionary Art, ed. Betty Rea (London; Wishart, 1935): 11-22.

[48]Ibid., 16.

Concise analyses of Herbert Read's aesthetics can be found in David Thistlewood, Herbert Read: Formlessness and Form: An Introduction to His Aesthetics (London; Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); and Herbert Read, A British Vision of World Art, ed. Benedict Read and David Thistlewood (Leeds: Leeds City Art Galleries, 1993).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> of their craft in order to more perfectly express the new content created by the social changes there.[49]

Von Wiegand presented a broader definition of proletarian art to include both the Mexican muralists and the abstract artists.

Furthermore, Read, proposed the isolation of artists in order to create a new vision of society. Von Wiegand elaborated: "If the present generation of artists should decide that a remote but friendly neutrality in the class struggle was consistently revolutionary conduct, how could it, in the isolation of the artistic laboratory, learn the needs and demands of the proletariat?" [50] Von Wiegand explained:

> As regards to abstract art, it is obvious that forms cannot be set aside like empty jars in a cold storage plant to be filled later with a new content. Splitting the two is idealism. If the forms of abstract art are to have relevancy for the future society, they must inevitably undergo profound changes during a period of social revolution.[51]

Von Wiegand believed artists should be socially aware and

---

[49]Ibid.

[50]Although von Wiegand agreed with Read's support of abstract art, von Wiegand was vehemently opposed to many points of Read's argument. She disagreed with Read's definition of all modern art as intentionally revolutionary. Von Wiegand stated: "Surrealism he credits with the destructive but necessary task of the disintegration of the academic concepts of reality begun by Picasso and Braque," while to abstract art is reserved the honored task of keeping "inviolate and alive the universal qualities of art, those elements which survive all changes for the new society which is coming in the future." Ibid., 18.

[51]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their work should reflect their political orientation in one form or another.

Von Wiegand wrote in strong support of the British art critic, Dr. Francis Donald Klingender's essay, "Content and Form."[52] Briefly, his article summed up her own purpose for art criticism; she singled out his comment that art is a form of social consciousness and that only an historical analysis which interprets each manifestation of art in relation to the specific social group it derives from can arrive at any concrete conclusions.[53] His essay also supported von Wiegand's belief that art is " a revolutionary agent for the transformation of reality."[54]

---

[52]Francis Donald Klingender, "Content and Form," Five on Revolutionary Art (London: Wishart, 1935): 7-11.

Other writings by Klingender that influenced von Wiegand were: Francis Donald Klingender, Art and the Industrial Revolution (London: N. Carrington, 1947); Klingender, Goya in the Democratic Tradition (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1948); and Klingender, Marxism and Modern Art (London; Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd., 1943).

[53]Von Wiegand, "Five on Revolutionary Art," 16.

[54]Dr. Klingender, as von Wiegand reported, believed that as long as there are various social classes, there can be no single set of aesthetic values binding the whole of society. His definition sets standards by which the "working class of today can evaluate the art of the past and select its progressive contributions for its own use." For example, he took France as the "blue print" for the development of modern capitalism and produced concrete examples of the historical method in criticism. He related the work of the painter David to the French Revolution, demonstrating how the changing social scene had its effect on certain specific paintings of the artist.

According to von Wiegand, the objective interpretation of nature, as Dr. Klingender defined it, ceased to be the main theme in art at a moment when the conquest of nature, which was the primary task of capitalism, had been won.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand praised A. L. Lloyd's essay [55] for his observation that "the split between economic production and intellectual production which was caused by the division of labor in the 19th century led art away from reality to develop its own autonomy--the complete detachment of art from life."[56] She agreed with his analysis that this separation resulted in the death of the Christian myth. She also praised his observation that the replacement of the organic human body in art by abstract and mechanist forms actually parallels the same replacement in industry. Von Wiegand concluded: "the appearance of abstract art is a reflection of the growing abstract nature of bourgeois society itself" and has an important place in creating change for Western culture.[57]

Writings 1934-1938

Before von Wiegand joined the Art Front, New Masses, and John Reed Club radicals, the interpretation of art had

---

Von Wiegand said he sought to prove that while modern art has made great technical discoveries, the destruction of content has led inevitably to the destruction of form itself and cites Malevich's white square on white square as an example. Von Wiegand noted, Dr. Klingender based many of his stimulating comments on the work of the German critic, Adolf Hildebrandt (Das Problem der Form [1893]). Ibid.

[55]Five on Revolutionary Art (London: Wishart, 1935): 23-35.

[56]Von Wiegand, "Five on Revolutionary Art," 17.

[57]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

undergone several formal and thematic changes between 1925 and 1936.[58] Initially, organizers of the New Masses and Art Front endorsed both abstract and realist art in their quest for an artistic renaissance in America and adopted a constructivist interpretation of "revolutionary art" by which experimental innovation was equated with political radicalism. However, with the conflict between experimental art and social content clearly apparent by 1928, Michael Gold, as the new editor-in-chief of the New Masses, introduced "proletarian art" as the goal of the New Masses, a concept that he increasingly defined as formal realism--social and political in content.[59] During the sectarian years from 1930 to 1936 radical artists called for "revolutionary art' based on Marx's theory of dialectical materialism and on Lenin's beliefs. With the introduction of the program of the Popular Front by the Communist Party in 1936, radicals abandoned partisan rhetoric and turned to

---

[58]Social realism both continued the partisan interpretation of art advocated by radicals during the sectarian years of the John Reed Club and projected the nonpolitical tone appropriate to the Popular Front program of the Artists' Congress. For more information on the aesthetic of Social Realism consult: Milton Brown, Social Art in America, 1930-1945, curated by Linda Hyman (New York: ACA Galleries, 1981); and Cecile Whiting, Antifascism in American Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[59]This interpretation of proletarian art was officially adopted by radicals after the affiliation of the New Masses and the John Reed Club with the International Union of Revolutionary Writers in 1930. Helen Harrison, "John Reed Club Artists and the New Deal: Radical Responses to Roosevelt's 'Peaceful Revolution,'" Prospects 5 (1980): 240-268.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

subjects that were less overtly critical and that showed positive aspects of workers' lives in compliance with the broad definition of social art endorsed by the Artists' Congress.[60] This strong Soviet presence not only shaped the Artist's Congress but also the publication, Art Front.

Art Front

The 1930s was the first time in American history that artists organized on a wide scale to protect their crafts, and culture in general. The American Artists' Congress of 1936 desired to form a permanent cultural organization for all artists. The purpose of the new organization, the Artist's Union (organized in 1934), was indicated in the congress' "Call." It appealed to all artists who were aware of a need for action; who desired discussion and planning with the objective in mind of preserving the cultural heritage. The artists who signed the Call thereby expressed their willingness to cooperate with all groups struggling against war and fascism.[61]

---

[60]The deradicalization of artists begun by the Popular Front and the Artists' Congress became more pronounced with the unionization of the Congress in 1941. In April 1941 the American Artists' Congress merged with the United American Artists, formerly the Artists' Union, to form the Artists' League of America. Gerald M. Monroe, "The American Artists' Congress and the Invasion of Finland," Journal of the Archives of American Art 15, no. 1 (1975): 20.

[61]"The Call," Artists Against War & Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists' Congress [edited with] introduction by Matthew Baigell and Julia Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand contributed both as critic and editor to Art Front, the publication which published the dialog and debates of the Artists Union. Stuart Davis was the editor-in-chief from the second through the tenth issue. All those who wrote for the magazine were concerned with creating a revolutionary art, and Art Front represented an aesthetic dialogue on the left. An attack on American Scene painting and Regionalism--the popular style at the time--supported by Thomas Hart Benton in the magazine, was launched largely by Stuart Davis. Charmion von Wiegand, a unique voice on the pages of Art Front, believed revolutionary art was not of one aesthetic and could encompass both American scene painting and abstraction.[62]

American Artists' Congress

The first piece von Wiegand wrote for Art Front appeared in the February 1936 issue on the upcoming meeting of the American Artists' Congress.[63] The article was written prior to the meeting of the Congress, scheduled for Friday, February 14, 1936 at Town Hall. Von Wiegand immediately declared the "need to safeguard culture and art against the

---

[62]Gerald M. Monroe, "Art Front," Archives of American Art Journal 13 (1973): 13-19. For more in depth information consult Francine Tyler, "Artists Respond to the Great Depression and the Threat of Fascism: The New York Artists' Union and Its Magazine "Art Front" (1934-1937)," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1991).

[63]Charmion von Wiegand, "American Artists' Congress," Art Front (February 1936): 35-36.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

threats of war and fascism."[64] Drumming up interest in the Congress, she gave all the pertinent information: the inaugurating session would be open to the public, how to go about receiving a guest card to the closed sessions of the Congress, and the various speakers and topics scheduled. She closed with a reminder to all:

> ...the convocation of a Congress such as this indicates that the most progressive artists are beginning to realize that their own integrity, their talents, their work, are jeopardized by that destruction of all culture which fascism of necessity brings in its train. Artists are now widely stirred by the conviction that only in the struggle against war and fascism can art and culture hope to survive and to move forward to new heights of development.[65]

Von Wiegand and other members of the American Artists' Congress equated democracy with aesthetic freedom. The protection of free expression thus became one of the organization's foremost goals.

Von Wiegand drafted a letter to her father describing the crises that the American Artists Congress in 1936 hoped to combat:

> Last week came the American Artists Congress--the first of its kind in the USA--over 400 artists of all aesthetic schools, various political affiliations or none at all, joined together on a platform to defend culture against Fascism and War. I met artists I had not seen for ten years, many whom I never thought would participate in such thing, many of them internationally famous. A phenomena [sic] which you probably are not aware of is happening in this country--the reaction is growing very strong and very narrow. The result is that even the mildest liberals, folk who have no

---

[64]Ibid., 35.

[65]Ibid., 36.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> political interests, are being shoved left. Just as in Germany, anyone who cares about modern pictures, honest expression in literature, the advancement of science, and progressive education is labelled "red." On the other hand, the Nazi movement is at work here, the Hearst press is filling the papers with its propaganda, and Governor Landon has come out on a real reactionary program. The reaction is attacking the present administration with all weapons. When a republican congressman Vito Marcantonio--is publicly beaten up by the police when he headed a demonstration of WPA workers, and unemployed; when Charlie Chaplin has been forced to give up clowning and make a social document of his latest film, Modern Times, in which his sympathies are obviously with the unemployed, you can see how fast things are moving to a crisis.[66]

Von Wiegand adopted a "watchdog" policy for any case of aesthetic censorship at home and abroad.

For example, in 1936, Von Wiegand used the article, "Expressionism and Social Change," as a platform to condemn Germany:

> No one can envy the lot of the artist or writer in Germany today. Few of them are willing to strut in Nazi uniform like the corrupt Gottfried Been, a former Expressionist poet. The majority suffer in silence, their work repudiated in their homeland because it is modernist and in the outside world because it is German, they lead a shadow life, deprived of life-giving currents of thought and action which alone can give meaning to art. Everything that is creative in Germany has either been destroyed or thrust underground to await another spring.[67]

Von Wiegand noted that Hitler had not triumphed over modern art because the forces which caused Expressionism to flower in post-war Germany thrived in other lands, such as the

---

[66]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Karl von Wiegand, Germany, 20 February 1936, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[67]Von Wiegand, "Expressionism and Social Change," 16.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

United States.

Censorship and Abstract Art

George Biddle's resolution to boycott the international art exhibit held in conjunction with the 1936 Olympic Games in Nazi Germany, potentially conflicted with what the Communist party considered to be the artist's duty to contribute to the defeat of fascism. The Party expected that in defending democracy artists would depict actual struggles for democracy against fascism, such as the one taking place in Spain.[68] Most members of the congress did not recognize a contradiction between these two tactical positions; they believed that artists, freed from censorship, would--even as they experimented with formal devices--naturally create more or less representational images featuring themes about the fight for democracy against fascism.[69]

Von Wiegand had a different--and more complex--way of

---

[68]On April 13, 1931, a group headed by Niceto Zamora declared Spain a republic. King Alfonso fled from the country, and Zamora issued a call for the election of a constitutional convention. The Republican regime, though victorious in the election of 1936, encountered powerful opposition form the Church, the army, and the land-owning groups. A rebellion ensued, leading to full-scale civil war. In 1939 the government forces were defeated, and a corporate state headed by General Francisco Franco was established. For more information on Spain's Civil War consult: Luis A. Bolin, Spain the Vital Years (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967).

[69]Matthew Baigell, "Introduction," American Scene: American Painting of the 1930s (New York, Praeger, 1974), 7.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

resolving these conflicting positions. While sympathetic to the political position of the Soviet Union and American communists during the Popular Front, she carved out an aesthetic position of her own by which she remained committed to socialist principles and modern art alike. However, since the emphasis on modernist styles in her art did not fit in with the Soviet understanding of what Marxist antifascist art should look like, it inevitably set her apart from radical social-realist artists. Even as von Wiegand's politics came into line with those of the Popular Front in the late thirties, her artistic practice and interests began to push beyond the comparatively tolerant standards of the Popular Front's aesthetic to fully embrace abstract art.

Surrealism

Von Wiegand defined many European artists' work as proletarian in nature. In "The Surrealists," published in Art Front in January 1937,[70] von Wiegand reviewed the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art titled "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism."[71] She immediately set the historical and social scene behind the production by these artists. "Shell-shocked imagination of the continental

---

[70]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Surrealists," Art Front (January 1937): 12-14.

[71]Ibid., 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

artists exposed for over four years to the unendurable reality of destruction and war, the disintegration and social chaos which grew out of the bloody slaughter, revolted and found relief in a fantastic world where the usual logical and rational concepts ceased to be valid," von Wiegand wrote.[72] Unlike many of the other critics of the exhibition who saw the surrealist work as "four floors of good clean fun," von Wiegand, more seriously inclined, hailed it as "the heroic effort of man to adjust himself in a tragic dilemma, the need to find release from the unbearable confusion and contradictions inherent in a dying social order."[73] Von Wiegand cited three influences on Surrealism and the new social order that its art reflected: 1) Einstein's discovery of the theory of relativity; 2)Freud's theory of psychoanalysis; and 3) the social revolution in Russia. The painting, according to von Wiegand, "faithfully transmuted these crises of the social and economic world into its own esthetic and formal terms."[74]

De Chirico and Picasso

Von Wiegand re-examined the work of two modern masters--De Chirico and Picasso--to place their artistic

---

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., 13.

[74]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

struggle within a political and economic context. [75] Von Wiegand wrote, while both painters are necessarily representative of the old class, their directions mark art moving toward solutions at opposite poles. Where De Chirico destroys Western society with his distortions of classical motifs, Picasso dismantles humanism, on which our culture has been based. Von Wiegand wrote: "Following in the tradition of humanism, Picasso has carried it to its logical end--the destruction of man--and now he destroys the abstract form...dissecting it into dismembered and isolated fragments unrelated to living organic life."[76]

Several months later, von Wiegand again wrote about Picasso, after he had addressed the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, espousing the loyalist cause in Spain.[77] Von Wiegand reported, "like the sensitive seismograph, which records a catastrophe in nature, Picasso, the artist, registers the social earthquake of fascism and recoils from violence." What interested von Wiegand was the split between form and content in Picasso's work. Reexamining her own definition of proletarian art, that a

---

[75]Charmion von Wiegand, "De Chirico and Picasso," New Masses 22 (12 January 1937): 6-7.

[76]Von Wiegand had recently seen an exhibition of the two artists' work held at Zwemmer Gallery, London, "Chirico and Picasso." For more information see: Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective, ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 308-309.

[77]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Fine Arts--Picasso," New Masses 24 (13 July 1937): 28-30.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

painting must be accessible to the common man of the street, she wrote: "Picasso's art not understood by many reflects the basic contradiction in our society today, caused by the division of labor and the struggle of opposing classes. Within the field of his own craft, Picasso has arrived logically at the cross-roads between the old dying world and the new social world in the process of creation."[78] Perhaps the depiction of the tragedy of Guernica will enable him to arrive at the synthesis he has been searching for all his life, concluded von Wiegand.

New Playwright's Theater

The majority of von Wiegand's criticism of the 1930s can be found in the New Masses. Von Wiegand first became familiar with the New Masses as a member of the Workers' Drama League and the New Playwrights' Theater before her trip to Russia.[79] They encouraged formally innovative art that expressed sympathy for workers.[80] While the New

---

[78]Ibid., 29.

[79]James B. Gilbert, Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968), 1-96 passim.

[80]The Workers' Drama League and the New Playwrights' Theater were founded by playwrights associated with the New Masses--Michael Gold, John Dos Passos, John Howard Lawson, Francis Faragoh, and Em Jo Basshe. The Workers' Drama League functioned sporadically from March 1925 to February 1927; the New Playwrights' Theater was founded in early 1927 and was active through 1928. The Workers' Drama League produced "The Paris Commune" on March 15, 1925, "Money! Money! Money!"by Michael Gold in January 1926, "Strike' by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Playwrights' members acknowledged the relationship between art and propaganda--"great art is good propaganda for any cause that bases itself on the vital needs of mankind and great propaganda is good art"[81]--they, like the New Masses' editors, denied allegiance to any political party, claiming that their productions were "working class propaganda in the sense that the output of Hollywood is employing class propaganda."[82] Despite these claims, New Playwrights' Theater productions[83] increasingly emphasized social content over technique, raising the conflict between its aesthetic and social objectives.

Von Wiegand's involvement with theater in the 1930s was as a critic. She reviewed the productions of various worker theater groups in the New Theater and later in the New

---

Michael Gold in May - June 1926 and "The Biggest Boob in the World" by Karl Wittforgel in January 1927. Ibid., 88-91.

[81]"To the Dramatic Editor of the Daily Worker," Daily Worker (15 April 1927): 4.

[82]Ibid.

[83]The New Playwrights' Theater productions included The Belt by Paul Sifton, which portrayed the labor struggle in a Ford factory; Airways, Inc. by John Dos Passos, which showed the effect of the airplane on the working and middle classes; International by John Howard Lawson, which showed the conflict between the worker and the capitalist; the Singing Jailbirds by Upton Sinclair, which portrayed the struggle of migratory workers in California.

For discussion of the New Playwrights' productions, see Don Brown, "An Impression of the New Playwrights' Theater at Work, " Daily Worker (28 January 1928): 7; Michael Gold, "Here's Workers' Theater' Who'll See the Play?" Daily Worker (29 October 1927): 5; and Michael Gold, "A New Masses Theater," New Masses (November 1927): 23.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Masses. Von Wiegand's most revealing review appeared in the New Masses on March 10, 1936.[84] Here von Wiegand critiqued a play written by Michael Blanfort, a member of New Playwright's Theater, based on the recent strikes of Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Omaha, Nebraska, titled The Crime. Von Wiegand relayed her excitement for this young playwright's attention to the play's form. Predisposed to an expressionist aesthetic because of her high school education in Berlin and her several months of theatrical training during the Weimar Republic, von Wiegand embraced Blanfort's incorporation of expressionist theater techniques, such as heavily spot lighting the actors on a darkened set.[85]

New Masses

When von Wiegand joined the staff of the New Masses, Mike Gold and Joseph Freeman had transformed it into a magazine of the workers.[86] They initiated regular biographic sketches of contributors that stressed their

---

[84]Charmion von Wiegand, "A New Strike Play," New Masses 18 (10 March 1936): 26-27.

[85]Ibid., 26. For a discussion of von Wiegand's study in Germany see Chapter II.

[86]Michael Gold had amended the New Masses' program by asserting his long-held, Whitmanesque belief that an artistic and literary renaissance in America would not emerge from "that hot-house air" of intellectuals but would arise "out of the soil of the masses." Irwin Granich [Michael Gold], "Towards Proletarian Art," Liberator (February 1921): 24.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

working class backgrounds in contrast to earlier profiles that had focused on the contributors' professional accomplishments.[87] In addition to emphasizing worker-artists and -writers, Gold began to limit the formal and thematic range of proletarian art, which he also called "workers' art," during 1929 and 1930. He advocated "proletarian realism," a concept combining unembellished realism, journalistic detachment, and technical clarity.[88] Further, he specified that proletarian art was "never pointless" and ideally should "reflect the struggle of workers in their fight for the world."[89] According to Gold, art and literature without a social theme, without "a clear revolutionary point," was "mere confectionery."[90] Gold cautioned New Masses' artists against "bourgeois romanticism"[91] and urged them "to dip" their brushes "in

---

[87]Art editor Hugo Gellert was identified as ditch digger, mule skinner, cotton picker, and teacher, while artist Anton Refreigier was described as a textile worker, dishwasher, house painter, and "jack of all trades. New Masses (December 1930): 31.

[88]Michael Gold, "Notes of the Month," New Masses (February 1930): 5. Also see Gold, "Notes of the Month," New Masses (September 1930): 5.

[89]Michael Gold, "Notes of the Month," New Masses (September 1930): 5.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Pauline Zutringer, "Machine Art is Bourgeois," New Masses (February 1929): 31.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

acid"[92] and to depict "worker heroes."[93] Reflecting Gold's social and political interpretation of proletarian art in the New Masses, the illustrations during 1929 and 1930 included political cartoons, scenes of workers' exploitation, and utopian views of a socialist future.

In the first issue published under his editorship, Gold announced that the New Masses was "the voice of the lowbrow, the failure, the rebel, the boy worker, the factory poet, the tenant farmer, the poor-house philosopher, the men and women at the bottom"[94] and urged workers to express themselves on any subject without worrying about technique or artistic merit, adding that "less literature and more life is our slogan."[95] On the other hand, Gold encouraged experimentation: "The New Masses...opens its own pages to writers who deal with unorthodox subjects in unorthodox techniques."[96] He coupled experimental art with Communism as "smashers of old values":[97] "The style of Lenin is

---

[92]Vern Jessup, "And Now, the Artists...," New Masses (October 1930): 22.

[93]Zutringer, 31.

[94][Michael Gold], "Announcement," New Masses, (June 1928): 2.

[95][Michael Gold], "Editorial Notes," New Masses (June 1928): 17.

[96][Michael Gold], "Editorial Notes," New Masses (June 1928): 17.

[97]Michael Gold, "Go Left, Young Writers!" New Masses (January 1929): 11.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

curiously the style of Ernest Hemingway and other young writers of today. It is the Communist style."[98]

While Gold's political interpretation of proletarian art dominated the New Masses by 1930,[99] a minority view was supported by Ralph Cheyney and J.Q. Neets, and later von Wiegand. Cheyney argued that radical artists need not become specialists on the lives of workers or industry because their contribution was to be cultural rather than reportorial.[100] For his part, Neets accused Gold of translating his anti-bourgeois feelings into an anti-cultural bias, a position that contradicted Lenin's statements on proletarian art.[101] In encouraging all manner of cultural expression, Neets and Cheyney continued the New Masses' early focus on an artistic and literary renaissance and the radicals' former analogy between artistic innovation and political revolution. In 1934, von Wiegand joined the staff of the New Masses, picking up the debate where Neets and Cheyney had left off. Von Wiegand challenged Gold's definition of proletarian art--an art produced by the worker, for the worker, about the worker's life--in every

---

[98]Ibid.

[99]For a further understanding of Gold's political views see: Michael Gold, Jews Without Money (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1984, c. 1958).

[100]Ralph Cheyney, "On New Program for Writers," New Masses (February 1930): 21.

[101]J.Q. Neets, "Let Us Master Our Art!," New Masses (July 1930): 23.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

review she wrote. Although this conflict between cultural and political interpretations of proletarian art remained unresolved, the political interpretation of proletarian art became the primary focus of the New Masses and its newly-formed offspring, the John Reed Club, during von Wiegand's stint as art critic.[102]

Mexican Muralists

Von Wiegand's first art review written in the United States since her return from Russia turned out to be the seminal American article on David Alfaro Siqueiros. Von Wiegand wrote numerous reviews on the Mexican mural painters, many of whom she knew through Joseph Freeman, who had spent months at a time living in Mexico during the late 1920s with his first wife Ione Robinson, Diego Rivera's model. The earliest article von Wiegand wrote for the New Masses was her 1934 piece on the Mexican artist, Siqueiros.[103] Von Wiegand held Siqueiros' art in very high

---

[102]Several New Masses staff members--Walt Carmon, Jacob Burck, Harold Hickerman, Anton Refregier, Hugo Gellert, and William and Joseph Pass-were involved in the founding of the John Reed Club. The first organizational meeting was held in the office of Walt Carmon, managing editor of the New Masses. The executive board consisted of Michael Gold, Joseph Freeman, Sender Garlin, William Gropper, Anton Refregier, Jack Hardy, Hugo Gellert, and Louis Lozowick, all New Masses staff members. The name of the Club was suggested by Joseph Pass. The first official meeting of the John Reed Club was held on October 23, [1929].

[103]Charmion von Wiegand, "David Alfaro Siqueiros," New Masses, 11 (1 May 1934): 18-21.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regard, because he worked both as a painter and political figure who led working-class struggles. Siqueiros had just opened an exhibition in the United States at the Delphic Studios. The article, largely an introduction to the art and career of this Mexican painter, provided great detail on the political and economic context in which Siqueiros constructed his works.[104] Von Wiegand also explored Siqueiros' influence on the painters of the United States, particularly New York artists. She described his work in Mexico, California, and Argentina in great detail and broke down Siqueiros' career into three periods. According to von Wiegand, the first period coincided with the rise of the Syndicate, whose painters revived fresco painting and made this public art the servant of the revolutionary movement. The second period, during his months of confinement in a Mexican prison for his involvement in a May Day demonstration in Mexico City, consisted of a number of small easel paintings. The final phase of Siqueiros' development culminated in the modern revolutionary fresco. Von Wiegand praised the artist for his bold move to use modern industrial materials for the creation of his contemporary

---

[104]According to von Wiegand, Siqueiros united his two chief interests: art and revolution. He wrote and issued the manifesto launching the Revolutionary Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, Sculptors, which inspired José Clemente Orozco, Xavier Guerrero, Diego Rivera, Carlos Merida, Jean Charlot and a host of other painters; and initiated the "greatest movement of revolutionary painting in the contemporary world." Ibid, 18.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

paintings since she believed that this type of experimentation lay at the root of proletarian art. Siqueiros used a cement gun to coat the wall, traced the drawings for the mural with the aid of an electric projector, and applied the pigment with air brushes. Von Wiegand discussed the recent Argentine murals and their revolutionary theme of agitators and workers; the innovative techniques of mural construction--adding the movie camera for the sketches of crowd scenes.[105] The Argentine murals marked Siqueiros' new style of painting. Von Wiegand described his new modern aesthetic:

> The room Siqueiros was to decorate had a barrel vault; the windows were small, it was technically unsuited to the panel type of mural. ...Confronted now by an interior vault, he decided to treat the room as a single unit,consisting of walls,ceiling and floor, to be treated as one decorative design, three dimensional in composition and dynamic in expression. For this purpose, he had to abandon all the rules of perspective followed by painters without question since the Italian Renaissance. Here again, Siqueiros realized, painting was behind life; the perspective of the Renaissance was based on the metaphysics of humanism; it was a mechanical, logical construction of space rather than a scientific one. Modern man has in his daily life long ago abandoned this perspective; the development of the train, the automobile and the airplane, the popularization of theories of relativity have long ago annihilated the ideas of space held by the Renaissance and still slavishly followed by painters. Now it was up to revolutionary painting to adapt modern ideas of space to its needs.[106]

---

[105]It is important to note that von Wiegand had already written about the experimentation in the use of non-traditional art materials long before Siqueiros opened his New York workshop.

[106]Ibid., 20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand believed Siqueiros' Argentine murals marked a turning point in contemporary art. She urged the art world to study the scientific and aesthetic laws of motion and to develop the technique of painting to the point where it corresponded to our present ideas about space and perspective. She welcomed Siqueiros' Argentine fresco as the first experiment in this direction, an experiment in which he tried to apply the laws of space and perspective evolved by modern science.[107]

In 1934, von Wiegand also wrote a companion article to the Siqueiros essay, surveying mural painting in the United States and the influence of the Mexican muralists.[108] In this work she noted the shift away from Euro-centric art--the world of Impressionism and early French modernism of Matisse and Picasso. During the Depression, the arrival of the Mexican painters in the United States brought pure Italian fresco, new subject matter, new attitudes, and new techniques. Von Wiegand, ahead of her time, declared the Mexican painters had come to stay, were more influential than modern French masters, and would give American painters

---

[107]Ibid.

For more information on Siqueiros see Lawrence Hurlburt, The Mexican Muralists in the United States (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989); Lawrence Hurlburt, "The Siqueiros Experimental Workshop: New York, 1936," Art Journal XXX, no. 3 (Spring 1976): 237-246; and Shifra Goldman, "Siqueiros and Three Early Murals in Los Angeles," Art Journal (Summer 1974): 193-205.

[108]Charmion von Wiegand, "Mural Painting in America," Yale Review 23 (June 1934): 788-99.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

an entirely new source of inspiration.[109]

Von Wiegand noted that the Mexican muralists had done the most in the United States to destroy the vogue of abstraction and to revive the idea that subject as much as the treatment matters in painting. After placing the Mexican muralists in the context of their time, the 1920s, and history,[110] von Wiegand cited the Manifesto of the Mexican Syndicate as the prime source for American painters, who desired to move away from abstraction towards subjects of vital social import.

American Artists

Over several months in 1936 von Wiegand reviewed

---

[109]Ibid., 790.

[110]Von Wiegand first placed the Mexican muralist in context:

> Mexico remains the one country which has produced a contemporary plastic art of national dimensions. There are several reasons why it sprang up south of the Rio Grande instead of north of it. It was no accident that the Mexican revolution in art followed the armed revolution. Mexico possesses a rich artistic heritage, but also had a high rate of illiteracy. The result is that the picture and the image form the natural means of communication between human beings. Moreover, the Mexican Indian, who can neither read nor write, possesses in his fingers such a fine sense of artistic values that even his small earthenware vessels, his coarsely woven mat, his hairy, symmetrically designed, and richly dyed serape, offer an enchantment and beauty that are not found in our machine-made productions. All these common articles of daily use in Mexico bear the imprint of a deep native artistry.

Ibid., 792.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exhibitions of American artists producing "proletarian art." Her selection of painters for review supported her broad definition of Communist art. Her first review of the series critiqued the American social surrealist artist, Walter Quirt. Von Wiegand maintained Quirt had consciously or unconsciously used compositional motifs derived from early Renaissance painting--chiefly, the Florentine painters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[111] Using Renaissance color and precise linear perspective, he created a satire of the classical foundation on which Western society was founded. As von Wiegand noted:

> In such a manner Quirt, on the collapsing structure of bourgeois culture, which saw its dawn in the Renaissance, raises the revolutionary banner. Yet as culture is continuous and proceeds historically with few breaks, he uses the old forms--rejecting the decadent researches of modernist and surrealist art for a form created in the present system. He uses Marxism as the yardstick to measure the shortcomings of American life and the position of the workers. He strips the garments from idealism and reveals the greed, hypocrisy and corruption underneath.[112]

---

[111]In her essay on Quirt for the New Masses, von Wiegand took issue with one of the reviewers of the recent exhibition of Quirt's paintings at the Julien Levy Gallery. She condemned the critic for referring to Quirt as a "revolutionary Dali." Von Wiegand stated that Quirt and Dali had "little in common except a love of meticulous painting on a miniature scale and an ability to see objects realistically in unexpected and novel relationships." Charmion von Wiegand, "Art: Walter Quirt," The New Masses 18 (24 March 1936): 25.

For more information on Walter Quirt see: Ilene Susan Fort, "American Social Surrealism," Archives of American Art Journal 22, 3 (1982):8-20; and Walter Quirt: A Retrospective (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, University Gallery, 1979).

[112]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand concluded that Quirt's whole gallery of pictures amounted to a last judgment on bourgeois culture based on the exploitation of the worker and the farmer.

William Gropper, according to von Wiegand, marked a milestone in American painting and the production of a proletarian art. Gropper rescued painting from the "abstract remoteness of modernism," using its technical advances to present the conflict between the forces of reaction and fascism.[113] After viewing a recent exhibition of William Gropper's work at A.C.A. Gallery in New York, von Wiegand noted that whether Gropper presented the "grotesque cynicism of the ruling class or the bitter misery of the poor," he did not use raw propaganda, but painting, beyond illustration, which was at once subtle and vigorous in its plastic presentation.[114]

Eitaro Ishigaki, the third American artist von Wiegand selected for review, was born in Japan. Ishigaki had spent the major part of his life in the United States, and had become an American painter working in the traditions of the West.[115] Although Ishigaki's aesthetic was remarkably different from Gropper's, von Wiegand maintained, he still

---

[113] Charmion von Wiegand, "The Fine Arts," New Masses 22 (23 March 1936): 30.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Charmion von Wiegand, "Art: Ishigaki's Two Traditions," New Masses 19 (28 April 1936): 28.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expressed the "rebellion against the bourgeois social order."[116] Where Gropper had signified his rebellion by repudiating the American painting tradition, remarked von Wiegand, Ishigaki rejected his Eastern tradition in favor of the Western forms in painting. Von Wiegand noted that Ishigaki's tradition of the Japanese print, rich in subtle color nuances and composed in lines of precise and perfect definition--presented tantalizing visions of paradise that were never to be enjoyed by Ishigaki, a poor worker's son. Ishigaki rejected his own tradition because of a class struggle and chose models for his work elsewhere. According to von Wiegand, in the artist's search for liberation he turned to Marxism, as well as democracy, whose symbol in art is the human body. Ishigaki took up the western tradition of painting beginning with the style of Delacroix. His main theme in all pictures is the contemporary world-wide class struggle. Von Wiegand, whose current studio experiments suggested the work of modern European masters, considered Ishigaki paintings in a cubist style to be the great culmination of the artist's work.

> "The Whip" uses the motif of horse and rider with the whip in an abstract form; here the horse's flank and the curve of the lash complete an S composition of terrific intensity. In its somber greys and browns, "The Whip" combines Cubist form with the expressionist feeling; in this it reflects the clash of modern life--the contradiction in terms of class struggle and the

---

[116]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> tumbling towers of the background suggest the industrial milieu out of which the fight emerges.[117]

By supporting Ishigaki's work, von Wiegand broadened her definition of proletarian art to include the art of abstraction based on modern European experimentation.

In her review of Adolph Gottlieb's show at the ACA Gallery in New York in 1937, von Wiegand declared that Gottlieb, the president of the New York chapter of the Artist's Union, was a revolutionary artist in transition.[118] The majority of Gottlieb's paintings depicted the decaying industrial section around lower Kingston, "where sagging clapboard houses teeter on the hills and rotting barges, iridescent with rancid oil, clutter the canal." Von Wiegand wrote of his work: "[Gottlieb's] practical activity and his art are not yet fully fused into a new definitive style." Von Wiegand concluded that the changes occurring in Gottlieb's work and the opening of the new exhibition at the Squibb Galleries in New York of 39 artists in search of new forms, signaled that abstract art was becoming a vital issue in the United States.

> But no one can deny that the whole movement in plastic art since the turn of the century has been consistently away from representational painting. For all practical purposes, the pictorial conquest of the visual world begun in the renaissance was accomplished in the time of Cézanne. For this reason, the appearance of so many young capable, and articulate artists in the abstract

---

[117]Ibid.

[118]Charmion von Wiegand, "Fine Arts," New Masses 23 (20 April 1937): 28-29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> field is significant. The exhibition reveals that within the formula of abstract art, there are as many personal variations as in realistic art. The tradition comes through Picasso's latter phases, from Mondrian, Hélion, and even from Kandinsky.[119]

The well known abstract painters in the exhibition at the Squibb Galleries were Balcomb Green, Ilya Bolotowsky, Byron Browne, Albert Swinden, George L.K. Morris, Paul Kelpe, Vaclav Vytlacil, George McNeil, Frederick J. Whiteman, and Carl Holty.[120]

Abstract Art

Several reviews in the New Masses from 1937 focused almost exclusively on the rise of abstract art in the United States. In von Wiegand's review of the New York regional show housed in the International Building at Rockefeller Center (part of the comprehensive survey of the work of the members of the American Artists' Congress) she stressed the work of the abstract painters: "The abstractionists are well to the fore in the present show: they include such well known men as Criss, Bolotowsky, Browne, and Stuart Davis, who contributes his brilliant Red Cart."[121] In 1937, the group known as the Ten exhibited at Georgette Passedoit's Gallery in New York, each showing a single example of his

---

[119]Ibid.

[120]Ibid.

[121]Charmion von Wiegand, "Sights and Sounds: The Artists' Congress Opens a National Exhibition," New Masses 23 (4 May 1937): 29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

work. [122] In a review of this exhibition, von Wiegand described them as American expressionists, who drew their inspiration, for the most part, from European tradition. Von Wiegand chose to single out the work of these men because of their occasional handling of social themes; yet their various styles related more to the early modernists. Von Wiegand pointed to the work of Bolotowsky--especially his abstraction in acid green, black, and vermilion--and the artist Adolph Gottlieb--whose Surf Casting concentrated on the essential movement of surf--as the most important work of the group. In the same review von Wiegand examined the work of Marsden Hartley currently showing at an American Place in New York.[123] She wrote: "his original lyric impulse has been crystallized into bone-like precise patterns...like a musical motif." She also reviewed the work of Lyonel Feininger, an artist born in New York, who was fated to become the "German cubist par excellence."[124]

In 1937, von Wiegand wrote excitedly in the New Masses

---

[122]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Ten," New Masses 23 (18 May 1937): 32-34.

The Ten was a group of American artists founded in 1935, which continued to exhibit until 1940. The artists in the group, included Rothko and Gottlieb. This group is not to be confused with the Impressionist group of the same name organized by John Twachtman in 1898. For more information see: Stephen Polcari, "Intellectual Roots of Abstract Expressionism," Arts Magazine (September 1979): 124-134; and Isabelle Dervaux, "The Ten an Avant-Garde Group in the 1930s," Archives of American Art Journal 31, (Summer 1991): 14-20.

[123]Ibid., 33.

[124]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the arrival of Walter Gropius:[125] "recently Harvard University invited a distinguished German exile to join the teaching staff. The coming of Walter Gropius, one of the outstanding pioneers in modern architecture and the founder of the experimental school, the Bauhaus, should mark a new development in American art."[126] She believed that no one had done more "to build a bridge between the handicraft arts of pre-industrial civilization and the new machine arts of mass production, which in the future will place art within reach of millions of people."[127] Von Wiegand already noted the changes occurring in the United States in art education because of the Bauhaus influence, such as the creation of the Design Laboratory in New York, a free school of applied design open to students unable to afford private art schools.[128] "The work of the school," von Wiegand wrote,

---

[125]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Fine Arts--The Bauhaus Comes to the United States," New Masses 24 (6 July 1937): 30-31.

[126]Ibid., 30.

[127]Ibid., 31.

[128]The Works Programs (later Works Projects) Administration's Federal Art Project (WPA-FAP), which included units for art, music, theater, and literature was established in October, 1935 and existed until July 1943, under the direction of Holger Cahill. Major subdivisions of the art unit included easel painting, graphics, motion pictures, murals, photographs, posters, and sculpture, as well as the Index of American design, the Design Laboratory and the Art Teaching Division. For more information consult: Francis O'Connor, Federal Support for the Visual Arts: the New Deal and Now; A report on the New Deal Art Projects in New York City and State (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1969); O'Connor, "The New Deal Art Project

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"thus offers a laboratory demonstration of how the creative artist may be encouraged to function for the benefit of the community."[129]

The "Pink Slip" Art Show

Von Wiegand's final article for the New Masses defended the rights of the artist. On July 15, 1937, almost three thousand W.P.A. workers on three cultural projects--among them many artists from the Federal Art Project--lost their jobs. In protest, she reviewed the enterprising A.C.A. Gallery Pink Slip Exhibition to demonstrate the fine quality of work of these artists and the importance of the government's support.[130]

> The standard of their work suggests that the wholesale slashing of jobs has been done without consideration of merit, or on the basis of need. Many of these artists support families and dependents on the meager wages; their plight is serious. It almost appears as if the ill fated recipients of pink slips were chosen by drawing tickets out of a hat.[131]

Von Wiegand was appalled that the artists most discriminated against were Japanese. Von Wiegand wrote: "the existence of an outmoded law which prevents the Japanese from claiming

---

in New York," The American Art Journal 1 (Fall 1969): 58-80; and Gerald Monroe, "The '30s: Art, Ideology, and the WPA," Art in America 63 (November/December 1975): 64-67.

[129]Ibid.

[130]Charmion von Wiegand, "A Pink Slip Art Show," The New Masses 24 (27 July 1937): 29-30.

[131]Ibid., 29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

citizenship was brought to public attention when Yasuo Kuniyoshi, the well-known Japanese-American painter, was barred in 1936 from the Municipal show and only admitted after mass protest of fellow-artists." Von Wiegand campaigned in her essay to revoke this unconstitutional law. The work of three Japanese artists, Chuzo Tamotzu, Eitaro Ishigaki, and C. Yamasaki, von Wiegand highlighted as the show's best and most sensitive. She noted that this show held its own with the "New Horizons in American Art," which the Museum of Modern Art offered the pubic to record the achievements of the first year of the Federal Art Project.[132]

Modern Art, the Fruit of Democracy

Von Wiegand thought of modern and abstract art as the fruit of democracy, a political system that valued progress and individual human achievement. She thus believed--in a simple though questionable inversion of cause and effect--that in practicing modern art and writing in support of abstract artists she insured the continued health and well-being of democracy. For von Wiegand, modernism was more

---

[132]Ibid., 30.

By 1936 a law had been passed barring aliens from working on the art projects. For more information see O'Connor, Federal Support for the Visual Arts: the New Deal and Now; A report on the New Deal Art Projects in New York City and State; and O'Connor, "The New Deal Art Project in New York," 58-80; and The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs, ed. by Francis O'Connor (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1972).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

than the mere product of democracy; it was the very embodiment of democracy, for aesthetic and political progress, in her eyes, were one and the same. Modernism, according to von Wiegand, represented the most advanced aesthetic style resulting from a revolutionary struggle against bourgeois academic traditions, just as democracy was the most advanced form of government. Moreover, modernism was the only art form which in and of itself expressed the democratic principles of individuality and freedom. Today, von Wiegand's defense of modernism as an art of freedom, individuality, and progress sounds like the justification that has so often been used to ally political and artistic progress.[133] At the height of social realism in the thirties, when von Wiegand introduced this concept into the antifascist dialogue in the United States, it was a minority and unpopular position, especially among the radical left.

Book on American Art

In March of 1940, von Wiegand, Carl Holty, and Raphael Soyer worked together on a book of American painters. Von Wiegand and Holty wrote the essays and Soyer painted the

---

[133]For example see Stephen Polcari, Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience (Cambridge, New York; Cambridge University Press, 1993), for a political justification of the artistic progress of Abstract Expressionism.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

portraits.[134] Much of the research and writing for von Wiegand's reviews from Art Front and the New Masses now appeared in book form. The painters she had chosen for the book were Max Weber, Marsden Hartley, Joseph Stella, David Burliuk, Benjamin Kopman, Stuart Davis, Yasuo Kunyoshi, Eitaro Ishigaki, Walter Quirt, William Gropper, Adolph Gottlieb, and Raphael Soyer. Her selection reflected artists that had "upheld the best traditions in painting and added some of their own individuality to their work." She felt each name represented an important tendency in American art, and the book was really a culmination of her search for "revolutionary artists and styles."[135] Although the book never came out, one of the essays was published separately; it revealed the culmination of von Wiegand's political views on the development of American painting and possible directions for the future generation of artists.

Von Wiegand succeeded in publishing her essay on

---

[134]"And we worked quite a bit on a first draft. And Carl loved to talk but he didn't like to do the writing. I got struck on the writing finally. Anyway it was one of those books that never came out but it was always a very useful resume as far as it went. You know the whole circle of the abstract movement from its early days and so on. We worked one whole winter on it." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 34.

[135]She wrote Max Weber of her interest in doing a profile about his art and life. Von Wiegand was currently working on the Marsden Hartley and Joseph Stella essays. The essays that she planed to write on each painter were between 400 and 5000 words. Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Max Weber, 1940, Max Weber Papers, Archive of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York City.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Marsden Hartley in the New York Times in 1940.[136] At that time Hartley had received little critical attention; since Social Realism was then the rage. Von Wiegand stressed the American tradition in Hartley's work: "Marsden Hartley is one of those rare artists who has successfully fused two great streams of painting tradition--American romanticism and European modernism."[137] She likened Hartley's color to the wild Maine coast and the autumnal leaves and berries of the Maine forest. His craftsmanship resembled the simplicity of a Maine woodsman. Von Wiegand acknowledged Hartley's indebtedness to Albert Pinkham Ryder and his link to fellow artists, such as John Marin, a pillar of the New England tradition. She placed Marsden Hartley squarely in the tradition of the New England transcendentalists: "something of the mystic awe-inspiring northern imagination illumines [his art] with a spectral light which is at once lonely and loving." [138] At a time when social realism exalted the literal, von Wiegand closed the decade of the 1930s with a full embrace of an abstractionist aesthetic as representing the experimental, the enterprising, and the future path of American art. Spiritualism would soon become the foundation of von Wiegand's own abstract painting thanks

---

[136]Charmion von Wiegand, "Marsden Hartley," New York Times, in the Max Weber Papers, American Archives of Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York, NY.

[137]Ibid.

[138]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

to a first generation European modernist, Piet Mondrian.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER VI

MONDRIAN--1940-1944

Introduction

On the eve of World War II, New York became a refuge for the intellectuals, writers, and artists fleeing from Hitler and Mussolini.[1] The avant garde shifted from Europe to the United States. Artists, such as Amédée Ozenfant, Marc Chagall, Yves Tanguy, Salvador Dali, Eugene Berman, Pavel Tchelitchew, Kurt Seligmann, Hans Hofmann, and George Grosz came in the 1930s. Piet Mondrian arrived in October and Fernand Léger in December of 1940. André Masson and Max Ernst traveled to the United States after enduring great hardships, in 1941.[2] By 1942, André Breton, Jacques Lipchitz, Roberto Sebastian Matta Echaurren (Matta), and

---

[1]For information on the events that led to the rise of the Axis power see: Warren Bayard Morris, The Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982); Gerhard Weinberg, Germany, Hitler and World War II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Manfred Jonas, Isolationism in America, 1935-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).

[2]As listed in: "Twelve Artists in U.S. Exile," Fortune XXIV, no. 6 (1941): 103-115. This article recounted the experiences of the above mentioned twelve artists (with the exception of Hans Hofmann) in reaching America.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ossip Zadkine followed; so did Joan Miró, Naum Gabo, Lyonel Feininger, and Kurt Schwitters.[3] These artists provided intellectual and artistic stimulation.[4] Their presence, largely in New York, lead the United States to emerge as a country of independent artistic expression.[5]

Charmion von Wiegand propagated the ideas of these European modern and abstract artists in the many articles she authored and the exhibitions she curated, during the early 1940s. Living among the bohemian circles of Greenwich village and befriending numerous exiled painters, sculptors, and writers she was an eyewitness to the changes occurring in the New York art world. In 1941, von Wiegand played one of her most important roles, providing an English voice for

---

[3]In 1942, the Addison Gallery exhibited works of fourteen artists teaching in America. For more information see: "Artists in Exile Hold Stimulating show," The Art Digest 16 (March 1942): 9.

[4]Greater numbers of European intellectuals sought asylum in New York immediately after the Moscow-Berlin Pact was signed and Hitler's troops invaded Poland, while England and France declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. The Allied offensive in Europe began in November 1942, when troops under General Dwight D. Eisenhower overran French Morocco and Algeria, then turned against the large German force in Tunisia. For more information on the U.S. war effort and the changing international climate during these years see: Herbert Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950); and Lee Kennett, For the Duration: The United States Goes to War: Pearl Harbor, 1942 (New York: Scribner, 1985).

[5]For an insightful discussion of the changes in American thought due to European influence see: Richard Polenberg, War and Society: the United States, 1941-1945 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exiled artist Piet Mondrian.[6] While, this crucial relationship gave Mondrian the means to communicate his theories to an American audience, it also supplied von Wiegand with a foundation for her mature artistic production.

"Meaning of Mondrian"

The promotion of Neo-plasticism in von Wiegand's essay, "Meaning of Mondrian," published in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism in the fall of 1943, contributed to the changing aesthetics among New York artists.[7] No other lengthy, critical article on Piet Mondrian had been written in the United States before 1943

---

[6]In 1934, Harry Holtzman, one of the few Americans to visit with Mondrian in Paris, found the need to directly speak with the artist after becoming obsessed with three paintings by Mondrian at the Gallatin Collection. During the five months Holtzman was in Paris he saw Mondrian several times a week. During his final interview in the spring of 1935 Holtzman tried to convince Mondrian to come to the United States. He responded, "If I were younger I'd go with you...Nous sommes comme frères." Four years later Holtzman wrote him, "Now it's time," and made all of the arrangements. His lawyer in New York managed to put Mondrian on a flight but he refused to fly and came by ship, without taking off his life vest. In October of 1940, a month after his journey began, Piet Mondrian, a sixty-eight year old artist seeking refuge from the London blitz, arrived in America. For more information on the relationship of Holtzman and Mondrian and Mondrian's arrival in the United States see: Virginia Pitts Rembert, "Mondrian, America and American Painting," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1970), 33-35; and Nancy Troy, Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1979), 7-8.

[7]Charmion von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 2, no. 8 (Fall 1943): 62-70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that supported and explained his Neo-plastic style. Von Wiegand, unlike other contemporary American art critics or historians, placed Mondrian within an art historical context and demanded a serious examination of his painting and theories.

Although von Wiegand had begun her research on Mondrian two years earlier, in 1941, her essay appeared only five months before Mondrian's death in 1944. Mondrian agreed with her view of his art. Von Wiegand stated in an interview:

> I know he liked [the article] because he said to Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart, "Oh, you must read this." (I brought her to visit him. She acquired two of his paintings. One of them is now in the Tate Gallery.) And he said, "Oh, well, Charmion understands me best here." And then I of course was right in the clouds.[8]

Von Wiegand said this article was a better explanation of Mondrian's art and life than any other essay she wrote later about his painting.[9]

An Early Exposure to the Art of Mondrian

The background that formed the basis for this article began before von Wiegand's introduction to the artist in 1941. Before 1935, von Wiegand's exposure to Mondrian's art and philosophy of Neo-plasticism was minimal. She had seen only a few works by the artist in the Gallatin Collection.

---

[8]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 35.

[9]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

But Frederick Kiesler, who had used Neo-plastic principles in designing his space-house for the 1925 Paris World's Fair,[10] worked hard to debunk the image of the eccentric artist obsessed with right angles that the United States knew from the press. Kiesler, in the late-1930s explained the work of Mondrian and the other artists of de Stijl to von Wiegand and other artist friends.

Frederick Kiesler arrived in the United States about 1926 and was introduced by friends to von Wiegand in the early to mid-1930s.[11] By the time Kiesler hired von

---

[10]Von Wiegand was well aware of Kiesler's set designs before she met the designer and had known of his City in Space, probably the most important fusion of de Stijl's architectural and sculptural principles. It was a bold experiment with asymmetrically arranged rectangular forms. The City was shown at the Paris exhibition of decorative arts in 1925. She had seen photos of his theater sets. She knew that Kiesler had been a member of the de Stijl group in Paris at the very end when it had begun to break up because of the conflict between van Doesburg and Mondrian. (In 1925 Mondrian separated from the group because of disagreements with Van Doesburg.) Kiesler was a great friend of van Doesburg and his wife Nellie. For more information on Frederick Kiesler's work consult: R.L. Held, Endless Innovation: Frederick Kiesler's Theory and Scenic Design, Studies in the Fine Arts: The Avant Garde, no. 23, ed. Stephen C. Foster, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982).

[11]It is unclear what year von Wiegand and Frederick Kiesler met. Von Wiegand could easily have first met Kiesler in the neighborhood since they lived a few doors down from one another on 31st Street. Charmion says about her meeting Kiesler: "I don't remember [when I met Kiesler]--in the middle thirties because I think we lived here on East 31st Street at the time. And when Joe used to go to the office, the New Masses, he'd say, "What are you doing today?' I'd say, "I'm having lunch." He'd say, "Why don't you come down to the office for something." So I would say, "No, I'm having lunch with someone else." He'd say, "Who is this you're having lunch with all the time?" I'd say, "Why

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand's husband, Joseph Freeman, as editor to assist him with his English in 1934, von Wiegand and Kiesler were spending time together on a regular basis.[12] Charmion von Wiegand commented on Kiesler's career:

> I think if he hadn't had that long hiatus here that he would have been one of the great scenic designers of America, because he really carried on the tradition. He didn't invent it so much as he carried it on from the time of--well, the Volksbühne [People's Theater] in Berlin when it was a very revolutionary theatre when its ideas came out of Meyerhold in Russia,[13] then later the Piscator Theatre,[14] and so on. Well, he did

---

that's Frederick Kiesler. Have you ever heard of him?" He'd say, 'I think so." Because Joe had a phenomenal memory for names, which I never did. I said, "He is just getting a job at Columbia designing modern things and teaching." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 55-60.

[12]Kiesler's command of English was not very proficient: he had come to the United States around 1926 and never held a full-time job in this country. For more information on the relationship of Joseph Freeman and Frederick Kiesler see: Kiesler Correspondence File, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[13]Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold at the Moscow Art Theater in the first two decades of the 20th century developed an abstract theater, placing the human element, the actor, on a level with the other elements of the production, thus reducing to nothing the actor's individual contribution to the ensemble, and making him merely a super-marionette in the hands of the producer. He was also the director of the theater of revolution and eventually had his own theater in Moscow in 1934. For more information on Meyerhold see: Vsevolod Emil'Yevich Meyerhold, Meyerhold on Theater, trans. Edward Braun (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969); and Norris Houghton, "Theory into Practice: A Reappraisal of Meyerhold," in Educational Theatre Journal (Washington D.C.) 20, 3, (October 1968): 437-442.

[14]Erwin Piscator (1893-1966) helped to initiate the style later developed for the Berliner Ensemble by Brecht, who collaborated with Piscator in his outstanding production, at the Volksbühne in Berlin, where he worked from 1919 to 1930. It was characteristic of Piscator's method of work that he would arrange and ruthlessly alter texts of plays to suit his own theories. In his early days

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> some astonishing sets. And he still carried on as much as he could here in the music school, Julliard.[15]

Von Wiegand's attraction to Kiesler was based on their mutual interest in European modern art and their shared passion for the theater.[16] Von Wiegand compared her friendship with Kiesler to meeting Homer or God.[17]

Kiesler told stories about Mondrian to von Wiegand. Kiesler painted the picture of an industrious artist who had worked largely alone for a quarter of a century in Paris developing his theories and producing his paintings. Kiesler discussed how Mondrian's work logically stemmed from prewar Cubism, and how Mondrian's grid had left its mark on

---

he made use of expressionist technique, and was one of the first to employ films and animated cartoons on the stage, to reinforce the argument of the play and speed up the action. For more information on Piscator see: C.D. Innes, Erwin Piscator's Political Theater: The Development of Modern German Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[15]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 55.

[16]Out of the business relationship of Kiesler and Freeman grew a very close foursome. Frederick Kiesler and his wife, Steffie, who worked in the German Department at the New York Public Library, rented a house in the summers in Phoenica, NY, which was about five and a half miles from the valley where Charmion and Joseph Freeman had their house in Accord, NY. They would travel back and forth across the mountain for picnics and dinners. Steffie Kiesler was instrumental in helping von Wiegand find the books and periodicals for her research on Mondrian and other topics. Ibid., 59-62.

[17]He worked in America at the Juilliard School, "where he could really take six yards of cloth and two beams and a little invention and make an absolutely amazing set." Ibid., 55, 60.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

European architecture, design, and typography.[18] Kiesler's words furthered sparked von Wiegand's interest in Mondrian's paintings and theories.

Von Wiegand, like many Americans, had little opportunity to view Mondrian's oeuvre. His first work exhibited in the United States was Painting 1, 1926,[19] which was shown at the "International Exhibition of Modern Art" organized by the Société Anonyme for the Brooklyn Museum in 1926.[20] The inclusion of Mondrian along with four of his associates from de Stijl proved daring.[21] Diamond-shaped paintings by Piet Mondrian and Cesar Domela and

---

[18]For more information on Kiesler's views of Mondrian and his theories see: R. L. Held, Endless Innovations: Frederick Kiesler's Theory and Scenic Design, 18, 22, and 23; Thomas Creighton, "Kiesler's Pursuit of an Idea," Progressive Architecture XVII (July 1961), 111; and Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 57 and 58.

[19]Currently known as Composition in White and Black, oil on canvas, 1926, bequest of Katherine S. Dreier, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

[20]Dreier visited Mondrian's Paris studio earlier in 1926. According to Michael Seuphor, this was Mondrian's first contact with an American. Katherine Dreier returned the following year and bought "several canvases: Fox Trot A, 1930; Fox Trot B, 1929 and Composition, 1929. "...Then the Germans came," wrote Seuphor, "and the Swiss, and also other Americans, like Mr. Gallatin, who had just founded the Museum of Living Art." Michael Seuphor, "International Exhibition," Piet Mondrian, Life and Work (New York: Abrams, 1957), 49.

[21]Katherine Dreier, anxious to make Mondrian's ideas known to the American public, attempted to edit the English translation of his essay "Neo-Plasticism." She was unable to clarify the artist's difficult prose. Troy, Mondrian: and Neo-plasticism in America, 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

architectural drawings by Georges Vantongerloo stood out among the dozen works shown.[22] Von Wiegand may have seen this exhibition, but she did not pay close attention to Mondrian's work until meeting Kiesler, almost a decade later.

In the mid-1930s von Wiegand read the catalog for the exhibition by the Société Anonyme, "International Exhibition of Modern Art" of 1926.[23] Katherine Dreier, one of the Société's co-founders, introduced Mondrian in the catalog using exalted terms:

> Holland has produced three great painters who, though a logical expression of their own country, rose above it through the vigor of their personality-the first was Rembrandt, the second was van Gogh and the third is Mondrian. When one compares Rembrandt with the men of his period, men as great as Franz Hals, one realizes the strong individuality of the man. So van Gogh stands out in contrast to the fine painters of his period. And again you find it in Mondrian, who with consequential slow development rose from that strong individualistic expression into a great clarity. Nowhere has such clarification been reached as in the paintings of Mondrian.[24]

---

[22]Ruth L. Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America, Studies in the Fine Arts, The Avant Garde, no. 29, ed. Stephen C. Foster (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), 54.

[23]Katherine S. Dreier, International Exhibition of Modern Art (New York: Société Anonyme for the Brooklyn Museum, 1926).

[24]Since 1920, the three founders, Katherine Dreier, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp, had been arranging lectures and exhibitions and building a collection for the same purpose, which prompted them to organize this exhibition: "to stimulate thought and reaction in the world of art." Ibid., 3, 33, and 48.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

But Mondrian's paintings were not singled out in any of the reviews of the Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition and its three traveling sections. This generally dismissive tone toward abstract work was a reflection of the attitudes towards Mondrian's painting in 1926.[25]

Von Wiegand, like many young artists of the time, enjoyed hours viewing the Gallatin Collection in New York, particularly the Mondrian paintings.[26] A. E. Gallatin had first opened his collection to the public on December 12, 1927.[27] In 1933, he owned only one Piet Mondrian painting,

---

[25]Despite the 13 years separating the Brooklyn exhibition from the pioneering Armory show and the Société Anonyme's own six-year effort to educate the American public to a better appreciation of the radical art of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the critics, who were steeped in the ideas of Clive Bell and Roger Fry, were incapable of assessing these works as anything more than pleasing formal exercises. Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition, 97-114.

[26]Gallatin's collection included works of all the major European artists. (He later gave one-man shows to a number of Americans whose works he also added to the collection.) His gallery remained the most comprehensive and qualitative public display of twentieth-century art in America for many years, at least until the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition of "Cubism and Abstract Art," 1936. The Museum of Modern Art did not open until two years after the Gallery of Living Art. For more information on Gallatin's collection see: Debra Bricker Balken, Albert Eugene Gallatin and His Circle (Coral Gables, Florida: Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1986).

[27]Gallatin's desire, as explained in the catalogue (not published until 1933), was that the "public might have an opportunity to study the many phases of the newer influences at work in progressive twentieth century painting, not only in private collections and at picture dealers, but in a public museum containing a permanent collection." A. E. Gallatin, Gallery of Living Art (New York: New York University, 1933), 2.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Composition with Blue and Yellow, 1932.[28] His catalog published in 1940 lists three additional paintings: Composition in Blue, 1926[29]; Composition with Red, 1936[30]; and Opposition of Lines: Red and Yellow, 1937, which he acquired in the late 1930s.[31] Von Wiegand was very familiar with these works.[32] "My first reaction [to the Mondrian's in the Gallatin Collection]," von Wiegand later told Margit

---

[28]Piet Mondrian, Composition with Blue and Yellow, oil on canvas, 1932, A. E. Gallatin Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[29]Piet Mondrian, Composition in Blue, oil on canvas, 1926, A.E. Gallatin Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[30]Piet Mondrian, Composition with Red, oil on canvas, 1936, A.E. Gallatin Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[31]Piet Mondrian, Opposition of Lines: Red and Yellow, oil on canvas, 1937, A.E. Gallatin Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[32]The critic in a 1939 review in Art News (J.L., "Pure Proportion in the Work of Mondrian at the Gallery of Living Art," Art News 38 [December 2, 1939]: 10) described Mondrian's work shown at the Gallery of Living Art as experiments in proportion:

> One's first temptation to shrug one's shoulders at these uncompromising straight black lines on dead white canvas, these square areas in primary colors, is followed by a curiosity at the motivation of what seems to be such a mechanical mode of expression....By the device of shutting out the color and excitement of the Picasso and Gris paintings which hang in the same alcove with the Mondrians, it is possible to focus upon the experiments in proportion which make these works comprehensible at all as art, for they go far beyond the abstract paintings in which the possibilities of color variation and subtle pattern are factors. As arrangements of arbitrary line and simple squared areas of color they do carry a conviction that pure proportion even within these narrow limits is possible to enjoy.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Rowell, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art, in an interview, "they were mathematical compared to the art I was interested in and I did not understand them."[33] Charmion von Wiegand was also familiar with the lone Mondrian in Museum of Modern Art's collection.[34]

But it wasn't until reading the pamphlet, Five on Revolutionary Art, in which Herbert Read published his famous essay, "What is Revolutionary Art" and declared Mondrian to be the only true "revolutionary artist," that von Wiegand decided she must meet Mondrian.[35]

---

[33]Charmion von Wiegand, interview by Margit Rowell in Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibition, 1892-1944 (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1971), 77.

[34]In June of 1932, the Museum of Modern Art first exhibited Composition No. II from the collection of Philip Johnson, currently owned by the Museum of Modern Art. In 1937 the Museum of Modern Art purchased Composition in White, Black, and Red, 1936, through George L.K. Morris, first exhibited in 1937.

"For the general public, familiar with the Mexican muralists and just being exposed to the distortions of Picasso, the lone Mondrian painting in the Museum of Modern Art had left virtually no impression at all." Mondrian's work in the Museum of Modern Art was completely overlooked by the press, reported von Wiegand. Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 58.

[35]Von Wiegand first saw Mondrian's name in print in the pamphlet Five on Revolutionary Art and decided she must meet Mondrian. Rowell, 78. What appealed to her in this pamphlet was the five authors, who contributed essays to "Five on Revolutionary Art," agreed that art grows out of the social environment and is an expression of the society and the class which produces it. Eric Gill and Herbert Read, "Five on Revolutionary Art," pamphlet (London: Wishart, 1935).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand Meets Mondrian

Mondrian had lived in New York for six months when Charmion von Wiegand first made his acquaintance. She had moved back to New York City in 1939 from Accord, New York, and had problems adjusting from landscape to cityscape painting,[36] so she focused more on her writing. At the time she was freelancing for Living Age magazine when asked to do an article on one of the exiled painters. The choice was up to her. She mulled over the assignment. "Well I think this painter Mondrian who has just come to the United States, I'd like to see him and do it. It sort of intrigues me," she told Carl Holty, the man she hoped would introduce her to the artist. She said to Holty, "of all the painters I can meet, I want to get to know Mondrian over Léger or Seligmann."[37]

On April 12, 1941, Carl Holty arranged the meeting between von Wiegand and Mondrian at the entrance to a row of brownstone walkups that faced First Avenue on 56th Street. She reported in her 1961 article that she rang the bell in the small courtyard, the latch clicked, and she walked up the three flights of stairs to the apartment. The door

---

[36]"The perspective wouldn't lie down," von Wiegand explained in an interview. "The work kept getting flatter and flatter. That was very disturbing. I had to stop." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 42.

[37]At the time Carl Holty and von Wiegand were working on a history of abstract painting. It was already in the stage of a first draft. Ibid., 27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

opened and a man shook her hand and led her into the front room. He was dressed in a light smock, with a clean-shaven face and wearing heavy spectacles. He struck von Wiegand as more of a chemist or a priest than an artist.[38]

Von Wiegand reported that there were pictures arranged all around the room with their fronts turned to the wall. Only the canvas backs were visible. Everything was painted a spotless white, like a scientific laboratory. The only relief were large matboards, rectangles in yellow, red, and blue which were hung in asymmetric arrangements on all the walls. Mondrian told von Wiegand that he arranged rectangles around the room to make it more cheerful.[39]

His English was precise; he enunciated slowly and drew from a large vocabulary. Von Wiegand characterized him as a man "who thought before he spoke, wasted no time on light conversation, and came straight to the heart of the matter."[40] He discussed his work simply and impersonally. As he talked he uncovered a small canvas on the easel. It was a composition of three horizontal black lines and two

---

[38]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 57.

[39]Ibid. For further description of Mondrian's apartment and studio see: Rembert, Ph.D. diss., 105-115; Carl Holty, "Mondrian in New York: A Memoir," Arts 31 (September 1957): 17-21; and Harry Holtzman, "Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944. Some Notes on Mondrian's Method: The Late Drawings," in Mondrian: The Process Works (New York: The Pace Gallery, 1981), 3.

[40]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 58.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

verticals, a bright red plane on the top and small blue rectangle on the lower right.[41] Von Wiegand described the piece as "clear and decisive against the white, it seemed a symbol to which I held no key."[42] Mondrian used only white and black and the three primaries. She recalled that he said: "The rainbow, it is true, has more colors, but they are natural; the primaries, because they are unmixed, have the greatest intensity and carrying power."[43]

He then turned a large square canvas around revealing a complex structure of black lines, enclosing an inner white square; several charcoal lines were thinly traced beside it on the white. This was the first picture he exhibited after his arrival in New York; the work was on display at the Riverside Museum, a museum that often displayed contemporary artists' work.[44] He went on to explain his theory that the

---

[41]The painting described is probably Composition of Red, Blue, and White, oil on canvas, 1939-1941, currently in a private collection.

[42]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 58.

[43]Ibid., 59.

[44]Mondrian's painting, later called New York City, No. 1, was first exhibited in the fifth exhibition of the American Abstract Artists, Riverside Museum, 1940. "On seeing this work hung in the Riverside Museum, Mondrian explained that the lines were not strong enough. He later changed the piece by an addition of color planes [lines] at the bottom, and titled the work, New York City, No. 1." Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 57. Also see: Piet Mondrian 1872-1944, with essays by Yves-Alain Bois, Joop Joosten, Angelica Zander Rudenstine, and Hans Janssen (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1994), 290-291.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

right angle is the strongest means of expression. Von Wiegand admired a square canvas with a bold, luminous yellow rectangle at the top and a small blue rectangle at the bottom. Von Wiegand thought of "butterfly wings and sunlight" and saw that it had the structure and color of a Vermeer.[45] He continued to turn more canvases from the wall. Von Wiegand wrote that when all the austere designs were exposed to view "the whole room began to vibrate with an invisible energy."[46] From the first few moments with Mondrian, von Wiegand was converted to his vision.

> Our contact was a rare experience which only occurs once or twice in a lifetime. And from that first meeting my eyes were transformed. When I went out in the street again I saw everything differently from before: the streets, the buildings, my total visual environment.[47]

She was sure when she went to his studio she would find it excessively disciplined. Later she admits how wrong she was. When von Wiegand first studied Mondrian's compositions at the Gallatin Collection she had found them bare, but beautifully proportioned designs. She saw their use for industry, typography, and decoration, but did not consider Mondrian a fine art painter, but a designer. Only after

---

[45]The work that von Wiegand described is probably Composition C; Composition in Blue and Yellow, oil on canvas, 1936, now in a private collection in Zurich. For more information on this painting see: Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944, 267.

[46]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 59-60.

[47]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 45.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

meeting the artist and immersing herself in Neo-Plasticism, did von Wiegand realize the value of Mondrian's work. "They [Mondrian's paintings] reveal a sensibility of such perfection that they will become the touchstones for training people to a new sensibility that as yet does not exist even for the most aesthetically trained minds," she declared. "These canvases are a deed, a revolutionary act in the true sense of the word, for they changed me, and they react upon their environment, so that they must in the end change life."[53]

Second Visit

On von Wiegand's second visit to Mondrian's studio she saw many paintings. In her journal of June 5, 1941 she recorded her experience:

> Mondrian is the iconoclast who destroys that a new world may be born. Actually he is very gentle, quiet and reserved. He knows the way and so he is indulgent to those who do not. He is so sure that he can be very liberal. But inside, the power burns and vibrates."[54]

Mondrian had hung more squares of color on the white walls. "The great red rectangles sent out rays of light; yellow rectangles spread sunlight and deep blue ones cool shadow,"

---

[53]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 58.

[54]Charmion von Wiegand, 5 June 1941, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

von Wiegand wrote.[55] She felt overwhelmed. Looking at the new pictures hanging around the room, von Wiegand noticed that Mondrian was now working on a new style of painting. She described this work as "a mummy waiting to come to life...different from all the others, for it is made entirely of colored lines...more brilliant, as if America had already changed his color."[56]

Von Wiegand saw other work hung on the bedroom walls. She described this room as "a room entirely empty except for a narrow cot covered with a "monk's-cloth spread" and a small red chenille rug at its foot. Yellowing sheets with drawings of crosses, short verticals and horizontals within oval outlines hung on the pristine white walls. To von Wiegand these calligraphic notations "seemed as mysterious as the secret formulae of an alchemist."[57] She later learned to know the works as "Paris Facades" and "Plus-Minus Compositions" done in Holland during the mid-teens.[58] Von Wiegand considered these works as "representing the greatest change that had occurred in Western art in six

---

[55]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 60.

[56]Ibid., 59.

[57]Ibid., 58.

[58]For an excellent discussion of Mondrian's "Paris Facades" and "Plus-Minus Compositions" consult: Joop M. Joosten, "Mondrian: Between Cubism and Abstraction," in Piet Mondrian: Centennial Exhibition,exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1978), 53-66; and Kermit Swiller Champa, Mondrian Studies (Chicago and London, 1985).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hundred years, the shift from a sensorial art of appearance to abstract, ideational art of the twentieth century.[59]

Their relationship, begun in 1941, thrived until Mondrian's death in 1944. In fact, the article for Living Age magazine, which first led von Wiegand to Mondrian, was never published, but the information she gathered became the basis for her most important article, "Meaning of Mondrian." It also helped with her first translation of Mondrian's writing, "Toward the Vision of True Reality," which accompanied his first American show of paintings.[60]

After meeting Mondrian, von Wiegand spent a great deal of time in New York libraries--the Museum of Modern Art and the New York Public Library--reading everything written on Neo-plasticism and the work of Mondrian. Sensing rapid changes in her own vision, she stopped painting and set out to acquire an understanding of abstract art. She remembered this period in an interview with Margit Rowell: "I stopped painting for a year and a half and plunged myself into Neo-plasticism, going to the New York Public Library every day and reading everything I could get my hands on which meant

---

[59]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 60.

[60]The magazine Living Age folded before von Wiegand could get her article published. Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 35.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

all the European magazines on abstract art."[61]

Correspondence

During the first year, von Wiegand visited Mondrian at least three times a week and had dinner with him once a week.[62] On occasion, when von Wiegand would come over, the artist would be in his immaculate little kitchen preparing his dinner. For years he had followed the Hauser diet.[63]

---

[61]Charmion von Wiegand, Interview by Margit Rowell in Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibition (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1942), 78.

"I [would sit] in the library at the Museum of Modern Art. I was working on Mondrian's essays and I read everything I could find on Mondrian in all the European publications, and did a sort of research job for myself and did a bibliography of articles, most of them were in magazines, which I later gave to James Johnson Sweeney when he was doing a book on Mondrian." [James Johnson Sweeney, Mondrian (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1948). This text was published in conjunction with Mondrian's retrospective hosted by the Museum of Modern Art.] Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 53-54.

The bibliography of articles which she sent to James Johnson Sweeney when he was working on a book on Mondrian, included such essays as: Max Bill, "Über konkrete Kunst," Werk, 25 (August 1938): 251; H.P. Bremmer, "Lijnencompositie," Beeldende Kunst 3 (July 1916), 106-107; and Jean Hélion, "La Réalité dans la peinture à propos de l'exposition du musée de l'Orangerie," Cahiers d'Art 9 (1934): 261.

[62]Von Wiegand, Interview by Margit Rowell, 79.

[63]Von Wiegand refers here to the Gayelord Hauser diet. Gayelord Hauser was a popular German-born nutritionist. He emigrated to the USA after World War I and set up business in California in 1927, advocating special vegetable diets featuring 'wonder foods' like brewer's yeast, skim milk, wheat germ, and blackstrap molasses. "His fare was of the simplest, arranged with elegance, even if no more than bacon and boiled potatoes with a green salad and cheese." Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

When von Wiegand was invited to dine with him, he made more elaborate preparations, going shopping to buy pastry or ice cream, because that was "what Americans liked." "His was a hospitable nature, and he would always offer visitors tea or a cocktail," which turned out to be a glass of V8, von Wiegand recalled. "He rarely drank anything, but on festive occasions he was fond of a glass of wine."[64]

They corresponded for the purpose of establishing meeting times.[65] "Mondrian and I corresponded frequently. He did not have a phone, he would send post cards or little notes to his friends."[66] It would never occur to Mondrian's friends to drop in unannounced. Von Wiegand said, "I always waited for a note or post card that conveyed the message: "If you are not too busy, shall be pleased to see you on Tuesday (tomorrow) after five."[67] A typical letter from Mondrian to von Wiegand read:

> Mrs. Guggenheim asked me to come Tuesday instead of Monday so I am Monday free and also after Tuesday every night.
>
> I found your letter when you had left me and thank you very much for it. I am happy with what you wrote about

---

[64]Ibid.

[65]A small suitcase of postcards and letters from Mondrian to von Wiegand was stolen during Charmion von Wiegand's lifetime, as reported by Elaine Wrong, Interview by author, 20 May 1994, New York, Tape recording, Collection of the Author, New York.

[66]Von Wiegand, Interview by Margit Rowell, 77.

[67]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> the impression of the picture. I am afraid that I was not clear enough in my articles for you [to] write [about] me, not to be able to integrate what you knew in the past with what you know now about art. Tell me when you come what are the difficult points, perhaps I can clarify it.[68]

The majority of the notes focused on meeting times, but a few notes reflect the intellectual fervor of the relationship and the desire to understand one another on a deeper level. On January 21, 1942 Mondrian wrote to von Wiegand:

> Your letter was a great pleasure to me. You are the second person who understands me so well in my efforts to show the real value of life. The first was in Paris, an economist Backlund who did social work. In general, the painters and sculptors separate art from life, you know.[69]

Von Wiegand wrote several weeks later to Mondrian: "I cannot reconcile the old and the new anymore. It's a terrific cleft and I can't solve it."[70] She was casting aside the traditional with the enthusiasm of a new convert. Von Wiegand told Cummings in an interview that she never fully rejected the traditional, but found the path between the two. Mondrian wrote von Wiegand in response to her questions, "...well, if you're having difficulty about this

---

[68]"Unpublished letter from Piet Mondrian to Charmion von Wiegand", Piet Mondrian (Basel: Galerie Beyler, November 1964-Jan 1965) exhibition catalogue.

[69]Piet Mondrian, New York, NY, to Charmion von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman, New York, NY, 21 January 1942, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[70]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

I'll tell you when you come next time and we'll discuss it."[71]

Von Wiegand and Mondrian thrived on discussing art. One of their memorable conversations, as reported by von Wiegand, centered on the comparison between Mondrian's naturalistic work and his Neo-plastic paintings. Mondrian said that the two were almost the same. Von Wiegand did not grasp the full meaning of this statement until a year later after much reading and looking at Neo-plastic art. During an interview, von Wiegand relayed his point: "he meant it's [all] one [type of] growth, an organic growth."[72]

Mondrian and New York Society

Not only was von Wiegand instrumental in introducing the philosophy of Mondrian's art to an American audience, but she also integrated this immigrant artist into the New York artistic scene. Von Wiegand often accompanied him to openings and cocktail parties.[73] Thanks to Charmion von Wiegand, her husband, Joseph Freeman, and Harry Holtzman, by the time Mondrian painted his masterwork, Broadway Boogie Woogie, begun in 1942, he was fairly well known in the intellectual circles of New York.

---

[71]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 36.

[72]Ibid., 37.

[73]Von Wiegand reported, Mondrian loved the cocktail party: he said, "It's very nice. You don't have to talk very much." Ibid., 67-74.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Shortly after von Wiegand's visited Mondrian for the second time, she gave a little party for the artist. Carl Holty called for him and brought him in his car. Stuart and Roselle Davis, Walter Quirt and several others attended. "Mondrian seemed to enjoy himself," von Wiegand reported, "his step was light, his smile contagious, and he went around the apartment examining everything with interest."[74] That evening Mondrian made friends with Stuart Davis. They both had an enthusiasm for modern music, and they each chose to discuss painting on an intellectual level. As time progressed they met at parties, art exhibitions, and occasionally spent an evening out listening to boogie-woogie music, one of Mondrian's chief delights.[75] Mondrian later told von Wiegand that he appreciated "all good American painters," expressing particular interest in Stuart Davis. "He's the most abstract, I think of the young Americans."[76]

During the summer of 1941 von Wiegand's husband, Joseph Freeman, arranged with friends to take Mondrian to experience uptown café society.[77] At that time the

---

[74]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 62.

[75]Jay Bradley, "Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: 'Greatest Dutch Painter of Our Time'," Knickerbocker Weekly, 3, 51 (1944), 16.

[76]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 63.

[77]Von Wiegand was well aware of Mondrian's interest in jazz. He had shared with her the stories of his experiences with American jazz in Paris. He often sought analogies

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

literati had two night spots in New York, one in Greenwich Village, and the other on the Upper East Side. The best boogie-woogie could be heard in both places. Mondrian had been introduced to downtown clubs soon after his arrival, but was unfamiliar with the uptown night spots until the Freemans took him.[78]

---

between music and painting, and had written two essays on the subject of Futurist music, which von Wiegand had read.

"The Manifestation of Neo-Plasticism in Music and the Italian Futurists' *Bruieurs*. (1921) which appeared in the August and September 1921 issues of De stijl as "De 'Bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens' en 'Het' nieuwe in de muziek" (The 'Italian Futurists' *bruiteurs*' and 'the new' in music.) A French translation by Mondrian himself in La Vie des letteres et des arts, April 1922, bore the slightly altered title "La Manifestation du Néo-Plasticisme dans la musique et les bruiteurs italiens futuristes" ("The Manifestation of Neo-Plasticism in Music and the Italian Futurist's *Bruiteurs*"). A translation of the French text into German by Max Burchartz appeared in Mondrian's Bauhaus book no. 5 (1925).

"Neo-Plasticism: Its Realization in Music and Future Theater" (1922) was Mondrian's second essay on music, dated January 1922, which appeared in De Stijl for January and February with the title "Neo-Plasticism (The New Plastic) and its (their) Realization in Music" ("Het Neo-plasticisme [De Nieuwe Beelding] en zijn (hare) realiseering in de muziek"); it was subtitled "Supplement to 'The Italian Futurists' *Bruiteurs* and 'The' New in Music.' Like its predecessor, it was translated into French by Mondrian himself for La vie des lettres et des arts (August 1922), with a revised title: "Neo-Plasticism: Its Realization in Music and Future Theater" ("Le Néo-Plasticisme: sa réalisation dans la musique et au théâtre futur"). A German translation was included in Mondrian's Bauhaus book Die Neue Gestaltung (1925). For more information see: The New Art--The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian, ed. and trans. by Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986), 148-155, 156-163.

[78]In 1927, Mondrian was preoccupied with the relationship between jazz and Neo-Plasticism. "De Jazz en de Neo-Plastiek" appeared in Dutch in December 1927 number of *i* 10. For more information on the essay see: The New Art--The New Life, 217-222.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mondrian asked von Wiegand if she thought he was too old to ask the ladies to dance and seemed much relieved when she said no. He had a wonderful sense of rhythm but liked very complicated steps. Von Wiegand related that "he held me at a disconcerting distance--which did not make dancing with him easy."[79] In the middle of the dance, when the orchestra switched suddenly from boogie-woogie to jazz, he stopped abruptly: "Let's sit down. I hear melody." "He adhered to his principles in everything," von Wiegand said.[80] "Mondrian's boogie-woogie dancing has been exaggerated. If you added up the times he indulged in dancing, parties, or movies it would amount to very little in the three and a half years he lived in New York."[81]

Mondrian particularly loved to accompany von Wiegand to Hans Richter's famous cocktail parties. "You had to climb four flights to a tiny apartment that wasn't much bigger than this whole room," von Wiegand reported.[82] She

---

Von Wiegand knew of his essays on music, since they had both been translated into French and German. She felt, as did many of his other artist friends, that it was important for Mondrian to hear good American jazz.

[79]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 63.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., 64.

[82]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 39. For more information on Richter's New York period see: Ezra Goodman, "Dreams that Money can Buy," Dance Magazine (February 1947): 22-28.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

introduced Mondrian to James Johnson Sweeney and Kurt Seligmann at Richter's. Often after having a drink or two von Wiegand and Mondrian would go out to dinner with friends from the cocktail party.

> We used to go to that one on Third Avenue--Le Moal was one of Mondrian's favorites. French sailors were always in there singing songs at the bar. And there were checked table cloths. He liked that. And dinner cost eighty-five cents. That was our chief place. And I think you got a glass of wine with it. I didn't drink it but I think you could have it. It was very pleasant French cooking. And when we were more extravagant we went to the place that still exists on East 56th Street...Canary d'Or.[83]

Von Wiegand later stated that Mondrian's "Boogie Woogie" compositions were prime examples of his New York work, where he broke the color lines into a new rhythm of the country, a rhythm opposed entirely to Europe and the classic tradition. Von Wiegand believed this was a rhythm that could not find any expression in this country, except in jazz. As a result to his exposure to American popular music he created the "most luminous and joyous works" of his life, reported von Wiegand. These last works opened "a road of infinite possibilities of experiment for the future."[84]

Mondrian in the Press

By the fall of 1941, Mondrian was working more intensely on his paintings. His arrival in New York had

---

[83]Ibid., 40.

[84]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, Memoir of His New York Period," 59-61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attracted little attention compared to that given such artists as Marc Chagall, Fernand Léger, Jacques Lipchitz, and the Surrealists--André Breton, Max Ernst, and others. Mondrian's first exposure in the popular press came that fall in Fortune magazine, which published an illustrated portfolio of the exiled European artists then in America, and Mondrian was given lead billing.[85] In spite of this positive mention in the press, overall there was a general dismissal of Mondrian and his art. During the 1930s many stories circulated in New York about Mondrian's life as a recluse in Paris, his oddly decorated studio, and his obsession with painting straight lines on white canvas. In 1941, the New Yorker ran a "Talk of the Town" column devoted to Mondrian. This tongue-and-cheek report focused on Mondrian's eccentricities, with many anecdotes about the artist's distrust of the circular.

> We have encountered another Paris artist whom the war has expatriated here--Piet Mondrian, probably the only painter in the world who hasn't drawn a curved line in twenty years...Once, when he was living in Paris in a house with a curved staircase, he fastened rectangular pieces of painted cardboard to the balustrades so that he could go up and downstairs with a free mind...He has a collection of boogie-woogie records which he plays, often dancing around the room to their accompaniment all by himself. He likes oranges and sometimes sucks one while he dances. He is sorry that records and oranges are circular...He is delighted with his Manhattan quarters, since they look out on First

---

[85]"Twelve Artists in U.S. Exile," Fortune XXIV, no. 6 (1941): 103-115.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Avenue, where there isn't a piece of greenery in sight or much that is round. His stay in London was made hideous not only by bombs but by the fact that there was a tree outside his window.[86]

A more positive piece came a month later when Sidney Janis published a series of interviews with famous artists, including Mondrian in Decision, edited by Klaus Mann. Sidney Janis remarked in his interview that Mondrian's "artistic growth had been fairly constant through the years."

> [Mondrian] has added, since coming to America, a complexity and fresh color distribution that give new vibrancy to his work...To him the oblique is weak and the curve weaker still, so he has covered the curves on his studio doorway with rectangular shapes to eliminate the offending note. His paintings, arranged against the walls and on the floor, fall in line as part of the composition of the room, and the effect of the whole upon the visitor is electrifying...It is Mondrian's desire to use his ideas to plan a complete living interior for the American home.[87]

The article goes on to describe Mondrian's use of colored tapes, which increased the speed of his work and the importance of Boogie Woogie music to create a "corresponding mood and rhythm" in his painting.[88] Although the tone of the interview was favorable, the article gave little historical development, cultural context, or philosophical basis.

---

[86]"Lines and Rectangles," New Yorker 17 (March 1, 1941): 8-10.

[87]Sidney Janis, "School of Paris comes to the U.S.," Decision 2 (November-December 1941): 89-91.

[88]Ibid., 91.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In an article published in June of 1942 in VVV, Robert Motherwell condemned Mondrian's painting or what Motherwell described as "experiments." He declared Mondrian's painting to be "scientific": "...[it] employs a hypothesis about the nature of reality, of which his work is an attempt at experimental confirmation."[89] Motherwell gave Mondrian credit for one very important contribution to the art world--the freeing of the artist from the representation of the image. Mondrian's work was valuable for its "demonstration," that he "had brought abstract art into being," wrote Motherwell. Several paragraphs later, Motherwell accused Mondrian of falling into the natural trap, a loss of contact with historical reality.

> He has spent his time in [the] creation of a clinical art when men were ravenous for the human; he created a rational art when art was the only place where most men could find irrational sensual release from the common-sense rationalism and discipline of their economic lives...Mondrian's experiment is a failure in its own terms...that it is possible to express the felt quality of reality...in non-referential spatial-color structures...We know that color and space are able to communicate feeling, as when....a green room is felt as more cool and peaceful than an orange one...It is possible to say...that Mondrian failed, with his restricted means, to express enough of the felt quality to deeply interest us...No one can meet hostile reality with the simple proposition that 2 + 2 = 4. The proposition is true, but it is not enough.[90]

Motherwell anticipated an argument of the Abstract Expressionists, with whom he would later be identified. Von

---

[89]Robert Motherwell, "Notes on Mondrian and Chirico," VVV 1 (June 1942): 59.

[90]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand felt Motherwell had failed to understand Mondrian's art and theories.

"Meaning of Mondrian"

In response to the statements by Motherwell and others regarding Mondrian's lack of historical development, von Wiegand wrote "The Meaning of Mondrian." In this groundbreaking article, she traced Mondrian's evolution and placed his paintings within an art historical tradition. Von Wiegand stated that after World War I Cubism was developed in three different directions by Malevich in Russia, Kandinsky in Germany, and Mondrian in Holland.[91] According to von Wiegand the first two artists failed to attain "complete fruition in their work," Malevich "was too far ahead of the primitive traditions from whence he derived" and Kandinsky, part of the German tradition, was too broken and diffused to offer a real continuity of development. At a very dogmatic point in von Wiegand's own thinking, she found Mondrian's art to be the logical result of a progression from Cubism:

> It was Mondrian's fortune to be sustained by two of the richest plastic traditions in Europe, that of Holland and France. He was thus enabled to weld the Latin and the Northern traditions into a new kind of art, in which all local and national characteristics were dissolved in a style that belongs preeminently to the 20th century.[92]

---

[91]Von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," 62.

[92]Ibid., 64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mondrian's role in the history of art was no less than to take the first steps to break with the whole plastic tradition of painting since the Renaissance.[93]

Von Wiegand traced Mondrian's artistic lineage back to Gothic art. She stated that his art followed a linear progression from Gothic Cathedrals to the work of the great fifteenth-century Netherlandish painter Jan Van Eyck and from there to the work of Pieter Breugel, and, eventually to van Gogh. Their careful attention to decorative detail and realism were extremely important influences on Mondrian and his contemporary Jan Toorop.[94] Von Wiegand described the tradition as "more realistic and more spiritual than the plastic corporeal art of the Latin peoples." For von Wiegand, the characteristics of "painstaking care," "perfection of detail," and "infinite patience of product," linked Mondrian to the Northern spiritual tradition.[95]

In addition to validating Mondrian's painting by firmly placing him within an established artistic tradition, von

---

[93]Von Wiegand began her seminal article on Mondrian with a quote from the Constructivist painter, El Lissitzky, who prophetically declared: "The solution of Mondrian is the last accomplishment in the development of Western painting," immediately establishing Piet Mondrian as part of the Western art historical tradition. "Mondrian is the painter who has completely fulfilled the Cubist revolution begun in France." Ibid., 66.

[94]For a well-written introduction to the early work of Piet Mondrian see: Robert P. Welsh, "Piet Mondrian's Early Career: The 'Naturalistic' Periods," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1977).

[95]Von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," 64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand also compared him to the two artists believed by art historians and critics of the 1940s to be the greatest masters of the modern age, Cézanne and Picasso.[96] She wrote, "today, for example, we no longer look at a canvas by Cézanne as his contemporaries did. They saw in it merely an aberration, while to us, it appears now as a logical step in development and an integral part of the great tradition." Von Wiegand suggested to the reader that Mondrian's work would eventually be understood "as the most logical solution for painting after Cubism."[97]

Midway in von Wiegand's essay on Mondrian's life and art she compared his productivity to Pablo Picasso's, the figure most widely considered to be the 20th century artistic genius.[98] In this comparison von Wiegand not only strives to raise Mondrian to Picasso's critical stature, but

---

[96]Many American articles of the 1920s and 1930s referred to Cézanne as one of the greatest artists of all times. Paul Strand wrote "Cézanne...whom we choose to call the great artist of all times." Paul Strand, "American Water Colors at the Brooklyn Museum," The Arts (December 1921): 151. Walter Pach, in his Masters of Modern Art (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924), devotes a whole section of his book to the work of Cézanne as "one of the greatest masters of all times."

[97]Von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," 63.

[98]Charmion von Wiegand had spent a great deal of time studying Picasso and before she met Mondrian had felt Picasso represented modern thinking. With her introduction to Mondrian, her views changed and Mondrian held the supreme position as the visual interpreter of the post-World War II period. For von Wiegand's earlier views on Picasso see: Charmion von Wiegand, "Picasso's Last Period," Direction 3, 6 (Summer 1940): 38-41.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

also presents an argument for Mondrian's greater genius.[99] Despite the artist's enormous influence on modern architecture and design, von Wiegand argued, Mondrian was among the last of the modern painters to achieve recognition. She suggested that by living in Paris for over a quarter of a century, his effect in the field of painting was slight and confined to esoteric circles--not until the thirties did a new revival of abstract art spread his fame abroad. She called his slow linear development the mark of a "true" genius.[100]

Von Wiegand also debunked the plethora of disparaging comments about Mondrian's life and art in the writings of other critics. For instance one critic wrote: "...Mondrian's rectilinear compositions appear like severe designs adaptable to architecture or decoration, but completely outside of the tradition of painting."[101] In response von Wiegand believed changes in modern life demanded a new art form:

---

[99]Picasso was written about extensively by critics and art historians in the late 1930s. Just to mention a few of the major works which portray Picasso as the genius of the 20th century: A.E. Gallatin, Of Art: Plato to Picasso: Aphorisms and Observations (New York: Wittenborn and Co., 1944); Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Picasso: Forty Years of His Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1939); Ambroise Vollard, Recollections of a Picture Dealer, trans. Violet M. Macdonald (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936).

[100]Von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," 64-65.

[101]"Twelve Artists in U.S. Exile," 103.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> But to look at them merely as design is to recognize only one of their aspects and the most external one. For in intensity of feeling and in completely unified plastic expression, they belong to painting as much as any art of the past. Dynamic and overpowering in their energy, their precision and sensibility has been conditioned by the fertile scientific inventions of modern life, which has created new needs and new sensibilities in man. Moreover, on closer inspection, they reveal a sensuousness as rich as the sensuousness in the painting of natural forms. Devoid of any biological, organic or literary connotations their passionate living is expressed solely through pure plastic means. This is their mystery.[102]

Von Wiegand meticulously laid out Mondrian's development as an artist. She described the early art lessons he received from his father and uncle,[103] to his present day activities with the American Abstract Artists. Von Wiegand's article focused on 1914, the year when Mondrian broke with the whole plastic tradition of the Renaissance: 'Mondrian excluded the third dimension, making use only of the surface of the canvas, and began to renounce natural color for primary color and adopted the right angle as the most constant and universal means of expression.'

---

[102]Von Wiegand, "Meaning of Mondrian," 64-65.

[103]Mondrian's father, a high school principal and an amateur painter, gave him his first lessons. Later he studied with an uncle. Destined by his family to be a drawing teacher Mondrian was sent to the Amsterdam Art Academy, where he graduated after three years of study. Mondrian's early landscapes of Holland, the "Skies and Dunes," demonstrate an intense interest in form over color. The texture in the flower compositions already indicated his direction in art to the "eternal and unchanging structure of reality." She suggested the importance of Mondrian's trip and study in Paris, where he arrived in 1910 and became aware, through the work of Picasso and Léger, of the new reality of painting: the surface plane of the picture. Ibid., 64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand reported, "...we are no longer dealing with the visual appearance of the corporeal world but with its potentialities as function and energy." No earlier American author on Mondrian's art had focused on 1914 as the turning point in Mondrian's career. After von Wiegand's article appeared in print, the literature on Mondrian consistently centered on 1914 as the date when Mondrian crossed over into abstraction. Von Wiegand also emphasized the year 1916 as the point in Mondrian's development where all of reality was space, and his work now manifested itself in endless mathematical compositions of horizontals and verticals.[104]

According to von Wiegand, Mondrian's significant role in the de Stijl movement was to elevate the plane to the highest ideal of art. Mondrian purified the canvas of all figuration, subject matter, and symbolism--the plane had been raised to the sole plastic means of expression. The great art of the past--Egyptian, Byzantine, and Medieval--according to von Wiegand, had made use of the plane in a similar fashion. Like Mondrian they shared the same motivation.

Mondrian's work in the de Stijl movement represented, for Charmion von Wiegand, a complete departure from the "materialistic atomic theories of reality" expressed in naturalistic representation and the emergence of a new abstract art of pure relationships of color, line, and form

---

[104]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

revealing a reality beyond appearances, spiritual reality.[105] Thanks to von Wiegand, Mondrian's life, painting, and art historical tradition had been fully introduced to the American public by 1943.

Mondrian's Writings

Von Wiegand made another important contribution to the propagation of Neo-Plasticism in America by translating Mondrian's articles into English. As she left Mondrian's studio after their first meeting, Mondrian pressed a few sheets of handwritten notes into her hand, saying "If you're doing an article on me, I've never written anything on my personal life but I've written down for you a few facts of my life."[106] He hoped that this little statement would make his art clearer. In it von Wiegand found a succinct account of Mondrian's artistic development. She put the pages into more legible English and sent him a copy.[107] He answered as follows: "Very kind of you to copy off my writing. I did

---

[105]Ibid.

[106]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 16-17.

[107]On her second visit to Mondrian's studio, von Wiegand and Mondrian went over her rewriting of the notes. "Today," von Wiegand wrote, "he seemed a little shy and had a certain difficulty speaking; sometimes his English is not so good, and he had a sore throat." They sat on two stools in Mondrian's front room, as there were no chairs, and went over the manuscript. Mondrian made new corrections. He also showed her a new manuscript on "Oppression and Freedom in Art." But she did not read it at this time. Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," 62.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

not consider it an article. I have written it only to explain to you my art development, but it is perhaps useful to the public to better understand Abstract Art."[108] These notes later formed the basis of Mondrian's article "Toward a True Vision of Reality," one of his classic essays.[109] It was published as a brochure for his first one-man exhibition.[110]

---

[108]Von Wiegand stated in an interview: "...it [the essay] was entirely his, you know. He dictated the ideas but he couldn't yet formulate it so well in English. I don't know whether I did it very well either. But I did the best I could." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 35.

[109]"Notes for an Interview, ca. 1941", The New Art--The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian, ed. Harry Holtzman and Merth James (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1986), 336.

[110]Mondrian's first one-person show ever, held in New York, brought him a great deal of attention. Throughout Europe his recognition had been achieved by exhibiting in group shows with Cercle et Carré, Abstraction Création, and other art organizations. Mondrian lived almost 25 years in Paris, the world's art center, and during that time no dealer offered to represent him. The one-man exhibition in New York City, one of the biggest events in Mondrian's life, opened on January 19, 1942 at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery on East 57th Street. (Charmion von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 62.) Valentine Dudensing had arranged his late white canvases in the front room and in the back room included some of the Paris "Facades," and Cubist works and the "Plus-Minus" drawings, as well as a few paintings and watercolors of his early flowers. (For more information on the contents of the exhibition and its reviews see: Rembert, "Mondrian, America, and American Painting," 60-67.) For the first time the public was able to see the evolution of his work. Katherine Dreier, Peggy Guggenheim, and the Museum of Modern Art were among those who bought his art. Even though his work was modestly priced, Mondrian was suddenly independent and could finally live from his work. Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir," 63.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> In the rapid exchange of letters which now took place, I felt the excitement of discovering a new aesthetic world. Mondrian had not had a schoolteacher father for nothing; he delighted in imparting knowledge. "But I am glad to know that these Art problems interest you so much and that for you also art is not a thing separated from life. Many don't or won't see the unity of Art and Life," he wrote me. He kept sending "little supplements" to the first notes he had given me, and seemed satisfied with the revisions.[111]

In the notes, for the first and only time, he wrote about Neo-Plasticism in terms of his personal experience.[112] This initial translation was the start of a deep intellectual relationship between Mondrian and von Wiegand. Mondrian found in von Wiegand a keen translator and English interpreter of his ideas.

During Mondrian's first summer in New York he was rather lonely. Harry Holtzman, with whom he had dined regularly on Wednesday evenings, had left the city for the country.[113] Von Wiegand too found herself very much alone since Joseph Freeman had moved out of their apartment to a hotel to be able to write his current novel without interruption.[114] Von Wiegand and Mondrian gravitated toward

---

[111]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of his New York Period," 61.

[112]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 35.

[113]Rembert, "Mondrian, America, and American Painting," 55.

[114]Joseph Freeman was working on the novel, Never Call Retreat, which would become his first critically successful large work of fiction. See: Gary Robert McConnell, "Joseph Freeman: A Personal Odyssey from Romance to Revolution" (Ph.D. diss., Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1986), 38-47.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one another for companionship. Mondrian decided since there were few distractions that summer, he would devote part of his time to editing and translating his essays, with von Wiegand's help. She, suffering an artist's block, was relieved to have important work assisting her dear friend.

Mondrian wanted his essays published in English so that the American public, especially in New York, would come to understand his work. Mondrian asked von Wiegand if she would help him with his English prose and add a preface to his collection of essays.[115] The first essay he gave her was his pamphlet on Neo-Plasticism, which had been published in Paris in 1920. Although Mondrian was very poor at the time, he had managed to raise nine hundred francs to have it privately printed. If necessary, he said he would do the same thing in the United States.[116] Later, he gave von Wiegand the Bauhaus book of his essays, his handwritten manuscripts, and many notes and catalogues. Most of the material was in Dutch, French, or German. Von Wiegand read and spoke both French and German and was familiar with Dutch, but was nervous that her language skills were not enough for the task at hand. "But you have me," Mondrian said, "and that's all you need."[117]

---

[115]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 61.

[116]Ibid., 62.

[117]Ibid., 63; and Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 55.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Over the next several months, the two met at Mondrian's studio for two or three days each week to work on his writings.[118] Von Wiegand found the project all consuming as she hustled back and forth between her downtown apartment, his studio, and the library. Von Wiegand read everything she could find on abstract art, particularly on de Stijl and Neo-Plasticism. "Whenever I unearthed some article on him in an obscure European publication or a reference to his work, I would copy part of it off, and we would discuss it."[119]

The translation process often slowed to a standstill as Mondrian and Von Wiegand spent hours on a single paragraph or searched in the dictionary to discern the exact shade of meaning of a word. Von Wiegand reported:

> If told that some expression of his was not idiomatic English, he would insist that it made no difference; it was the way he wanted it. No sooner was a part typed off as finished when there would come a note with just a paragraph or two to add, and it would all have to be done over again. He wrote as he painted, clarifying his ideas through many small corrections and emendations. I think the whole is pretty clear now, he would say suddenly, and never again would he look at that particular essay. But before this, he had gone through six or seven revisions.[120]

At the end of the summer, ten essays were roughly translated; a few were ready for publication, others in

---

[118]Bois, Piet Mondrian 1872-1944, 76; and Von Wiegand, Interview by Margit Rowell, 78.

[119]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 61-62.

[120]Ibid., 64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

various stages of completion. Von Wiegand recalled: "I gave him back all his notes and catalogues and freshly typed copies of the manuscripts. Never again would he be able to devote himself so wholeheartedly to writing."[121] When there was a specific demand for immediate publication, Mondrian and von Wiegand returned to work.

Von Wiegand assisted Mondrian when Peggy Guggenheim, back from Europe and establishing a new gallery, asked him to contribute to her catalogue of contemporary art, Art of This Century in 1942.[122] She had begun assembling the collection in London shortly before the war and to house her collection and promote contemporary art Guggenheim opened her Art of This Century Gallery on 57th Street in New York,

---

[121]Ibid., 66.

[122]Mondrian was also close to Peggy Guggenheim. He went there periodically to clean his pictures which she owned. In 1942 Guggenheim bought a drawing, an ocean drawing, from his first one-man show at Valentine Dudensing's.

> [Mondrian] used to go over there to clean the picture and he used to get invited to dinner. Peggy never invited me to dinner when she had the house by the River and was living there with Max Ernst. But she had an apartment before there that is where I used to go where she had this mural made by Pollock. And gave it then--I don't think the Museum of Modern Art wanted it--but they got it. And she had the two little terriers, you know that were very cute. I was there several times. But then she later bought this house or rented the house. But it didn't last too long with Max Ernst. Mondrian used to say, "They do not live in the same world." But he was rather fond of her and he liked going there.

Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 67-74.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

designed by Frederick Kiesler, in October 1941. Mondrian's final manuscript for the catalog, translated by von Wiegand, was signed and dated November, 1941, and titled "Abstract Art".[123]

For the exhibition "Masters of Abstract Art" held at Helena Rubinstein's in 1942, he revised his essay on "Pure Plastic Art."[124] Von Wiegand not only translated Mondrian's essay, but also Hans Richter's work for the catalog. She had been asked to assist with the selection of the show and the editing of the catalog.[125] She wrote to her father: "Yesterday, I worked a solid twelve hours with pauses twice of one hour and while I am very tired today, I feel good. This was for the catalogue of the "Masters of Abstract Art," a fund raiser for the Red Cross, to be shown on April 1 at

---

[123]Holtzman, 331. "Abstract Art" was reprinted in Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art, 1945. Several versions of the manuscript also exist including one earlier version dated October 1941. Piet Mondrian, "Abstract Art," in Art of This Century, edited by Peggy Guggenheim (New York: Art of This Century Gallery, 1942).

[124]Piet Mondrian, "Pure Abstract Art," in Masters of Abstract Art, ed. Stephan C. Lion and Charmion von Wiegand (New York: Helena Rubenstein, 1942).

[125]Von Wiegand met Peggy Guggenheim through Kiesler while he designed the gallery, "Art of This Century." Von Wiegand was quite surprised watching Kiesler work. Here in the gallery he was designing a space which was more Surrealist in tone than his usual constructivist work in order to complement Guggenheim's collection. "...so when it was getting fixed up I used to go over there and watch it. And of course at that time he was hanging geometric pictures, dangling them from the ceiling. And that seemed very strange to me," von Wiegand reported in an interview. Kiesler also designed the furniture in the gallery. Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 97.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Helena Rubinstein's."[126] Von Wiegand rarely achieved recognition for her writing and translating during the 1940s. Her political involvement with the Communist Party and Russia made it difficult for her to obtain work during the war years. She was thrilled when her name was placed as one of the editors of the catalog for the exhibition.

> While it looks like I will not collect any money as usual, this time my name goes on as editor with Lion, plus the fact that I translated articles for [Hans] Richter and for Mondrian and will be given credit. Once I appear in a fancy catalogue with all those high brow sponsors, perhaps the left curse may be taken off of me. I also forced them to find me a typist, who said that when she volunteered for war work, she never expected it would be typing art articles. I put up a fight to get credit and Richter says he may get me some money. He was grateful I did his article and says I would be a treasure for Alfred Barr to whom he promises to introduce me.[127]

This exhibition, assembled by Stephan C. Lion and Charmion von Wiegand, was held at the New Art Center of New York from 1 April to 15 May 1942.[128]

Charmion von Wiegand spent several weeks editing Mondrian's lecture, titled "A New Realism" (delivered January 23, 1942, a few days after the opening of Mondrian's first Valentine Gallery exhibition, to the American Abstract Artists). At his first and only lecture, which was read by Balcomb Greene, artists jammed the Nierendorf Gallery and

---

[126]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Joseph Freeman, Europe, 12 March 1942, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[127]Ibid.

[128]The other essays were by Fernand Léger, George L.K. Morris, Stuart Davis, Carl Holty, and Harry Holtzman.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

stood outside on the stairs. One traditional European artist left in a huff, fulminating against such "dictatorial ideas"; the majority listened with respect, von Wiegand and others reported.[129]

All the essays von Wiegand translated were published posthumously, together with one Mondrian wrote in England, in the Documents of Modern Art series in 1945.[130] On May 4, 1945 von Wiegand wrote to her father:

> ...The essays and translation I worked on with Mondrian have now been published by the painter [Harry Holtzman], who inherited his estate, and without giving me the slightest credit for months of labor. It is for this reason, that I took to my pen again. [She referred here to an article that she was writing for Vogue on Mondrian.] My lawyer wanted me to sue, but it would have made an unpleasant situation and I might have been criticized. There was nothing to get out of a suit but a headache and annoyance.[131]

Von Wiegand assisted in the translations of the essays "The

---

[129]Later in the year, in her annual report of AAA activities for 1941-42, Mrs. Mason wrote of a renewed interest in abstract art and commented that the Mondrian lecture, the second lecture of the series, brought the largest attendance. Mondrian did not actually lecture, but his paper was read by Balcomb Greene, according to Mrs. Mason's account. (Other lectures in the same series were given by George Morris on sculpture, Balcomb Greene on painting, Hans Richter on abstract films (with a showing of his film, "Rhythm," and films by Léger, Duchamp, and Van Eggeling). (American Abstract Artists Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York, NY.) For more information on Mondrian's lecture before the American Abstract Artists see: Rembert, "Mondrian, America, and American Painting," 62-64.

[130]Piet Mondrian, "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art," Documents of Modern Art, ed. Robert Motherwell (New York: Wittenborn, 1945).

[131]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, 4 May 1945, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Necessity for a New Art Teaching in Art, Architecture, and Industry;" "A New Religion?;" "Plastic Art: Reflex of Reality;" and "Space-Determination in Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture"--all were left unfinished and unpublished at Mondrian's death and all were first published in Holtzman's The Collected Writings of Mondrian. The essays, which were completed and translated into English by von Wiegand, were published in Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art of 1945,[132] as well as Holtzman's book with no translation or editing credit ever given to von Wiegand.[133]

Mondrian considered his writings of paramount importance. He wrote all his life. The essays in which he developed his philosophy were the foundation of the de Stijl movement; they gave it coherence and dynamic direction and produced a lasting influence on aesthetic thinking. For him, the theory of Neo-Plasticism was not a personal art expression, but a universal vision of the unity of life and art. "The way lies open to all," he wrote.[134] Charmion von Wiegand had helped him attain his dream of publishing his essays in English.

---

[132]Piet Mondrian, Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art (New York: Wittenborn & Schultz, 1945).

[133]Piet Mondrian, The New Art--The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian, ed. and trans. by Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986).

[134]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Further Understanding of Mondrian's Painting

By 1942, thanks largely to von Wiegand's assistance, Mondrian exerted a far wider circle of influence in the United States than he ever had in Europe. His intimate circle of friends grew to include Alexander Calder, James Johnson Sweeney, Max Ernst, Peggy Guggenheim, Fritz Glarner and Jean Hélion. Mondrian went to dinner with them and attended artists' festivities, including Hans Richter's monthly cocktail parties, where the avant-garde and the exiled artists--André Breton, Marcel Duchamp, and Fernand Léger gathered.[135]

Von Wiegand's and Mondrian's relationship deepened. She spent more time watching her mentor paint. They discussed aesthetics along with art theory. Von Wiegand revealed her new depth of understanding of abstract art in many of the letters to her father and his companion Grace Hammond. A prime example follows:

> ...The curve belongs to organic and natural life and relaxes and rests us for this reason. Only the mathematical circle is pure. The straight line jars us and disturbs us, breaks the organic rhythm--it is in-organic, conceptual, and expressive of spiritual will. It forces us into another world away from all that is pleasing and natural--towards an Absolute. It is the most abstract expression--pure mathematical. All art is made up, in the final analysis, of the curved line and the straight line--the effort toward a synthesis--but Northern Mediterranean art--the classical art of Rome and Greece--was based more on the organic rhythm--the curve. Any painting, whether it be illustrative of human being or a house, or expressive of it or impressionistic of it, or abstracted--makes use of both

---

[135]Ibid., 62-63.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> elements. But modern art has stripped painting of all but the elements and begun over in a new way--it has become architectonic. This is always the sign of a new epoch in the world of a new beginning in culture.[136]

Mondrian's discussions and writings strongly influenced von Wiegand's acceptance of abstract painting. She came to recognize the spiritual meaning of the straight line based on the many discussions with Mondrian, beginning in 1941 with the notes he handed her upon their introduction. Mondrian wrote: "Through the rectangular opposition of straight lines, he [referring to himself] expressed the completely balanced reciprocal action of the opposite forces of life manifested in the reality around us.[137]

Mondrian's Death

On February 1, 1944, Mondrian suddenly grew ill with pneumonia and died. Von Wiegand's devotion to Mondrian was such that she "wept at the funeral and for months couldn't bear to go past and look up at his unlighted studio."[138] Von Wiegand wrote to her father on March 6, 1944:

> On Tuesday, February 1, after I last wrote to you, my dear friend Mondrian died. I had to get up at 3AM, summoned to the hospital, and was there when Mondrian breathed his last of pneumonia at 5:30 that morning. The following day was Mondrian's funeral. He was one

---

[136]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Grace Hammond, Egypt, 27 January 1944, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[137]Piet Mondrian, "[Notes for an Interview] ca. 1941," published in The New Art--The New Life, 336-337.

[138]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 62.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> of the first artists to get a long editorial in the New York Times and all the exiled artists and writers from Paris were present. He would have been 72 tomorrow, which is his birthday. He was very hale and hearty and did all his own housework, as well as painting every day at least six hours. If it hadn't been for that beastly flu germ, which was neglected too long, he would have enjoyed another decade of life, at least.[139]

After Mondrian's death, von Wiegand continued to look for opportunities to immortalize her mentor.

Further Writing on Mondrian

Von Wiegand campaigned in 1945 to write an article on the artist for various magazines. She wanted to honor Mondrian's memory by doing a feature piece in a major mainstream magazine. Despite an initial interest of many publications and hours of writing by von Wiegand, she could not get her account published. Von Wiegand wrote her father on May 4, 1945:

> For the past ten days I have been working on an article for Vogue. They asked me to write a personal account of Mondrian's life here. I sweat writing it and can't image it will fit into their style--at least they will have to cut it in half. But I think I did a good job. Mondrian has already in a year become a legend--the great saint of modern art. The Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with the Free Netherlands Committee has honored him with a memorial exhibition. The picture he gave to me occupies a very prominent place among fifty others...[140]

---

[139]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 6 March 1944, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[140]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 4 May 1945, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.
The painting which von Wiegand refers to is Piet Mondrian's Composition No. 1; Composition with Red, 1931 which was exhibited in Piet Mondrian (New York: The Museum

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand believed that Vogue never published her account because it did not fit with the interests of the magazine, which was a social account of the artist's time in New York.[141]

Von Wiegand also worked on an article for Harper's Bazaar. On July 3, 1945 von Wiegand met with a young woman editor, Ms. Portugal, at Harper's. The editor liked the Mondrian article, which von Wiegand had originally written for Vogue, but insisted it must be reduced by 2000 words with the aesthetic information cut out and the more personal anecdotes about the artist emphasized. Von Wiegand conveyed her frustration to Joseph Freeman:

> Queer how people never gave a damn for his work, now want to know what he cooked and ate and what shaving cream he used. I don't know why it is that those details that make a man of genius part of the crowd are the only things that interest the crowd. The thing that makes him different they don't want to hear about.[142]

To help sell the article, von Wiegand had spent a great deal of time creating a scrapbook about Mondrian's art and life--it included photos of his work and himself, letters, postcards, and gallery exhibition cards; but the extra

---

of Modern Art 21 March - 13 May, 1945).

[141]Charmion von Wiegand, New York to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 31 May 1945, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[142]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Joseph Freeman, Europe, 4 July 1945, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

information could not help sell the piece.[143] The rejection of this important article crushed von Wiegand's hopes.

Von Wiegand continued to read and do research on Neo-plasticism. Her later writings on Mondrian betray a much more in-depth understanding and a unique view point on Neo-Plasticism. In a talk entitled "The Age of Mondrian," given to the members of the American Abstract Artists association on May 25, 1956, von Wiegand discussed the historical influences and the process of Mondrian's painting. She suggested that the foundation for Mondrian's ideas can be found in the laws of proportion and symmetry, developed by Pythagoras, Plato, and Euclid.[144] Von Wiegand deeply believed that Neo-plasticism was related to the new mathematics of the time. Neo-plasticism achieved a new equilibrium by reducing painting to its basic elements: color and line and rediscovering the geometric basis of nature's forms. The new equilibrium was based on asymmetric compositions that presented unequal but equivalent

---

[143]Today, the scrapbook is lost. Its existence is mentioned in letters to her father. Ibid.

[144]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Age of Mondrian," (25 May 1956) American Abstract Artists, New York, Zoe Dusanne Papers, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

For a later in depth discussion on the relationship of Mondrian to geometry see: Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "The New Geometries during World War I and the Postwar Period in France and Holland: Reevaluation and Transformation," in The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 300-339.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

relationships.[145]

For the first time von Wiegand succinctly broke down Mondrian's beliefs into six basic principles: 1) the right angle becomes the strongest means of expression; 2) the colors are limited to the three primaries--red, blue, and yellow--and the three neutrals: black, grey, and white; 3) the diminution of personal hand writing by eliminating the brushstroke to achieve an objective form of expression; 4) the primacy of the plane to destroy all illusionism; 5) the use of opposites to express the principle law of life; 6) and the creation of equilibrium through unequal but equivalent relationships.[146] Von Wiegand, in her translations of his essays, spent many hours discussing these principles with the artist.[147] Her understanding of the tenets used by Mondrian first came from his essay "Toward the True Vision of Reality."[148]

1960 Article on Mondrian

In 1960, the art critic Hilton Kramer approached von

---

[145]Von Wiegand, "The Age of Mondrian," 1.

[146]Ibid., 4.

[147]Von Wiegand, Interview by Margit Rowell, 79-86.

[148]Von Wiegand had taken the notes Mondrian had given her at their first meeting and turned them into the essay by Mondrian, which accompanied the first exhibition of his work in the United States at the Valentine Gallery. The notes of this first meeting are reprinted in Piet Mondrian, The New Art--The New Life, 336-337.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand to write a piece on her memories and thoughts about Mondrian's life and work. The piece would be included in the fourth annual of Arts Yearbook, an issue devoted to the work of Piet Mondrian.[149] Von Wiegand suggested to Kramer the names of other artists who had a great understanding of Mondrian and who should write essays, including Carl Holty and Stuart Davis.[150] In her article, "Mondrian, A Memoir of His New York Period," von Wiegand focused on Mondrian's working methods.[151] The vast amount of writing she had done on the artist at his death and all the years of research now culminated in an influential essay on her mentor. By this time, von Wiegand had largely given up criticism and art historical writing. It was quite logical that she should focus on her memories of the times with Mondrian and how his philosophy corresponded with his painting methods, since the focus of her own work in the 1960s was almost exclusively painting.

She first explained Mondrian's belief in the law of opposites as the principle law of life. Von Wiegand credited his personal struggles with tragedy as the origins of Mondrian's abstract expression. She quoted his writings

---

[149]Charmion von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," Arts Yearbook 4 (1961): 54-65.

[150]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 34.

[151]The material von Wiegand had originally composed for the Vogue article was used as the basis for "Mondrian, Memoir of His New York Period."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in Paris: "in order to love High Noon, it is necessary to have loved the Night, to have deeply known the Dawn,..in order to detest the tragic, it is necessary to have lived a long time."[152]

For the first time in her writing on Mondrian, von Wiegand classified him as a realist. She considered him to be a concrete artist; an artist who constructs entirely from purely plastic elements, that is to say planes and colors excluding sentimentality, lyricism, or symbolism. During her work with Mondrian on his essay "Toward the True Vision of Reality" he dictated the following to her: "At the moment, there is no need for art to create a reality of the imagination based on appearances, events or traditions." Von Wiegand interpreted this statement in her article: "he had little enthusiasm for works of art in which fantasy, Surrealist elements and lyricism played a large part."[153] Von Wiegand also noted: all oppositions [being and becoming, time and eternity] were dissolved by Mondrian in the white square into a great stillness of being; similar to the "emptiness of Buddhism."[154]

---

[152]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 59. Von Wiegand quoted from Piet Mondrian, "The New Art--The New Life: The Culture of Pure Relationships (1931)," reprinted in The New Art--The New Life, 244-276.

[153]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 60.

[154]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1963, Von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman Collaborate

Von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman collaborated on an essay, which Freeman titled "The Geometric Line in the Art of Mondrian and Kandinsky" written in 1963, but never published.[155] This work further expanded on the theme of equilibrium in Mondrian's work, which von Wiegand had mentioned in her previous articles written in the 1940s and 50s. The essay described the work of three artists: Theo van Doesburg, Wassily Kandinsky, and Mondrian. The thesis of the article was that each artist represented a different "perennial aspect of the human enterprise." Van Doesburg, 'a hegelian pragmatist, was above all concerned with the immediate transformation of the immediate environment.' Mondrian had the 'climax of the classical tradition of the West--luminous, austere, Olympian, committed to objective law and to the limits set by law, concerned with the equilibrium in art that was to achieve equilibrium in life and replace the Old Adam with the New Adam.' Kandinsky was the 'Romantic suffused with Russian and oriental thought, who wanted art to spiritualize the world by means that were free, fluid, flexible, Dionysian, boundless, and conditioned above all by the inner necessity of the artist.'[156] All three artists were strongly influenced by the values of the

---

[155]Joseph Freeman and Charmion von Wiegand, "The Geometric Line in the Art of Mondrian and Kandinsky, 1963," JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[156]Ibid., 4-5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

period. Freeman and von Wiegand described the period of 1905-1925 as "an era when materialism achieved a triumph far greater than ever before, when the spirit of man reaffirmed itself in terms that fused ancient philosophy with modern science, and when the social revolution promised to abolish every evil and to establish every good."[157]

The Freemans elevated Mondrian over Kandinsky and Van Doesburg, calling the former a romantic and the later a pragmatist. Mondrian's path, the authors thought, was the only means to a precise order within society. Neoplasticism stands for equity; "the equivalence of the plastic means in the composition demonstrates that it is possible for each, in spite of differences, to have the same value as others." The equilibrium Mondrian achieved integrates "particulars and individuals with the whole, there by creating future society and real unity."[158] The right angle becomes a symbol for Mondrian, according to the Freemans, for the universal liberation and redemption of human beings. The most important symbolic message of Mondrian's aesthetics, as defined by von Wiegand and Freeman, was his affirmation of the doctrines of Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity that all men are equal, not in capacity but in value.

---

[157]Ibid., 8.

[158]Ibid., 9.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Diagonal

In the final year of Joseph Freeman's life, von Wiegand and Freeman found themselves once again reexamining the meaning of Mondrian's life work. In 1965 while Freeman lay dying, the two composed "The Horizontal, The Vertical and the Diagonal as Symbols of Man's Fate."[159] The Freemans wished to explain why Mondrian had rejected the diagonal, which they considered one of the great mysteries of modern art:

> There were only two lines in the cosmos, the horizontal and the vertical. What others called the diagonal was for [Mondrian] no more than the horizontal or the vertical at an angle of 45 degrees. Was this reason enough for Mondrian to break with de Stijl?[160]

As in every article von Wiegand wrote on Mondrian, his paintings are tied to their historical tradition.

> As a painter he was the climax and the closing of the whole tradition of Western art as structure. He was steeped in this tradition and knew its evolution from the golden mean of Pythagoras and Plato, through the cross of the Gothic age and the Divine Proportion of Leonardo da Vinci and Paccioli in the Renaissance, down to the Cubist art of our own era. For him the climax of this development were the primary colors and the right angle.[161]

After placing Mondrian in an historical context, the Freemans analyzed the purpose of Mondrian's oeuvre:

---

[159]Joseph Freeman and Charmion von Wiegand, "The Horizontal, The Vertical and the Diagonal as Symbols of Man's Fate," JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[160]Ibid., 10.

[161]Ibid., 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> All is space; form is space, and what we see as empty space is space. To create unity, art has to follow not nature's visible aspect, but what nature really is. Nature appears in oppositions, yet nature is unity. Form is limited space concrete only through its determination. Art has to determine space as well as form and to create the equivalence of these two factors.[162]

Next they examined the relationship between Mondrian and Kandinsky. They suggested the two artist's philosophies were linked in their interpretation of Theosophy. After connecting the two artists, they turned to Kandisky's writings on the diagonal for answers to Mondrian's interpretation of lines placed at 45 degree angles. Freeman and von Wiegand concluded that where Mondrian found the diagonal line objectionable, Kandinsky found the diagonal line indispensable. This line of logic did not lead them to answers but to more questions. The only link between the men was that they were "metaphysical painters of the highest order whose quest for the reality behind appearance emphasized different aspects of the appearance and the reality."[163]

The Freeman's final search for answers brought them to Mondrian's own writing, specifically "Tragic's Oppression," left unfinished at the artist's death. The Freeman's quoted:

> Reality appears tragic to us, he went on, because of the disequilibrium and confusion of its appearances. What makes us suffer is our subjective vision and the position in which we find ourselves determined. Tragic

---

[162]Ibid., 5.

[163]Ibid., 7.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> manifestations and feelings exist only in time, but for us time is reality. Subjective vision and experience make it impossible for us to be happy. But if we cannot free ourselves, we can free our vision; we can escape tragic oppression through a clear vision of true reality. This is veiled, but it exists.[164]

The authors concluded that the function of art for Mondrian, like the function of philosophy for Plato, is to free us from the tyranny of time and appearance to achieve freedom, eternity, and reality. The diagonal created equal relationships and went against Mondrian's belief in the "equivalence of life's unequal oppositions leading to the freedom of equilibrium."[165]

---

[164]Ibid., 13. The paraphrasing of Mondrian's ideas comes from one of the notes which von Wiegand translated two decades before: Piet Mondrian, "Tragic's Oppression," in The New Life: The New Art, 374.

[165]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ABSTRACTION, SPIRITUALISM, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE ART AND WRITING OF CHARMION VON WIEGAND

by

JENNIFER NEWTON HERSH

VOLUME II

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER VII

PAINTING AND COLLAGE--1945-1950

The Aftermath of World War II

During the late 1940s, the intellectual and artistic production of Charmion von Wiegand and her husband Joseph Freeman centered on the question: What is the key to the salvation of humanity? World War II brought the realities of modern warfare closer to home than any previous conflict. No American could escape regulatory measures that governed the economy and the terrifying implications of the atomic bomb. The Freemans strove to find a peaceful and healthy pathway. Their artistic production of the late 1940s recorded their search and discoveries.

The Freemans, like most Americans, were facing economic difficulties in the post-war period. Price controls maintained by the Office of Price Administration had grown unpopular in peacetime. Many Americans believed that inflation could best be combatted by allowing free competition to force prices to their natural levels. The end of federal price control in 1946 sent prices skyrocketing. Von Wiegand wrote to her father on July 10, 1946:

> I cannot understand the attitude in Washington, the reckless disregard for the future. Since the lifting

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> of the OPA, the cost of living in about a week has risen fourteen percent. If you figure that it has gone up since the war about fifty percent, you can see what we are headed for. I am so frightened by the threat of uncontrolled inflation...[1]

By December of 1946 prices had risen 32 per cent higher than a year before.[2] Von Wiegand described in a letter to her father in October of 1946 the effect of these economic changes:

> The reason I have not written is that we were confronted with such a change in living conditions that it is frightening. There has been a new low reached and it was not due to the trucking strike alone. Food has suddenly leaped up to appalling prices, that is, if you can get it. My whole time seems to be taken up in trying to keep relatively clean without soap and to finding something to make a meal with. Now isn't that ridiculous in the USA, which won the war and has the most resources of any country in the world?[3]

---

[1]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 10 July 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[2]For an understanding of the domestic policies of the Truman administration see: Barton J. Bernstein, ed., Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970); and William G. Berman, The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1970); and Robert J. Donovan, Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996).

[3]In the Hoover Archive at Stanford University there are numerous letters from Charmion von Wiegand to her father, Karl von Wiegand, during 1946, which chronicle the difficulties of living in the United States, particularly New York. Several excerpts follow. Von Wiegand wrote from her 31st Street apartment.

> After lunch I go out with my market basket like a regular "hausfrau". One has to use ingenuity to eat. This is a poor neighborhood, and so if I want cake, I must go at least to the fifties. The meat market I use, is closed and has been for two weeks. The fish store next to it is closed also, although I don't understand that...

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

For the Freemans and others economic hardships worsened as strikes and food shortages multiplied in 1946.[4]

Meanwhile, reverberations from the final blow of the war--the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that forced the Japanese to surrender in August, 1945--still rippled. The total destruction caused by America's terrifying new weapon not only hastened the end of the war, but brought home to millions the realization that another world war could destroy civilization.[5] After Karl

---

Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 4 October 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

> Till the end, I thought he [Truman] would keep the controls on. He spoke against the bad men who were depriving the public of meat for greed and then he capitulated completely to them. This morning so many cattle were going to the Chicago stock yards that they had to call out the police. Frankly, this meat fight has obscured the true issue--the inflation of all food.

Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 16 October 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[4]Workers sought to retain the high wages of overtime work during the war years. As a result, most major industries adopted new wage schedules calling for increases of about eighteen cents an hour. During the next two years the workers obtained second round and third round increases to keep up with post-war inflation and in turn adding to the drastic rise of production costs. For more information on United States economics of the 1940s, particularly the numerous strikes consult: Milton Mankoff, The Poverty of Progress: The Political Economy of American Social Problems (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1972).

[5]For more information on American culture and atomic weapons see: Richard Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972); Dennis Wainstock, The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996); and Robert P. Newman, Truman and the Hiroshima Cult (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

von Wiegand's article on a visit to Mount Sinai appeared in print, Joseph Freeman wrote:

> ...unless men stop killing each other, they will be wiped off the face of the earth. The day on which your piece appeared Albert Einstein announced that the H-bomb can destroy all life and vegetation on earth. This boils everything down to the moral choice--the one you so clearly stated, as Moses did, from Mount Sinai. We must stop killing or perish. If only Washington and Moscow would listen![6]

The threat of atomic weapons came up often in conversation among the Freemans and their intellectual circle in New York.

With von Wiegand's active support, Freeman worked to see the scientific community enforce ethical guidelines. As an influential member of the public relations firm of Edward L. Bernays, which did many promotional projects for groups of scientists, Freeman aided the selection of the scientific honors awarded by the agency to support like minded individuals calling for ethically responsible scientific practice. Joseph Freeman wrote von Wiegand about his selection of Prof. Art Horenell for Bernay's Atomic Energy Award:

> Edward L. Bernays Atomic Energy Award which is being given to Prof. Horenell of Duke University for a grand paper along the lines we have been thinking and talking these past five years--the application of science and ethics to the control of material conquests, so deadly without that control. It's in the spirit of Mondrian, very scientific and your demon-public-relations husband has coined a slogan which pleased Eddie [Freeman's boss]: What the world needs, is a SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC

---

[6]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 13 February 1950, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

MANHATTAN PROJECT.[7]

In spite of the difficulties, Americans did not retreat into a shell of isolationism after the war was won. Convinced that only collective world security could maintain peace, the United States helped form the United Nations in 1945, which promised a better world than the moribund League of Nations following World War I.[8] Yet scarcely had the U.N. been established when harmony was threatened by division of the globe into two hostile camps, one looking to the United States for leadership, the other to the Soviet Union. Charmion von Wiegand, nervous about the growing tensions between the United States and Russia, corresponded frequently with her father regarding the relations between the two super powers. Karl von Wiegand wrote the Freemans:

> I am skeptical about immediate war unless someone's foot slips or deliberately precipitates it. Russia doesn't want war--not yet if ever and neither do we. I do think it is eventually almost inevitable and that both sides are building up for that eventuality. It is a clash between an old and a new civilization, and that means a long struggle. Even a war will not end it. It may accelerate its process. There is a great parallel or analogy between today in Europe, and the Roman Empire. It was 300 years in falling. The coming of Christianity undermined it but it took a long time. Today Communism, Socialism, and other isms are undermining the Christian civilization that began 1800

---

[7]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Paris, 1 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[8]For more information on the forming of the United Nations see: Robert A. Divine, Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism During World War II (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1967); and William L. Neumann, After Victory: Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, and the Making of Peace (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> years ago. That civilization has become spiritually almost as dead as the Pagan Gods of Rome at that time. they see that far better in the Kremlin than in London or Washington...[9]

Like Russia, the United States, and their allies maneuvered for power, building even more lethal weapons for nuclear attack and defense. The Cold War threatened to lead the world into a global conflict that would dwarf even World War II.[10]

Von Wiegand sank into great despair in 1946 over the congressional elections. Republicans gained a majority in both houses as voters, rebelling against wartime controls and taxes, turned out the party in power.[11] Von Wiegand responded to a letter from her father regarding the election of the 80th Congress:

> Things are going to be different, but are they going to be better? I did not vote. There was nothing to vote for, I do not for one minute believe that the Republicans will do better, and they cannot bring back an era that is over. All of the shortages to a good

---

[9]Karl von Wiegand, Hotel Meurice, Paris, France, to the Freemans, New York, 29 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[10]For Truman's foreign policy and the beginnings of the Cold War see: Gabriel Kolko, The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990); Lloyd C. Gardner, Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941-1949 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970); Richard S. Walton, Harry Wallace, Harry Truman, the Cold War (New York: Viking, 1976); and Herbert Druks, Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 1945-1953 (New York: R. Speller, 1996).

[11]For more information on the Republican Party and the Republican Congress see: Susan M. Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> extent have been caused by manipulation to show up the administration. The people that do that, do not have the good of the whole country at heart. Perhaps they will not throw us into a depression until later, but life is just going to be a new kind of headache.[12]

The Republicans now had their chance to put their own stamp on a reconversion program. In 1947, they passed the tax bill that slashed taxes for the rich and added the Taft-Hartley Act, which weakened organized unions' power.[13]

Alienated by politics, Charmion von Wiegand, like many of the American artists of the period, turned her energies to the New York art scene. Rejecting Paris, a major source of inspiration for American artists before World War II, von Wiegand wrote to her father:

> I know of nothing that has come out of France artistically or in a literary way of importance since the war. There are still the fine writers of the pre-war era like Andre Gide and the painters like Picasso, but they have not found any new expression. I think the war must exhaust all creative energies for a time. A certain amount of security both physical and mental is necessary to produce good art...[14]

Later while traveling in Europe, von Wiegand stressed to her husband the importance of New York as inspiration for her own art:

---

[12]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, France, 7 November 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[13]For more information on the Republican Congress and the Taft Hartley Act see: R. Alton Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley: A Question of Mandate (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966).

[14]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 30 July 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> I would not like to live permanently in Europe. I love this trip and for me it is a great relaxation. But Europe is no longer the center of life, its rhythm is slower, different. I feel as an artist that I am much more at home in the center of Manhattan. I like to look at all these old things, but they no longer thrill me with that direct thrill of something living. I study them as the steps of humanity's advance but what the artist is sustained by is the point of tension where the past and future meet in the living present.[15]

Freeman had just completed his first major novel, Never Call Retreat,[16] an opus on political destiny and human freedom: "I know how you feel about Europe," he wrote von Wiegand, "I said it toward the end of Never Call Retreat when the hero is flying to the USA."[17] As the plane left the British airfield, headed to America after the atrocities of World War II, the character in Freeman's book says, "I am really flying cross the sea, away, perhaps forever, from the Europe which until now had been my whole life and toward a vast unknown America alluring with promises and enigmas of an existence about to be born."[18] Joseph Freeman and Charmion von Wiegand recognized, along with the writers and intellectuals who fled Europe for the United States, that in the post World War II era the new capital of art and

---

[15]Charmion von Wiegand, Hotel Hassler, Rome, Italy, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 12 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[16]Joseph Freeman, Never Call Retreat (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1943).

[17]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Paris, 16 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[18]Freeman, Never Call Retreat, 660.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

literature would be New York.

First One-Person Show

Von Wiegand, in spite of the distractions of economic and political hardships, prepared for her first one-person show. Rose Fried, who took over Dan Harris's New York Pincotheca Gallery in 1935, had employed von Wiegand to assist her in planning exhibitions, writing catalog essays, and helping in sales. As von Wiegand's own painting progressed, Fried decided to include her work in a number of group shows at the gallery. By 1946, Fried, recognizing an artist of maturity, offered von Wiegand her first one-person exhibition.[19] Charmion von Wiegand shared the news with her father:

> I have been fortunate that a small dealer, a friend of mine, has been kind enough to offer me an exhibition in the fall. I have work only in watercolor because I cannot paint in oil in this small space, but I still have a lot more to do if I am going to show publicly. I have two pictures on exhibition now.[20]

Shortly after writing to her father, von Wiegand convinced the landlord to allow her and Joe Freeman to move from their small apartment at 301 East 38th Street to a much larger flat in the same building on the 17th floor. Von Wiegand used the spare bedroom with its East River views as

---

[19]For more information on Rose Fried and the history of the Pincotheca Gallery see: Rose Fried Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

[20]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 10 July 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her studio. This move gave her the extra space to more fully prepare for the momentous occasion of her first solo exhibition. She began to work on a larger scale and in oils.[21] Von Wiegand wrote her father:

> I try to get at least half a day for painting, as I must have quite a number of canvases ready, if I am to have an exhibition. I feel that I have made an advance of late and that I am at last on the road I wish to travel. My pictures are very colorful but they would no doubt puzzle you greatly.[22]

The paintings and collage exhibited in von Wiegand's first one-person show at the Fried Gallery in March, 1947, revealed a variety of sources for color, structure, and subjects.[23] In a press release for the exhibition von Wiegand stated her view of modern art during this decade:

---

[21]Von Wiegand's mother Inez von Wiegand wrote a mutual friend, Zoe Dusanne regarding her daughter's activities preparing for the show:

> She [Charmion] is so busy just now I do not see her often, I hope she will have success with her showing in March. She has been making some very interesting and nice things of late and has moved away up on the seventeenth floor with one more room. The apartment is indeed an improvement. A nice view of the East River.

Inez von Wiegand, Great Neck, NY, to Zoe Dusanne, Seattle WA, 18 February 1947, Manuscripts and University Archives, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, WA.

[22]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 30 July 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[23]Rose Fried, "At the Pincotheca, 20 West 58th Street, a one-man show of Charmion von Wiegand's abstract paintings, gouaches and collages, through April to May 10th, 1947: Press Release," April 1947, Pincotheca Gallery, New York, NY, Rose Fried Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> ...I seek to employ the free floating space, still three dimensional, of Kandinsky, created through liberated pure colors and rhythms of line... I refer to the bio-morphic forms of Arp and Miro. Through the process of automatism forms are brought to consciousness and there disciplined through color and reduction of particularities... I wish to indicate the spirit of external modern life: the dynamic movements of our 20th century metropolis. Here geometric forms are taken from the fugue-like procession of streets, of electric lights at night, and from the geometric shapes of technical utilities of buildings... The multiplicity of things which lie in no man's land just beyond the world of appearance enchants me. Therefore, for me the path toward unity lies through diversity.[24]

In this "treatise" von Wiegand succinctly declared the philosophical foundation of her art. She described her methods, automatism, and collage; her subject, the city; her vocabulary, pure color, line, and shape; and the artists that influenced her choices: Kandinsky, Arp, Miro, and Mondrian.

The paintings, watercolors and collages exhibited in her first one-person show can be divided into two categories. Von Wiegand based her biomorphic work on psyche-automatism exercises, as taught to her by John Graham and Hans Richter, and her study of Kandinsky, Arp, and Miro. Works such as Dance of the Elements, ca. 1946,[25] Disparate Elements, ca. 1946,[26] Celestial Chart, ca. 1946,[27] The

---

[24]Ibid.

[25]Charmion von Wiegand, Dance of the Elements, oil on canvas, ca. 1946, Collection of Mrs. Anne Feinberg, New York.

[26]Charmion von Wiegand, Disparate Elements, oil on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Floating Continent, ca. 1946,[28] and Christmas Eve, 1947[29] all are works woven either of torn organic paper shapes, or solid painted lobular forms, or a combination of the two. She also exhibited a large number of works from her "Form" series inspired by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater. These included Thought-Forms,[30] Burgeoning Forms, ca. 1946,[31] Dream Form, ca. 1946,[32] The Nuptial Form, ca. 1946,[33] The Ominous Form, 1946[34] (Fig. 8), Forms #6, Disparate Forms, 1946,[35] The Swan Form, ca 1946,[36] The Telescopic Form,

---

[27]Charmion von Wiegand, Celestial Chart, collage, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[28]Charmion von Wiegand, The Floating Continent, gouache on canvas, ca. 1946, Collection of Alice Frank, New York.

[29]Charmion von Wiegand, Christmas Eve, collage: metallic paper, ink, painted white, 1947, Estate of the Artist, New York.

[30]Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Thought-Forms (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901). For more information on Thought-Forms see Sixten Ringbom, "Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers," The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, exhibition catalog, (New York: Abbeville Press printed for Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985), 134-137.

[31]Charmion von Wiegand, Burgeoning Forms, collage, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[32]Charmion von Wiegand, Dream Form, oil on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[33]Charmion von Wiegand, The Nuptial Form, oil on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[34]Charmion von Wiegand, The Ominous Form, oil on canvas, 1946, Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Zoe Dusanne.

[35]Charmion von Wiegand, Forms #6, Disparate Forms, oil on canvas, 1946, Private Collection.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1946,[37] and The Warrior Form, ca. 1946.[38] Mondrian was the sole influence for the ten large geometric paintings, which included many works from her "New York Series:" City Lights, 1947[39] (Fig. 9), Manhattan, ca. 1946,[40] Greenwich Village, ca. 1946,[41] New York--Spring, ca. 1946,[42] New York--Summer, ca. 1946,[43] New York--Winter, ca. 1946,[44] Midsummer Night, ca. 1946,[45] and Second Avenue, ca. 1946.[46]

---

[36]Charmion von Wiegand, The Swan Form, collage, 1946, collection unknown.

[37]Charmion von Wiegand, The Telescopic Form, gouache on canvas, 1946, collection unknown.

[38]Charmion von Wiegand, The Warrior Form, gouache on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[39]Charmion von Wiegand, City Lights, oil on canvas, 1947, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

[40]Charmion von Wiegand, Manhattan, gouache on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[41]Charmion von Wiegand, Greenwich Village, oil on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[42]Charmion von Wiegand, New York--Spring, collage, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[43]Charmion von Wiegand, New York--Summer, collage, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[44]Charmion von Wiegand, New York--Winter, collage, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[45]Charmion von Wiegand, Midsummer Night, gouache on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

[46]Charmion von Wiegand, Second Avenue, gouache on canvas, ca. 1946, collection unknown.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reviews

Charmion von Wiegand, extremely sensitive to the reactions to her show, visited the exhibition for an hour or so each day to see who and how many people had attended. She wrote her father:

> Attendance was very low at the first of last week, but that was to be expected after the large crowd at the opening. Now the critics are coming, but probably I will not merit too much attention with a first showing. There are no more sales as yet. But the artists continue to visit the show and to be surprised and pleased. Their approval is more important to me than any other publicity, for the artists really are the first public of the individual artist, and they do more to determine the future of a reputation than anyone else. The critics, the museums, the collectors eventually reflect their judgment.[47]

Their judgment turned out to be heart warming. Von Wiegand's first one-person exhibition received many favorable reviews. Margaret Brenning wrote in Art Digest that the paintings demonstrate:

> ...a wide diversity of invention in their lively patterning. Brightly colored forms jostle each other in skillfully devised relations of triangle, rectangle, and occasional circles, to form handsome all-over designs. Color, as well as form, functions in these effective abstractions in which all suggestion of space is eliminated in their flat two dimensional patterns.[48]

Jean Cassou, a critic for Art News, reported:

> Her own abstractions are made up of endless mazes of interpenetrating curves and ovals. In some of the collages she does use rectangles, but these are multiple, minute fragments of bright metallic paper.

---

[47]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 29 April 1947, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[48]M(argaret) B(renning), "Charmion von Wiegand," Art Digest 22 (1 January 1948): 20-21.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> There is considerable originality here in use of color and in organization of small, rhythmic shapes.[49]

The favorable reviews helped trigger the sale of six collages out of the 12 exhibited, which covered von Wiegand's expenses--paint, canvas, and printing costs of the mailer--[50]and secured an invitation to exhibit her work in Ohio for one month between February and March, 1948.[51]

Surrealism and Organic Forms

For von Wiegand, being a modern artist meant staying abreast of significant developments and changes within the vanguard movement. It was not a static condition but a process of change and assimilation. In addition to the influences of Jules Pascin, Joseph Stella, and John Graham,

---

[49]Jean Cassou, "Charmion Wiegand [Pincotheca; to May 10]," Art News 46 (May 1947): 46.

[50]Charmion von Wiegand conveyed to her father the reactions to her exhibition:

> ...I had very encouraging reviews in the papers and magazines. In fact, I am not thoroughly accepted as a modern painter, but it will take several years before a real reputation can be established. Joe says I am spoiled because it is coming very fast for me. But if I count the years of fumbling, then I don't think it is so fast.

Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 27 January 1948, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[51]"Now I must run to the framer's. My exhibition has been invited out to Ohio for a month's showing between February and March. There is a lot of detail to get the things together for shipping." Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 27 January 1948, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her art was also, for a brief time, affected by Surrealism. By the time of von Wiegand's review of the Museum of Modern Art Show, "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," in 1936, she had been exposed to Surrealist art for at least five years.[52]

Surrealist art represented a number of new pictorial possibilities, but not all pertained to von Wiegand's own purpose. The irrational illusionism of Salvador Dali and René Magritte did not appeal to her because it smacked of the illustrative work she so detested. Von Wiegand experimented with the psychic automatism of André Masson and Max Ernst as taught to her by the artist, John Graham, and

---

[52]In 1931, the movement received its first American show at the Wadsworth Antheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, an exhibition that was brought to New York in January of 1932 by Julien Levy. Between 1932 and 1936, Levy, who had become a leading Surrealist dealer, also showed Man Ray, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Giacometti, Magritte, and Tanguy. In 1933 Miro and Masson were given shows at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, and in 1934 Dali made his well-publicized appearance in this country. Nineteen thirty-six saw the culmination of the flurry of Surrealist activity with the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition. "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," and its well-illustrated catalogue.

Even before these exhibitions were initiated, however, von Wiegand's appetite for Surrealist art had been whetted by the illustrations in Cahiers d'Art and by the little magazines--Broom, Secession, Transition--which von Wiegand read with enthusiasm, thanks to Hart Crane's introduction. In addition, von Wiegand was aware of the activities of Levy's Gallery and was occasionally involved with its artists and events. Jeffrey Wechsler, Surrealism and American Art (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1976).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the filmmaker, Hans Richter.[53] Richter had worked with her husband Joseph Freeman in the 1930s.[54]

Von Wiegand predominantly used organic shapes in many of the works created during 1945-1947, such as Abstraction, 1945,[55] Dance of the Elements, 1945,[56] Telescopic Forms, 1945,[57] and Untitled, 1946, (Fig. 10).[58] Von Wiegand's several years of practice of psyche-automatism changed the forms of her paintings to a biomorphic style, reminiscent of

---

[53]Von Wiegand had been strongly influenced by Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century when it opened in 1942, the Surrealist paintings were displayed unframed and projecting from the curved walls in a long gallery that approached the shape of a cylinder, with its floor and ceiling level. The stated purpose of the architect, Frederick Kiesler, in this unique conception was "to break down the physical and mental barriers which separated people from the art they live with, working toward a unity of vision and fact as prevailed in primitive times." Kiesler's statement combined the main theoretical concerns of the Surrealists living in New York at the time; an interest in the mythic past displayed in a spatial context in which a painting, at least metaphorically, broke beyond the limits of the canvas and became a part of the surrounding space. Von Wiegand had been invited by Kiesler and Guggenheim to assist with the selection, catalog, and hanging of the exhibition. Her involvement strongly influenced her early 1940s organic abstractions. Frederick J. Kiesler, "Design-Appreciation," VVV 2-3 (March 1943): 76.

[54]Hans Richter File, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[55]Charmion von Wiegand, Abstraction, tempera on panel, 1945, Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Zoe Dusanne.

[56]Charmion von Wiegand, Dance of the Elements, oil on canvas, 1945, Collection of Andrew Ethe, New York.

[57]Charmion von Wiegand, Telescopic Forms, gouache on paper, 1945, Collection of the Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb Incorporated, New York.

[58]Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled, gouache on paper, 1946, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Carl Holty.

> I started by doing drawings automatically, fifty or a hundred a night just fast. Then I decided they needed color. And certain paintings came out of that. Seattle owns the one that I think came out the best, the museum there. And there are others around.[59]

In Abstraction, 1945, exhibited at the Seattle Art Museum, von Wiegand used flat color on a white background. Many of the forms are outlined with a fine black line.

Incorporating "the Mondrian palette" (red, yellow, blue, grey, and white), she also introduced orange, using it sparingly throughout the work. The piece is simple, clean, pure in its abstraction and consciously composed of alternating dark and light tones. Endless mazes of interpenetrating flat round planes dominate this abstraction. Each shape flows gracefully into the next. A similar composition, Untitled, 1946, in the Metropolitan Museum's collection, a biomorphic work in bright colors, depicts forms resembling the shapes of plant leaves. The primary color triad of red, yellow, and blue is the only evidence of von Wiegand's flirtation with Neo-Plasticism.[60]

A short review in the New York Times, May 1947, praised von Wiegand's work from the mid-1940s as, "considerably original" singling out Individual Worlds, 1947 (Fig. 11)[61]

---

[59]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 18.

[60]Larsen, "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones," 31.

[61]Charmion von Wiegand, Individual Worlds, oil on canvas, 1947, Collection of Barbara B. Millhouse.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

as representative of von Wiegand's vision.[62] In this composition, von Wiegand painted with red, blue, yellow, white, and gray. She reorganized Mondrian's grid into free-form compartments, each containing a simplified symbol, such as a heart, triangular tree, sun, and half moon. The first generation abstractionist, Wassily Kandinsky strongly influenced von Wiegand's visual language of universal forms. The organic shapes surrounding each niche flow freely from one form into the next. This type of rhythmic shifting of color from shape to shape was not seen in the majority of work of von Wiegand's peers. Only Adolph Gottlieb's pictographs come close to resembling von Wiegand's abstract explorations.[63]

Von Wiegand and Kandinsky

On the whole, the style of the paintings and collages in von Wiegand's first solo exhibition in 1947, along with the explanatory brochure accompanying the show, point to the first generation European abstract artists as von Wiegand's strongest inspiration. This is not surprising, since in this same year von Wiegand organized "White Plane," an exhibition of the works of leading European abstract

---

[62]Grace Glueck, "Charmion von Wiegand," New York Times, 10 May 1947, 26(C).

[63]Von Wiegand knew of Adolph Gottlieb's pictographs. She covered his work for the The New Masses. Consult von Weigand's review: Charmion von Wiegand, "Fine Arts," New Masses 23 (20 April 1937): 28-29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

artists: Mondrian, Malevich, and Kandinsky, at Rose Fried's Pincotheca Gallery.[64] Von Wiegand singled out Kandinsky as the most important painter of the 20th century. Von Wiegand wrote in the brochure for "White Plane:"

> Kandinsky, one of the leaders of Abstract Expressionism in Germany, is credited with having made the first pure abstract painting in 1911. "With the object suppressed, the means of expression are not diminished but, on the contrary, multiplied to infinity," he declared. At variance with the materialistic structural art of Cubism, he sought in painting a new spiritual harmony of color and line closely akin to music. Out of his work, carried on in Russia, Germany, and France, has grown the large movement of Non-Objective Art.[65]

Kandinsky's ideas shaped von Wiegand's and other American artists' concepts, including Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, Abraham Walkowitz, and Oscar

---

[64]Von Wiegand praised all three movements for the same trends: 1) a greater consciousness of abstraction; 2) a search for a new structure; 3) an emphasis on relationships instead of objects; 4) an urge toward a more universal expression. Charmion von Wiegand, "The White Plane, The Pincotheca Gallery, 1947" TMs, Rose Fried Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York, NY.

[65]Ibid.

It is interesting to note that von Wiegand used the term non-objective throughout the 1930s and 1940s to mean abstract art. Mondrian and Kandinsky did not like this translation of the German word gegenstandslos (without object) to be translated as "non-objective." They felt that this translation, according to Rose-Carol Washton Long, "evoked the negative connotation of philosophical subjectivity, where as they wanted to emphasize the universal and international aspects of their work." See Rose-Carol Washton Long, "Non-Objective," Guggenheim Museum: A to Z (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1992), 200.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bluemner.[66] Von Wiegand owned a copy of Concerning the Spiritual in Art,[67] written by Kandinsky in 1912,[68] and she had ample opportunity to see Kandinsky's art in the

---

[66]Numerous American artists were interested in Kandinsky's ideas. In addition to the artists mentioned in the text, a group of American artists who followed the ideas of Theosophy and Kandinsky formed the Transcendental Painting Group in Taos, New Mexico, in 1938. The artists were Raymond Johnson, Emil Bisttram, Agnes Pelton, Lawren Harris, and others. At about the same time, Onslow-Ford founded the Dynaton Group on the West Coast along with Wolfgang Paalen and Lee Mullican. For specific information on the California painters see: Pacific Dreams: Currents of Surrealism and Fantasy in California Art, 1934-1957, ed. Susan Ehrlich (Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, 1995); and Charles C. Eldredge, Julie Schimmel, William H. Truettner, Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; New York: Abbeville Press, 1986.).

In New York during the late 1930s and 40s a growing spiritual interest manifested itself in the work of Mark Rothko, Richard Pousette-Dart, and Adolph Gottlieb. Many of the artists who were subscribing to Kandinsky's ideas were also pursuing Zen, the I Ching, and tarot. For more information see: Maurice Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art," The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, exhibition catalog, (New York: Abbeville Press printed for Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985), 43; and Gail Levin and Marianne Lorenz, Theme and Improvisation: Kandinsky and the American Avant-Garde, 1912-1950 (Boston: A Bulfinch Press Book, Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 10-19.

[67]Wassily Kandinsky, The Art of Spiritual Harmony, trans. Michael T. H. Sadler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 13.

[68]Von Wiegand was too young to have been influenced by Kandinsky's ideas when excerpts from On The Spiritual in Art were published by Camera Work in the July 1912 issue. ("Extracts from 'The Spiritual in Art,'" Camera Work 39 [July 1912]: 34.) Von Wiegand owned the 1946 edition: On the Spiritual in Art, trans. and ed. by Hilda Rebay (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Museum of Non-Objective Painting, 1946).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

exhibitions of the Société Anonyme, which she attended with Joseph Stella.[69]

Von Wiegand studied the sources of Kandinsky's ideas: Theosophical books, which contained illustrations of nonmaterialistic entities and attributed spiritual meanings to various colors. Books such as C.W. Leadbeater, Man Visible and Invisible[70] and Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Thought-Forms[71] intrigued her most of all. (Other American artists--including Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, and Georgia O'Keeffe--who were searching for visual ways to represent the spiritual, also turned to Leadbeater's books for inspiration.) For example, heat, fire, and light

---

[69]For more information on Katherine Dreier and the Société Anonyme's exhibitions see Ruth Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," Arts Magazine LI (May 1977): 97-101; and Ruth Bohan, "The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition 1926-1927: Katherine Sophie Dreier and the Promotion of Modern Art in America" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1980); Ruth Bohan, The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982); and The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest of Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonne, eds., Robert L. Herbert, Eleanor S. Apter, Elise K. Kenney; contributing editor, Ruth L. Bohan; assistant editor, Rosalyn M. Deutsche (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.).

[70]C.W. Leadbeater, Man Visible and Invisible (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1902).

[71]Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Thought-Forms (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901).
For more information on Thought-Forms see Sixten Ringbom, "Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers," The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, exhibition catalog (New York: Abbeville Press printed for Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985), 134-137.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

often symbolized the realization of mystic oneness for many writers and artists who had read Leadbeater's writings.[72] Von Wiegand's work The Image of Fire in Heaven, 1955 (Fig. 12), one of several works using fire, illustrates the use of flames for the symbol of spiritual awareness.[73]

Study for Masque of 1947[74] demonstrates not only Kandinsky's influence, but an interest in Leadbeater's Thought-Forms. Instead of natural images, graphic symbols portray von Wiegand's growing commitment to abstract art. An upward pointed yellow arrow, a black crescent moon, and a red solar disc convey von Wiegand's universal message. To understand von Wiegand's symbolic language one must examine the images in Thought Forms and Kandinsky's visual vocabulary. The domed towers, walled cities, embracing couples, and triangular trumpets of Kandinsky's painting connote a Utopian vision.[75] Von Wiegand's arrow, moon, and sun function as universal symbols, common to many cultures

---

[72]Maurice Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art," The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, exhibition catalog (New York: Abbeville Press printed for Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985), 19.

[73]Charmion von Wiegand, Fire in Heaven, ca. 1955, collection unknown.

[74]Charmion von Wiegand, Study for Masque, gouache on paper, 1947, Collection of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York.

[75]For a discussion of the symbolism in Kandinsky's oeuvre see: Rose-Carol Washton Long, Kandinsky, The Development of An Abstract Style (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and are used here to express the spiritual experience.

The yellow arrow, according to Thought Forms, represents an intellectual form. Von Wiegand's arrow is very similar to Thought-Form #43 "Intellectual Aspiration." Leadbeater and Besant interpreted the form as: "devotion of the highest ideal, and it is outlined and strengthened by an exceedingly fine manifestation of the noblest development of intellect. He who can think thus must already have entered upon the Path of Holiness, for he has learnt how to use the power of thought to very mighty effect."[76] The red solar disc corresponds to Leadbeater's Thought-Form #32 (Thought-Form of a Gambler). Leadbeater wrote: "The scarlet ring shows deep anger and resentment at the hostility of fate."[77] The black of the crescent moon represented malice.[78] Like the first generation abstractionists, von Wiegand used these universal symbols as a starting point for her abstraction.

John Graham

Another important source for von Wiegand's understanding of Kandinsky and her use of Thought-forms was the instruction she received from John Graham. Von Wiegand remarked in an interview that she had not taken any art

---

[76]Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater, Thought-Forms (London: Theosophical Publishing House, Ltd., 1901), 71-73.

[77]Ibid., 60.

[78]Ibid., frontispiece.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

classes except those conducted by Graham,[79] who had come to America in the early twenties. His underground influence in American avant-garde art in the 20s, 30s, and 40s was considerable. Yet his articles, writings, and the body of his artistic work, exhibited in the United States and abroad from the twenties to the sixties, remained unknown to the general public until recently.[80] In Graham's unpublished notebooks he often quoted Kandinsky. Kandinsky's delineation of formal polarities (motion, weight of forms, rhythm, type of forms)[81] were the underlying thrust of Graham's writing in his comprehensive work, The System and Dialectics of Art, which von Wiegand read with great enthusiasm. Both artists actually saw abstract art as a form of occult elaboration.[82]

---

[79]Vivien Raynor, "Art People," New York Times," 10 November 1978, 37.

[80]John Graham, System and Dialectics of Art, annotated from unpublished writings, with a critical introduction by Marcia Epstein Allentuck (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, c. 1937), 1.

[81]John Graham used Michael Sadleir's translation of Kandinsky's treatise, published in 1947.

[82]Von Wiegand was very familiar with Graham's work. Von Wiegand wrote on The System and Dialectics of Art in an unpublished manuscript contained in the Joseph Freeman Papers. She stated:

> It is called a System because it intends to provide a related terminology in art, to divide the history of art according to socio-economic periods, to provide for the classification of works of art and periods of art based on space-consciousness, to provide tangible bases for the evaluation of works of art and periods of art. It is called Dialectics because it intends to provide

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In 1946, von Wiegand convinced Rose Fried to curate an exhibition of Graham's drawings at the Pincotheca Gallery. In the catalog von Wiegand authored, she stressed the unique psychological content of Graham's work. Von Wiegand also described Graham's new pursuit of the classical idiom. "It only reinforced his own strong, private style, once so effectively rendered in an abstract mode," wrote von Wiegand.[83] But it was the abstract works Graham painted in Paris in the 1930s, also included in the exhibition, that had the greatest influence on von Wiegand's compositions. Rectangles and squares divided Graham's canvas into vertical and horizontal quadrants, creating a completely abstract work. Graham chose colors of soft muted browns, tans, whites, grays, pinks, and blacks, a strong alternative to the primaries of Mondrian.

Mondrian

Although von Wiegand diverged further from Mondrian's style than any other member of his immediate circle--

---

the methods of logical organization in the domain of art.

Von Wiegand commented "in Graham's hands it [the book] becomes more than a logical analysis; it is also a poem about art, a vision of man and the world, and a flash of insight into the nature of good and evil. Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled manuscript, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[83]Charmion von Wiegand, "John Graham" Essay for exhibition: "John Graham" The Pincotheca, 20 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019, October 16 - November 1946, 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

including Harry Holtzman, Ilya Bolotowsky, Burgoyne Diller, and Fritz Glarner--she said that she did not depart from Mondrian's principles.[84] She claimed not to be a sectarian follower; instead, Mondrian's means gave her a format for content.[85] Von Wiegand found that his letters and writings provided clues to his work, but the work itself changed her vision.[86]

Carter Ratcliff in a review for Art International, 1975, stated that Charmion von Wiegand's paintings from the 1940's distinguished her from the other Americans associated with Neo-Plasticism.

> Charmion von Wiegand is a bit of a maverick. In the 1940's she still refers to Mondrian's facades of 1913-14. The rest stick with mild variants of his fully achieved Neo-Plasticism.[87]

It is not surprising that Ratcliff pointed to Mondrian's early work as the source of von Wiegand's inspiration. Von Wiegand's research on Mondrian's art and life fostered a deep understanding of his early paintings, which were more consciously derived from Theosophical sources and more

---

[84]Nancy Troy, Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1979), 7-8.

[85]Virginia Pitts Rembert, "Mondrian, America and American Painting," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1970), 33-35.

[86]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 61.

[87]Carter Ratcliff, "New York Letter (American Abstract Art: Whitney Museum, New York: Exhibit)," Art International 19 (October 1975): 56-57.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

closely linked philosophically to von Wiegand's own mission. She appreciated Mondrian's early compositions for their exploration of the concepts of limitation, expression of the infinite in the finite, the play of opposites, the use of geometric shapes to express the spiritual, and a view of human beings as a microcosm of the universe. (See Chapter VI.)

Mondrian's definitive style originally developed from the knowledge of Theosophy he received in Holland from 1900 through 1919.[88] He eventually absorbed these theosophical principles into an aesthetic system of his mature style. Von Wiegand's experience took reverse path. She turned away from the aesthetic system of Neo-plasticism to theosophical ideas. Theosophy eventually pointed her in the direction of the original Buddhist, Hindu, and Judeo-Christian texts, which were important components of Theosophy. Von Wiegand found Theosophy connected her more strongly to Mondrian's content than either his writings or their discussions.[89] In her interview with Margit Rowell von Wiegand stated: "It was

---

[88]In 1900 he designed a bookplate using theosophical symbols of the lotus flower and hexagram for the first time. He did not officially join the Theosophical Society until May 25, 1909. Carel Blotkamp, "Annunciation of the New Mysticism: Dutch Symbolism and Early Abstraction," The Spiritual In Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985 (Abbeville Press: New York), 96-97.

[89]Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, in "Charmion Von Wiegand," American Women Artists (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall and Co., 1982), 296, also feels that Theosophy led von Wiegand to Buddhist and Hindu texts.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

coincidental that I was particularly inclined to understand Mondrian and his Theosophic philosophy, due to the fact that I grew up in San Francisco, my father had exposed me to Oriental philosophy, and I had even looked into Theosophy on my own. So Mondrian's ideas were not foreign to me."[90]

Theosophy, A History

In the 1940s, Theosophy[91] held immense appeal for von Wiegand and other Americans, who were disenchanted with official religions, because it posed an alternative to the materialist and mechanistic view of human being's purpose in Western culture.[92] It offered a comprehensive philosophy

---

[90]Rowell, 77.

[91]Founded in New York in 1875 by Helena P. Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steele Olcott, the Theosophical Society was established at an auspicious moment--just as the fascination with spiritualism was beginning to wane. It took root as quickly as it did because of its outgrowth of a larger revolt in the United States against the authority of the Protestant churches. For further information on Theosophy consult: Gottfried de Purucker, H.P. Blavatsky: The Mystery (San Diego, CA: Point Loma Publications, 1974); Marion Meade, Madame Blavatsky: The Woman Behind the Myth (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980); and Michael Gomes, The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement (Wheaton, IL; The Theosophical Publishing House, 1987).

[92]Its teachings represent a curious mixture of Hermeticism, Platonism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, which Madame Blavatsky claimed to have learned by mental transference from "the masters" in a Tibetan monastery. Essentially Theosophy teaches that there was one truth received by mankind in the beginning of civilization. This truth has been obscured by centuries of religious schisms, it has been kept alive in the continuous tradition of esoteric literature. In its doctrines Theosophy pictures a universe fundamentally composed of consciousness, ruled by correspondences and susceptible to sympathetic influences.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(claiming to be the unifying element behind all human activity--art, science, industry, and religion). Moreover, it was optimistic. By using the theory of evolution, Theosophy promised not only immortality, but also that life progresses in an upwardly moving spiral.[93]

For von Wiegand, Theosophy offered a means to project onto life a coherence and value that contemporary culture could not provide. Given von Wiegand's Romantic temperament, her family's early rejection of organized religion, and her need to believe in a transcendental reality, she was naturally drawn to the promise and particular slant of theosophical thought. It fulfilled her craving for religious belief by providing some form of spiritual focus. In general, von Wiegand's interest in Theosophy represented a protest against the dilution of the sacred. She desired to make the spiritual accessible to the general populace. Von Wiegand, who viewed politics during the post-World War II period as having failed to transform society, naturally turned to a spiritual solution for the ills of Western culture.

A central premise of its teachings is the Hermetic relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. For more information on the teachings of Theosophy see: Moore, In Search of White Crows, 47-63.

[93]Ibid., 227-230.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand's Neo-Plastic Painting

One night while visiting von Wiegand in her apartment, Mondrian stopped before a landscape which hung between two windows that faced the skyline of lower Manhattan. He said, "This is very good indeed." He paused for a time and with quiet assurance said, "It is what I have come to destroy."[94] Von Wiegand interpreted this as a completely impersonal statement, perceiving the incongruity of the landscape of nature on the wall and the city outside, an emblem of the twentieth century. Just a decade before, Mondrian had stopped composing paintings of the Dutch landscapes in the interest of a new evolution, the work of geometric De Stijl.[95]

Von Wiegand admits to having been a "dialectal materialist" when she met Mondrian. The objects and scenes around her were the subjects of her paintings. Under his influence, however, she began to change. She explains:

> Mondrian had the logic. He was a rational thinker, but also a man of great intuition. He said, "You can overcome tragedy, not in life, but in art." ...Mondrian believed that no one was on the same step of development, that there is a higher consciousness. He tried to stress the technical part. Execution was so important to him--weight, intensity, meaning of color--all were

---

[94]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 60.

[95]Ibid., 62.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> very worked out. Color went with the structural lines, but each of his paintings was a unique experience, a unique moment.[96]

Von Wiegand fully accepted abstract art after her introduction to Mondrian. She quoted Mondrian in her 1964 article, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period:" "True abstraction is not rejecting or eliminating parts of the whole of reality, but intensifying it. The culture of art is a continuous attempt to move toward more profoundness."[97] She went on to write: "basing his idea, not on the philosophical but purely on plastic and technical experience, he emphasized that abstract art is not the creation of another reality, but another vision of the one and always the same reality."[98]

Mondrian gave Charmion von Wiegand several paintings and drawings during their four years of friendship. Von Wiegand described the circumstances under which she acquired Piet Mondrian's Composition No. 1; Composition with Red, 1931:[99]

> He gave me a white picture...the one I wanted. He took out two pictures. One was a diamond-shaped picture, a large one. The other was a picture that had a great black cross in it and one little red plane and it was a very striking one. And I said, "Well, I'm crazy about

---

[96]Ibid., 63.

[97]Ibid., 60.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Piet Mondrian, Composition No. 1; Composition with Red, oil on canvas, 1931, Private Collection, Switzerland. Charmion von Wiegand owned the painting from 1941-1970.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> that picture. It's marvelous." He said, "You like it?" And he said, "Should I show it in my show?" I said, "Certainly!" And he said, "I don't know that I like it because I did it in the hardest period of my life and it's a tragic picture." And he was very adverse to anything that had a tragic feeling. But I think it had a more personal tragic feeling to him. The picture is very strong and very heroic. And perhaps it is tragic. Anything with a black cross is dramatic and you might say it's tragic.[100]

Mondrian asked von Wiegand which painting she preferred, the large diamond composition or the smaller work.[101] Mondrian went on to tell von Wiegand that he made the Composition No. 1; Composition with Red, when he was very poor. At the time he was engaged to be married. The bourgeois family objected to the union because Mondrian was too impoverished and could not properly support their daughter. Finding the work too tragic, Mondrian was all too happy to give the painting to von Wiegand. He also considered the work unbalanced, an assessment she thought off base. Von Wiegand also purchased several works from Mondrian before the artist's death, including The Trees, 1912.[102]

In 1942, von Wiegand sketched a working version of Mondrian's masterpiece, Victory Boogie Woogie, titled Sketch

---

[100]Von Wiegand, Interview with Paul Cummings, 55-60.

[101]Mondrian later gave this painting to James Johnson Sweeney. Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 61.

[102]Piet Mondrian, The Trees, oil on canvas, 1912, The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg. It was owned by CVW from 1945-c. 1965.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Victory Boogie Woogie, 1942 (Fig. 13).[103] Although she made sketches based on Mondrian's compositions and studied his working methods, von Wiegand did not paint in a Neoplastic mode before Mondrian died. Reportedly, their relationship was so symbiotic that she assisted him by painting colored squares and rectangles on his canvases; but von Wiegand was not yet creating her own Neoplastic works.[104] After meeting Mondrian in 1942, von Wiegand had found that her ideas were changing and developing so quickly it was difficult to paint; she did not return to her own painting until months after Mondrian's death. Previously, she had used her time for studying and reading about Neo-plasticism.[105]

Von Wiegand painted her "City Light" series of the late 1940s completely under Mondrian's spell. This work coherently expresses the philosophical and visual knowledge of Neo-plasticism she had acquired by 1945. Mondrian's

---

[103]Charmion von Wiegand, Sketch of Victory Boogie Woogie, pencil, crayon, and colored tape on paper, 1942, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Whitney has another version of the sketch of Mondrian's composition Victory Boogie Woogie; Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled, collage of paper on paperboard, ca. 1942, Whitney Museum of Art, New York.

[104]Several members of the American Abstract Artists remember Charmion von Wiegand discussing painting small squares of color on Mondrian's New York paintings. Notes on the "Mondrian Symposium, Meeting of the American Abstract Artists, 30 January 1996," Collection of the Author, New York, NY.

[105]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 79.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

studies and reworkings of New York, 1941-42,[106] (Fig. 14) and New York City I, 1941-42,[107] (Fig. 15) directly inspired von Wiegand's series. Von Wiegand described the Mondrian compositions of "New York City":

> Two large new compositions on the theme of New York City [were] constructed solely of colored lines in red, yellow and blue. The lines were broad and ran close to the edge of the canvas both horizontally and vertically, threading their way over and under one another, a warp and woof creating a circulatory, vibratory action like the geometric rhythm of the city traffic seen from above. His European pictures had been more serene, contained, arrived at by plane division. The two new works were more fluid in line, the color gayer and lighter, and together they made a unity of opposites. The first, with its strong vertical and horizontal in red, had an almost martial air; the second, in which yellow lines dominated, flowed serenely in a blaze of light. The latter, Mondrian declared, was the best picture he had ever made. At this time, both paintings were still only worked out in colored tapes. The first was never completed; the second became New York City, 1942.[108]

Von Wiegand believed Mondrian found the elements from which a new life could be molded in New York City. The most modern city in the world, New York, Mondrian said was 'the most congenial environment in which he had ever lived.'[109]

---

[106]Piet Mondrian, New York, oil on canvas, 1940-41 [first state], Collection of Hester Diamond, New York. A second state of the work was made in 1941-1942 and Mondrian changed the title to Boogie Woogie; New York.

[107]Piet Mondrian, New York City I, oil on canvas, 1941-1942 [second state], Musée National d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France. The first state was titled New York City, 1941.

[108]Charmion von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of his New York Period," The Arts Annual 4 (New York: American Abstract Artists, 1961), 58.

[109]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

According to von Wiegand, New York offered the material basis for a higher culture he had dreamed of, a culture technically superior to the old, and a classless society, founded on democratic principles for the benefit of all.[110]

> Here was the place where humanity could advance, pushed by necessity and invention into greater co-operation and greater freedom. Here it was possible to move toward that goal where the spiritual and material would become better equilibrated, where art and the environment would no longer stand opposed, but become one in a larger unity: a truly human society based on a culture of relationships. Mondrian remained a Utopian to the end; all the horrors of destruction taking place never shook his confidence. He saw the war as the inexorable struggle toward an end and after it, a new period of construction such as the world had never seen before.[111]

Von Wiegand also reported that Mondrian never tired of the visual delights of New York City. Everywhere he went he saw parallels in life to the ideas he expressed in his work. The geometric patterns of modern linoleum, the black and white tiles of Riker's lunch counters, the carefully proportioned shapes of windows, the spare verticals of skyscrapers--these were all related to the De Stijl of the First World War.[112]

According to von Wiegand, New York at night enchanted Mondrian the most. Von Wiegand stated:

> Under the cover of darkness, all that was old, disintegrating and primitive vanished, and a new city was born: the city of the future. This city,

---

[110]Ibid., 58.

[111]Ibid., 58-59.

[112]Ibid., 60.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> constructed of straight lines of colored light, rose in delicate but determined structures against the deep black of the sky. The ground pattern of its straight streets was revealed through the staggered procession of red and green and yellow lights, and planes of store windows and advertising signs brilliantly illuminated. All the nostalgia of deep space was vanquished by the conceptual image of the pure plane.[113]

The most important influence on Mondrian's later pictures, according to von Wiegand, was the electric light:

> The era of electric light was still a miracle to Mondrian. To him it was a proof of man's advancement. He enjoyed strolling along 57th Street on cool summer evenings looking at the lights of the tall buildings. It was out of this nocturnal pageant of light in New York that the staccato rhythms of Boogie Woogie pictures were born.[114]

These words could also describe von Wiegand's own experiments in painting of the city at night. Manhattan (Night Environment), 1946-9,[115] Night Environment, New York City, 1947, (Fig. 16)[116] and Night Rhythm, ca. 1947[117] are all works motivated by Mondrian's New York period. Night

---

[113]Ibid., 60-61.

[114]Von Wiegand, Interview with Paul Cummings, 45.

[115]Charmion von Wiegand, Manhattan (Night Environment), oil on canvas, 1946-49, Collection unknown. For information on the painting consult: Annely Juda, "Charmion von Wiegand Retrospective," exhibition catalog (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 1974).

[116]Charmion von Wiegand, Night Environment, oil on canvas, 1947, Collection of the Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York. In a review for the 1985 Marilyn Pearl Retrospective, Blair Birmein refers to the title as Night Environment, New York City, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches, 1946-49.

[117]Night Rhythm, oil on canvas, ca. 1947, Collection unknown. For a color reproduction see Blair Birmein, "Charmion von Wiegand at Marilyn Pearl," Art in America (October 1985): 154.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Environment of 1947 depicts planes of color, red, blue, yellow, white, and gray located on the grid of vertical and horizontal lines, highly reminiscent of Mondrian's Victory Boogie Woogie (Fig. 17). The rhythm shifts as each plane of color varies in size from an inch by an inch to three by eight inches, and all sizes in between.

As described in an exhibition review in Art Digest of her one-person show in 1952 at the Saidenberg Gallery: "The earlier paintings--a series called 'The City'--are architectural in feeling and adhere quite faithfully to the Mondrian tradition. Some are relatively simple, open compositions having slow serene rhythms. Others are busier with closer, smaller intervals of color."[118] The strong balance between the vertical and horizontal axes of von Wiegand's Study for City Lights, 1947 (Fig. 18),[119] City Lights, 1946,[120] and City Lights, 1947[121] places her compositions in the same tradition as Mondrian's New York City I. Von Wiegand viewed Mondrian's late work as moving from the "severely architectonic toward a new solution

---

[118]"Charmion von Wiegand: Exhibition of Oils at Saidenberg Gallery," Art Digest (15 May 1952): 16.

[119]Charmion von Wiegand, Study for City Lights, gouache on board, 1946, Private Collection.

[120]Charmion von Wiegand, City Lights, gouache on board, 1946, Collection of Francoise and Harvey Rambach.

[121]Charmion von Wiegand, City Lights, oil on canvas, 1947, Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

polyphonic and complex. His major chord of primary color was expanding, and a new determined structure was arising, lighter, more liberated, enriched by an ornamental fullness like a jeweled mosaic."[122]

The vocabulary of von Wiegand's paintings broadened beyond the scope of Mondrian's last "Boogie Woogie" piece, Victory Boogie Woogie, 1943-44,[123] to include circles, half circles, triangles, and arches, echoing the visual world of New York--the buildings, parkways, streetlights, sidewalks, doorways, bridges, lights, and beams of light of an actual cityscape.[124] Von Wiegand's forms of urban life are also found in the paintings of New York City by her

---

[122]Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 60.

[123]Piet Mondrian, Victory Boogie Woogie (unfinished), oil on paper on canvas, 1942-44, Private Collection.
Von Wiegand knew the work, Victory Boogie Woogie intimately. She had seen the development of the painting at each stage. Von Wiegand wrote: "At one period Victory Boogie-Woogie was declared complete. At that time, it was a composition of unbroken primary colors. The next time I saw the picture, it had been destroyed and was in process toward 'a new solution.' The white plane bore the marks of struggle; the long colored lines were broken up into small rectangles, cut by various large planes, and tiny pieces of tape were superimposed everywhere on the surface. This was to happen again and again, so that under Victory Boogie-Woogie lie buried six or seven different solutions, each of which might have been a complete picture." Von Wiegand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," 62.

[124]Von Wiegand often described Mondrian's paintings in terms of an urban landscape, such as "resembling city traffic as seen from above." Ibid., 63.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contemporaries, Joseph Stella[125] and Charles Sheeler.[126] Joseph Stella's Old Brooklyn Bridge of ca. 1941[127] is a good example of the type of colors and forms that appealed to von Wiegand. Von Wiegand knew well Sheeler's work from the 1920s, such as Church Street El, 1920 (Fig. 19).[128]

Von Wiegand's paintings hold true to many of the same limitations which Mondrian set forth in his work, such as placing the forms on a white ground. Von Wiegand eliminated Neoplasticism's black linear grid, a change Mondrian had adapted in his work beginning in 1942.[129] Her paintings

---

[125]For more information on Joseph Stella's work see: Irma Jaffe, Joseph Stella (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970); and Wanda M. Corn, "In Detail: Joseph Stella and New York Interpreted," Portfolio 4 (January-February 1982): 40-45.

[126]For more information on Charles Sheeler's work see: Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirshler, Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings (Boston; Little, Brown and Company, 1987).

[127]Joseph Stella, Old Brooklyn Bridge, oil on canvas, ca. 1941, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

[128]Charles Sheeler, Church Street El, oil on canvas, 1920, The Cleveland Museum of Art.

[129]In 1942 Mondrian eliminated black in compositions, creating the second state of New York City I. "Here in America his art experienced a new flowering," von Wiegand stated.

> Something of the intense color of the American environment and the precise, clear outlines of New York City entered his work and changed its color and rhythms. Rarely in Europe had he used more than two color planes in one composition but in the very first canvas made here and named 'New York City', he eliminated all the black lines, formerly so characteristic of him, and substituted red, blue and yellow lines. While he met the problem of giving the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Untitled, 1945 (Fig. 20),[130] Untitled, 1945 (Fig. 21),[131] and Night Environment, 1946-49 (Fig. 22)[132] more clearly reveal the hard edge of the Mondrian style. The two earlier untitled works are reminiscent of Mondrian's paintings from the 1930s done in London, while Night Environment, with its small pulsating squares and rectangles, suggests Mondrian's later New York paintings, particularly Victory Boogie Woogie.[133] Von Wiegand took liberties with the grid

---

color lines the same intensity as the black lines, a tendency toward verticality gave the composition a certain rigidity.

The changes Mondrian experienced in New York were merely touched upon in this first article on Piet Mondrian by von Wiegand. In her later article of 1961 von Wiegand expanded these brief comments to describe his working methods and the major paintings he executed during his New York period. Von Wiegand, "Mondrian, Memoir of His New York Period," 57-59.

[130]Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled, gouache on board, 1945, Private Collection.

[131]Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled, oil on canvas, 1945, Private Collection.

[132]Charmion von Wiegand, Manhattan (Night Environment), oil on canvas, 1946-9, Private Collection. First exhibited in 1974 at the "Charmion von Wiegand Retrospective," Annely Juda Fine Art, London, May 29 - June 29, 1974.

[133]Von Wiegand was excited and perplexed when squares appeared in Broadway Boogie Woogie, 1943-44. Mondrian stated to von Wiegand that, even if the squares went against past theory, they made the composition work. Mondrian was willing to go against past theory for the sake of the painting, as he did when he rejected black because of its highly graphic quality, choosing to think in total color terms. Mondrian told von Wiegand the theory came from the paintings. Rowell, 79-83.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

format,[134] including numerous irregular polygons that move the eye along diverse path ways. The variety of small forms eventually dissolve into relaxed larger rectangles organized along a regularized scheme.

1948--De Chirico

The first painter to indirectly encourage this young artist's departure from the principles of Neo-plasticism was Giorgio de Chirico. On a trip to Rome to visit her father, Charmion von Wiegand met de Chirico in September of 1948.[135] His early metaphysical work had been an important source for von Wiegand's subject matter of the 1930s, as she moved

---

[134]Von Wiegand's manipulation of Mondrian's grid may have been influenced by the work of Burgoyne Diller. Von Wiegand curated an exhibition of Burgoyne Diller's "paintings-constructions" of 1934-46 held at the Rose Fried Gallery in December of 1946. In the essay which von Wiegand authored about the artist she wrote that Burgoyne Diller was the first painter in the United States to follow the path of Mondrian and Van Doesburg. Von Wiegand was drawn to Diller's recent canvases executed by very simple means. They consisted of two intersecting lines, balanced by a small black plane in opposition to a larger one of color. The result, von Wiegand commented, is a composition "radiant with an intense and delicate rhythm. Here the personal and the universal, feeling and form, are unified in a subtle equilibrium." Charmion von Wiegand, Burgoyne Diller (New York: Rose Fried, 1946), 3.

[135]During and after the Second World War de Chirico's paintings became more minutely detailed and technically exacting, and still more devoid of meaning, while he set himself against most of what the modern movement stood for. For more information on De Chirico consult: Giorgio De Chirico and America, ed. Emily Braun (New York: Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1996); and Paul Winthrop Lauf, Giorgio De Chirico: The Father of Italian Metaphysical Art (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

beyond the representational to the abstract.[136] She sought an introduction to this legendary painter to question him about his early work. Their meeting had a strange effect on von Wiegand. Although he had abandoned the tenets of modernism for a more traditional art, the encounter between the two artists stiffened von Wiegand's resolve to support abstract painting.

De Chirico lived in an apartment off the Spanish Steps just one building away from John Keats' former dwelling.[137] Von Wiegand climbed up five steep flights of stairs. At the apartment door, she was greeted by an imposing looking man with Roman features, snow white hair, tall and rather a

---

[136]Von Wiegand wrote in 1937 about the painter:

> With the Italian painter Chirico, the primitive of the surrealist movement, begins for the first time the phantasmagoria of the human mind in bourgeois society--nightmares of death and destruction through dismemberment and insanity. But de Chirico still preserves the vision of the past; his tragic landscapes of twilight cities sleeping by the sea and wistful mechanical muses have the haunting music of a backward-looking romantic. In the canvas, Melancholy and Mystery of a Street, painted in the fateful years, 1914, the shadows are ominous with foreboding of doom. The Sailor's Barrack, painted the same year, offers for the first time the surrealist repertoire of unrelated objects placed against a classic background. Perhaps its hypnotic magic may be attributed to the suggestion of chaos impinging upon one familiar reality.

Charmion von Wiegand, "The Surrealists," Art Front (January 1937): 12-14.

[137]Von Wiegand, a great fan of the English poets, quite a bit about Keats, including that he had died in Rome at this home next to de Chirico. Charmion von Wiegand, Rome, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 12 September, 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

heavy build, over sixty-years-old by this time. Once inside she found the walls of his apartment painted in dark red and dark green with stone floors. Italian renaissance furniture and paintings in carved gold frames rounded out the classic interior. The visual highlight of von Wiegand's visit was a copy de Chirico had made of Michelangelo's "Holy Family"--the tondo with the muscular madonna holding up the more muscular baby and the aged Joseph. Among the few pictures he had painted, the latest were still-lifes of fruit in dark Titianesque rich colors, which were positioned around the spacious living room.[138] There was a large nude over the sofa of his wife, a Russian with blonde hair and blue eyes who left her native country during the Stalinist purges. Von Wiegand described de Chirico's wife as "having the atmosphere of Tchekov's [sic] sisters about her, and his apartment as "immensely conservative, rich, and one can smell in a moment the charnel house order of the past. It is a retreat from living."[139]

Under the impression that von Wiegand was a collector or dealer, De Chirico had quickly arranged the meeting. He was very surprised when he learned von Wiegand's mission--to acquire information for her own artistic pursuits. He questioned her as to her style of painting. Von Wiegand replied, "I am a follower of Mondrian." He abruptly told

---

[138]Ibid.

[139]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her "most of modern art is just a game," and 'Mondrian was the painter who painted nothing at all.'[140]

After returning to her hotel room at Hotel Hasller, Charmion von Wiegand conveyed to her husband on September 12, 1948, her impressions of this momentous meeting:

> Our conversation was carried on in German for the most part. He spent the time in a hymn of hatred against modern art, attacked the Museum of Modern Art and [Alfred] Barr. He said the modern painters like Matisse were engaged in gangsterism against the public--it was just not painting and it was worth nothing. So I asked him whom he considered (besides himself of course) good, and so he told me Titian and Tintoretto! He asked me what I painted and I said I had worked under Mondrian, "Oh, then, we are enemies." I tried not to argue. He is an old man and I respect his past. He called André Breton names and loathes the Surrealist movement particularly, since it is the movement that drew the most inspiration from his early work. And he hates his early work. I understand he sells his present art chiefly in South America, where the Spanish world likes his very traditional and able craftsmanship and feel they are getting real oil paintings...He asked me, when he heard that father was a correspondent, to write and publicize his ideas. All his gifts for the

---

[140]She recalled that the mood of their meeting was overshadowed by his annoyance with the officials of the Venice Biennial who planned to show some of his early pictures. He wanted to sue them. He didn't wish for those early pictures to be shown. He didn't possess them anymore. At the time of their meeting de Chirico was painting in a Renaissance style. Von Wiegand thought that he was a better painter than in the early days of his poetic subjects. "But it was really so traditional that he'd lost that poetic feeling of the early paintings," said von Wiegand. Von Wiegand reported to her husband "...it was so disagreeable, so disappointing that a really poetic artist in his youth, should have become such a bitter, hateful, partisan against all modern and living art." Charmion von Wiegand, Rome, Italy, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 12 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> rancor is the fact that people like Braque, Picasso, and Matisse make money and he does not, at least nothing in proportion.[141]

Von Wiegand, at de Chirico's invitation, began to read a book which lay open on a nearby table, Mona Lisa's Mustache.[142] The book was extremely important, de Chirico told her. "It really tells you the true story about modern art."[143] Von Wiegand was confused by de Chirico's positive reaction to the book, and upon her return to New York, she went to the library and checked out the tome to discover for herself the significance of this criticism of abstract art. She was amazed at the amount of research the decorator, T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings had done for the book. The writing struck her as "a blasting attack on pure abstract art all the way through."[144] One phrase caught her eye. Gibbings implied that pure abstract art amounted to a conspiracy that had been instigated by H.P. Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society. "Well, in one way he had something there", von Wiegand responded in a later interview. "It was no conspiracy. I was well aware of Blavatsky's influence on Kandinsky and Mondrian, and that they certainly had been

---

[141]Ibid.

[142]Terence Harold Robsjohn-Gibbings, Mona Lisa's Mustache: A Dissection of Modern Art (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947).

[143]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 25.

[144]Ibid., 25-27, and Charmion von Wiegand, Rome, Italy, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 12 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

members of the Theosophical Society."[145]

After recognizing the vast importance of H.P. Blavatsky from Gibbing's book, von Wiegand focused all of her summer reading of 1949 on understanding Blavatsky's theories and sources.[146] She spent time at the Theosophical Society and befriended its director, Louis James.[147] He loaned her books from the Society's library, including the seven volumes of Isis Unveiled,[148] and invited her to the Society's lectures. Devouring all seven volumes, von Wiegand grew fascinated with Blavatsky's notes in the third volume on her color theories.[149] De Chirico, by introducing Charmion von Wiegand to Mona Lisa's Mustache, led her again to H.P. Blavatsky's writings on Theosophy, and indirectly

---

[145]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 26-27.

[146]Theosophy was not new to von Wiegand. Both her parents were followers of Theosophy and had first introduced her to it. (See Chapter I.) Her interest in Theosophy continued through the discussions of the Occult with Hart Crane. Thanks to Crane, von Wiegand's experience with Theosophy deepened in the late 1920s when Theosophy dominated intellectual life in the United States. (See Chapter III.) Moreover, she had done some reading on Theosophy for her research on Mondrian and Neo-plasticism. Discussions of Theosophy again became important to von Wiegand upon meeting de Chirico.

[147]For more information on Louis James and the history of the New York branch of Theosophy see: Bruce Campbell, Ancient Wisdom Revised (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 158-165.

[148]H.P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology (Point Loma, CA: The Aryan Theosophical Press, 1919).

[149]Ibid., 747-67.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

guided her to Tibetan Art, one of the main sources of Blavatsky's philosophy and an important catalyst for von Wiegand's future paintings.[150]

Continued Search for Religious Meaning

In 1949, von Wiegand asked her husband, Joseph Freeman, to contact a friend and colleague for information regarding alternative religions. A memorandum dated October 11 of that year to Joseph Freeman from CM[151] contains a list, referred to as "seekers of wisdom," which included: United Lodge of Theosophists of New York City; Theosophical Society of Point Loma, CA and New York City; Theosophical Society--Annie Besant branch; Arcane School; AMORC (Rosicrucian) or the Ancient Mystical Order of Rosy Cross; Rosicrucian Fellowship; Source Teachings Society; Bahai; Philosophical Research Society; Anthroposophical Society; Vedanta Society of Swami Nikhilananda; Vedanta Society, followers of Swami Vivekananda; American Foundation of Metaphysical Arts and Sciences; and the Roerich Society.[152] The memo gave addresses and people to contact in the different occult and religious movements. Both Freeman and

---

[150]Also, she reports in an interview: "...it was this [Mona Lisa's Mustache] that led me then to Tibetan painting." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 30.

[151]CM is their friend Cameron McKenzie, editor of Friday magazine.

[152]CM [Cameron McKenzie], New York, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 11 October 1949, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

von Wiegand, strongly influenced by Vedanta of the Western World, written by Swami Prabhavananda, sought to understand the beliefs of Hinduism.[153] Memories of a Swami from von Wiegand's childhood prompted a full investigation of Vivekanada, the Hindu mystic behind Vedanta philosophy.[154] Von Wiegand attended many of these spiritual centers, continuing her exploration of Theosophy, Buddhism, and Hinduism well into the 1950s.

Von Wiegand recalled that their early interest in religion started around the time of the Congress of

---

[153] ...Joe and I have been reading Vedanta of the Western World--think you bought it before leaving--and have enjoyed it. It is, perhaps too simple for you. Do tell me who was the Swami, whose yellow robe I remember in my childhood dreams. Was he a follower of Vivekananda?

Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, 29 April 1947, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Swami Prabhavananda, Vedanta for the Western World ed. and with an Introduction by Christopher Isherwood (Hollywood, CA: The Marcel Rodd Co., 1945).

[154] Vivekanada, who lived from 1863 to 1902, was born to a wealthy family in Calcutta, and his given name was Narendra Nath Datta. As a young man he met Ramakrishna and thereafter devoted himself completely to his teachings. After Ramakrishna's death in 1886, he traveled around India as a wandering monk. In 1893, he went to the United States where he represented Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. After four years of teaching in the West, he returned to India, where he organized the Ramakrishna Mission and engaged in a strenuous campaign to encourage a national renaissance. See Sailendra Nath Dhar, A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975); Gurumayum Ranjit Sharma, The Idealistic Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1987); and Anantanand Rambachan, The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of the Vedas (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Religions held in New York in 1949. Von Wiegand stated: "Joe said to me one day, 'You know, I think we really should know something about what goes on in the religions in the world today,'" and so they went.[155] Their explorations continued at the Dante Center with Swami Nicolando. Von Wiegand said of renewing interest in the Theosophical Society:

> And in the course of it [religious exploration] we went to the Theosophical Society and heard a lecture on Oriental painting by Louis James who we met for the first time and became great friends. He was president of the Theosophical Society at that time. So then occasionally I used to borrow from their library.[156]

Charmion von Wiegand, Joseph Freeman, and Karl von Wiegand grew dissatisfied with materialism, politics, and the science of Western culture. Instead, they embraced spiritualism, religion, and the healing arts. As von Wiegand commented to her father after reading Aldous Huxley's new novel Time Must Have A Stop:[157]

---

[155]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 25.

[156]Ibid.

[157] That it is possible for human beings to love, know and, from virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground. That to achieve this intuitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence. That there is a Law or Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way, which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end. That the more there is of I, me, mine, and less there is of the Ground; and that consequently the Tao is a Way of humility and compassion, the Dharma a Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness.

Aldous Leonard Huxley, Time Must Have a Stop (London: Chatto

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> ...it [Time Must Have a Stop] has gathered all the problems into a small focus very successfully. Interesting too that the mystic note has crept into it, as in so many recent books, and that people now expect little of any political solution--that they don't believe the problem of our time can be solved by politics but only by facing moral, human, and spiritual issues...[158]

Similar sentiments were expressed by Karl von Wiegand several months later when he wrote to his daughter about his frustrations with the US economy:

> ...all stress and emphasis is laid on purely material security and no attention given to spiritual and moral stability. Mankind will never achieve its "salvation" until it [has] realized that Effects come from Causes, that fruits or weeds come from seed sown or roots planted and that Today is the fruit of Yesterday and carries the seed of Tomorrow. But who of the masses in this Radio and Hollywood world ever thinks of that.[159]

Joseph Freeman shared their views in 1946 while in Europe attending a conference on science and religion:

> The great religious teachers (Moses, Christ, Buddha) have had little effect on the human animal, who still is governed by primal fear, greed, ambition, hate, envy and sometimes by infantile hopes which disappointment sours into vengeance. But it is a hopeful sign that all the sciences today, physics and biochemistry included, recognize that man lives not by bread alone, that the material conquest of nature has landed us in a sanguinary cul-de-sac BECAUSE WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT OUR OWN NATURE, AND THEREFORE CANNOT CONTROL IT, just as in the midst of the turbulent and now forgotten Napoleonic wars, the physical scientists began to discover and control the secrets of chemistry, biology and physics; so now, in the midst of this terrible conflict which will, in 100 years be just as

---

and Windus, 1945), 289.

[158]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Paris, 3 Oct 1945, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[159]Karl von Wiegand, Madrid, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 4 September 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> meaningless as the Battle of Blenheim, the anthropologists, sociologists, and psychiatrists are beginning to discover the control and social atom--MAN. This may be our last best hope on earth--and certainly it is my chief interest today.[160]

It is interesting to note that von Wiegand's and Freeman's distrust of science resulted in an unusual choice of a family doctor. Dr. Jacobson, a man of non-traditional medicine, used herbal remedies to restore health. Von Wiegand and Freeman consulted with Jacobson on almost a weekly basis for any minor ailments.[161] The doctor looked decades younger than his age, "due to his marvelous medicine." The real testimony for both von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman had come when a young blonde boy of 17, who had been in a concentration camp and was near death, was rapidly restored by the magic of Dr. Jacobson.[162] The Freeman's gave Dr. Jacobson's vitamins as gifts to family and friends.[163]

---

[160]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Paris, 26 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[161]Freeman referred to the doctor as a "magician developing his Magic Elixirs." Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Rome, 16 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[162]Ibid.

[163]"Yesterday was father's 74th birthday. .. I represented him with 2 bottles of Jacobson's vitamins (now have only one left for me) as he has taken to them with gusto and looks much better as a result." Charmion von Wiegand, Rome, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 12 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Theosophy and Mondrian

In von Wiegand's previous articles on Mondrian, she suggested the influence of theosophy--its origins in Greek philosophy, Plato and Plotinus--as the main philosophical roots of Mondrian's painting.[164] After meeting Louis James and reading Blavatsky's tomes, she was convinced that the philosophical sources of Neoplasticism were deeply rooted in Blavatsky's work. Von Wiegand quoted Blavatsky in her talk, "The Age of Mondrian," as a means of describing and interpreting Mondrian's paintings. Von Wiegand understood that Theosophy gave Mondrian a basis to outline the limits of Neo-Plasticism and guided him in developing his working methods.[165] Von Wiegand was one of the few scholars who grasped the idea that the plastic properties of Mondrian's paintings possessed a physical counterpart rooted in the way the universe actually exists. Mondrian's paintings are not

---

[164]Mondrian never discussed Theosophy with von Wiegand; he considered it improper to discuss religion. Charmion von Wiegand, Interview with Paul Cummings, 27.

[165]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Age of Mondrian," 5.

In 1909 Mondrian joined the Dutch Theosophic Society. As early as 1911 a critic cites the artist's theosophical interests with specific reference to the monumental Evolution triptych. For further information on Mondrian's work Devotion and its relation to Theosophy see Robert P. Welsh, "Mondrian and Theosophy," in Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibit, (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1971), 36; Piet Mondrian 1872-1944, Yve-Alain Bois and others,(Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1955), 59; and Carel Blotkamp, Mondrian, The Art of Destruction (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1994), 32-42.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

simply iconographic metaphors as many other critics assumed.[166]

As Von Wiegand researched past material on Mondrian and read books on Theosophy by Blavatsky, she saw the relationship between the spiritual and geometry. The triangle, seen in Mondrian's earlier paintings attached to navels and nipples of his female figures and repeated in the flower images, related to a "tripartite dualism" that Blavatsky described as "representing the three great principles--spirit, force and matter; or the active (male), passive (female), and the dual or correlative principle which partakes of both and binds the two together."[167]

Psychic Research

Von Wiegand's preoccupation with psychic research had a lot to do with her interest in Theosophy and the occult.[168] Theosophy's teachings were frequently identified with the activities of psychic research because they were supposedly

---

[166]Although, von Wiegand had been exposed to theosophy by her parents, but it was with Mondrian that her first real exploration into theosophy begins with the introduction into Madame Blavatsky's writings. J. Burnham, "Mondrian American Circle," Arts (September 1973): 38.

[167]Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, vol. 2, 269.

[168]For an interesting account of the role of the Theosophical Society in America in the 1920s and its associations with spiritualism and psychic research see R. Laurence Moore, In Search of White Crows (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 232 and passim.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

open to empirical demonstration.[169] Both Theosophy and psychic research sought to expand the limits of the natural world and redefine the rational. Both made claims on invisible reality by demonstrating the affinity between mind and matter. Both called their findings "scientific."[170] In the eyes of many believers, both represented an acceptable solution to the debate currently being waged between science and religion.[171]

Von Wiegand shared her interest in psychic research with her father. In a number of letters they exchanged information on the latest findings and stories of people with extraordinary powers. One of their favorite discussions involved the story of Therese Neumann and others

---

[169]Moore believes that Theosophy gained much of its popularity from its close parallel to the work being done in psychic research. Ibid., 221-243.

[170]Though Theosophy and psychic research had their fundamental differences and required different kinds of commitment, they had enough in common to have an overlapping appeal. Growing out of the nineteenth century's fascination with spiritualism, psychic research was an attempt to verify by objective, empirical standards the existence of an immaterial reality. From the outbreak of World War I until well into the 1940s, psychic research had a large audience which included a cross-section of the American public. It was attractive to the scientific and lay communities alike, and there was an enormous groundswell of interest in psychic events. Seances were a popular pastime, mediums flourished, and many instances of automatic writing, spirit photography, and levitation were reported. During the 1920s and 1930s Scientific American published a regular column by Malcolm Bird called "Our Psychic Investigations" and in January 1923 offered a prize of $2500 to the first person who could produce "an objective psychic manifestation of a physical character." Ibid., 225-227.

[171]Ibid., 221-43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

who had the "gift" of the stigmata. Karl von Wiegand wrote to his daughter:

> I had dinner with a former foreign minister of a Balkan state, a devout Catholic with high connections in the Vatican. He told me a remarkable story of the woman in the Vatican... When the "stigmata" comes she is alleged to have the gift of prophecy. It is claimed that in 1938 and early 1939 she prophesied the coming war, that Germany would be crushed, that Hitler would "vanish."[172]

It did not matter if a Theosophist, Christian, or Buddhist experienced a psychic phenomenon. Both daughter and father collected all types of stories of events beyond the mundane, debating the authenticity of each experience. In addition, a close friend of the Freemans, Eileen Garrett served as editor in chief of Tomorrow: World's Digest of Psychic and Occult.[173] Von Wiegand called it "the first reputable

---

[172]Karl von Wiegand, Madrid, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 28 September 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute. The discussion continued in the following letter:

> ...I told you , Charmion, about the "Woman in the Vatican," who when recently she had the "stigmata" prophesied that the war is not over, that it will restart before the end of 1946, that "the Cossack horses will drink out of the Tiber, and that the "Holy Father will leave the Vatican and Rome and for a time go to another land," later to return. Fantastic, yes, but the elements of possibility are indeed present. The Dardanelles, the situation in Greece and on the Greek-Albanian-Yugoslav--Macedonian-Bulgarian frontiers, Triest, and no Titos war on the Catholic Church, not to mention the Danube and Germany. All that reveals what a tragi-comedy the Paris conference is.

Karl von Wiegand, Madrid, to Charmion von Wiegand, 29 September 1946, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[173]Eileen Garrett served as editor in chief of Tomorrow: World's Digest of Psychic and Occult (New York: Creative Age Press, 1941-1966.) From 1941-1951 the title

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

magazine in this country devoted exclusively to the exploration of the psychical and mystical phenomena."[174] In von Wiegand's mind, Theosophy, psychic research, and modern art all pointed to the same direction: they represented imaginative insight into the "essential" reality.

Blavatsky and Color

A change in color occurred in von Wiegand's painting and collage after she read Blavatsky's Isis Unveiled in 1948. Her limited Neo-Plastic palette now expanded to include prominent areas of green, a color whose naturalistic overtones were disapproved of by her mentor, Piet Mondrian. Von Wiegand described Mondrian's reaction to the use of green in painting:

> And that [green as the fourth primary] seemed always very much to disturb him. I didn't know why at the time. Of course he had painted so many green paintings in his youth. His paintings came out of landscapes. And after all there's green landscape in Holland. And there are dozens of green Mondrians that way. But I also found out that he even did his Neo-plastic paintings in green in the early time. There are several real green ones with black, green and red on white. I think the Museum of Modern Art has one of them. But evidently green was something he put aside when he made that change, you see. And it really doesn't matter to an artist. A theory, you know, is an instrument, a technical means. It's whatever assists the artist to do the work. A theory is helpful but you have to be able to discard the theory [for the sake of

---

was simply Tomorrow.

[174]Charmion von Wiegand, Europe, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 10 June 1952, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the painting].[175]

For von Wiegand the theory transcended the three primaries of an additive and subtractive color theory. Von Wiegand ascribed to the Perceptual Theory of color which distinguishes four primaries; red, yellow, blue, and green.

The color theories of perceptual color theorists give green an equal intensity to red in their color scale. Green often took the place of red in perceptual color diagrams, fitting between yellow and blue. Like Kandinsky, von Wiegand believed red had an inner movement, where green was the opposite of red and was immobile.[176] Von Wiegand read

---

[175]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 32-33.

[176]There is a confusing multiplicity of primaries. Two schools of contemporary theory, the additive and the subtractive, distinguish three primaries (red, green, and violet light for additive; bluish-red, yellow, and cyan ink or pigment for subtractive). Another school, the perceptual, identifies four primaries (red, yellow, green, and blue). Sir Isaac Newton, whose pathbreaking Optiks (1704) is based on seven primaries, is echoed by the early 20th century work of Wilhelm Ostwald. A. H. Munsell, one of this century's most prominent theorists, determined that there were five. Most of Wassily Kandinsky's paintings and teaching exercises are based on six primaries, whereas his Bauhaus colleagues Paul Klee and Johannes Itten adhered to systems based on five.

The search for what is primary is not just a philosophical question but an urgent matter for painters, composers, and writers eager to tap material that is both original and universal. In a century dominated by the rhetoric of purity in art and the need for simplifying painting and sculpture to rediscover its most basic elements, chromaticism has proved a major force, as the paintings and theories of Malevich, Mondrian, Newman, Stella, and Halley demonstrate. The "innocent eye" yearns for unbroken, meticulously prepared expanses of color. Clark V. Poling, Kandinsky's Teaching at the Bauhaus: Color Theory and Analytical Drawing (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 64-66.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

everything on color she could. She was familiar with Sir Isaac Newton's theories, whose groundbreaking book, Optiks, published in 1704, is based on seven primaries.[177] An early 20th century treatise on color by Wilhelm Ostwald followed Newton in supporting the theory of seven primaries. Von Wiegand read Ostwald's The Color Primer.[178] She also studied the work of A. H. Munsell, one of this century's most prominent theorists, who determined that there were five primaries.[179]

Von Wiegand used Mondrian's palette of the primaries (red, yellow, and blue), plus the neutrals (black, white, and grey) and expanded it to include the secondaries (green and violet), and the tertiaries (blue-green and red-violet), adding toned hues which function as the neutrals in her compositions. Of Mondrian's palette von Wiegand said, "Well, they are the strongest. I mean you see the opposition there is between neutral and primary. It's not two primary colors clashing against one another. He never used it that way."[180] But the clashing of colors symbolized

---

[177]Sir Isaac Newton, Optiks (1704).

[178]Wilhelm Ostwald, The Color Primer: A Basic Treatise on the Color System of Wilhelm Ostwald (New York, 1900). This book was in von Wiegand's possession at her death.

[179]Albert Henry Munsell, A Color Notation: An Illustrated System Defining All Colors and Their Relations by Measured Scales of Hue, Value and Chroma, intro. by Royal B. Farnum (Baltimore, MD: Munsell Color Company, Inc., 1946) was a book among the artist's possessions at her death.

[180]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 32-33.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for von Wiegand the opposing forces operating in the spiritual reality. "Use of high key color opposites to achieve vibration is perhaps a reflection of the ideal expressed in Ying, Yang, and the reconciliation of opposites. The five symbolic colors of Tibetan art are developed into a personal seven tone scale from red through yellow, blue and their intermediaries to purple," von Wiegand stated.[181] It was through the clashing of primary colors and secondary hues that the artist began to build the foundation for her unique philosophy of spiritual art.

Von Wiegand's complexity of color relationships stemmed from a study of H.P. Blavatsky's symbolic color charts. She believed that Blavatsky's philosophy was generally based on the experiences the Russian countess had in India and Tibet. "I think she must have been in Tibet, or, you know, at least on the edge of Tibet. It has never been clear how far up she went."[182] Von Wiegand learned from her study of Indian and Tibetan color that the color spectrum Blavatsky described in The Secret Doctrine was derived from the Tibetan color gamut originating in the Indian color scale.[183] The Tibetans changed the color scale to reflect a

---

[181]Ibid.

[182]Von Wiegand as cited in Larsen, "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones," 30.

[183]Helena P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy, v. 1 (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1897), 476

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

different philosophy from the Indians. The color is symbolic, and each color is either negative or positive. They use very bright colors, without any gradation of the color's hue. "It was one color against another. So they had reds, yellow, green, and black. And then in a later period they brought in the secondary colors like violet, orange, violet versus orange and so on which really came more out of the Chinese colors. It was a mix," reported von Wiegand.[184]

> I read books on proportion. I read books on color. But nothing stimulated me like Madame Blavatsky's color scheme. It was symbolic and it was with the prism so to speak.[185]

Von Wiegand expanded India's five-hued color scale (red, blue, yellow, green, and black) into a scale of seven colors (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red), more closely representative of the colors of Tibetan paintings and based directly on Blavatsky's symbolic color scale.

> Red is the color of manifested dual, or male and female. In man it is shown in its lowest animal form. Orange is the color of the robes of the Yogis and Buddhist Priests, the color of the Sun and Spiritual Vitality, also of the vital Principle. Yellow or radiant Golden is the color of the Spiritual, Divine Ray in every atom; in man of Buddhi; Green and Red are, so to speak, interchangeable colors, for Green absorbs the Red, as being threefold stronger in its vibrations than the latter; and Green is the complementary color of extreme Red. That is why the Lower Manas and Kama

---

[184]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 31.

[185]Ibid., 28-30.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Rupa are respectively shown as Green and Red...[186] Color was always von Wiegand's predominant concern, for she held that "color is expression of life and the natural world."[187] Von Wiegand used prismatic and complementary colors as positives and negatives in balanced opposition, reflecting her interpretation of the Tibetan concept of Yab Yum.[188]

The first picture von Wiegand made using the Blavatsky color scheme was sold in the Legois Show in 1952. The composition consisted of a cross and had a prism with her full seven tone color scale, where the colors repeated over and over again.[189] This same theme of a color prism was also incorporated in early works of the 1950s, such as Tabernacle, 1950-52 (Fig. 23),[190] The Yellow Castle, 1951 (Fig. 24),[191] The Ray of Creation, 1950,[192] Polar Light,

---

[186]Helena P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy, v. 1, 480.

[187]Ibid., 27.

[188]Tibetan term for the union of opposites, such as father/mother.

[189]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 29-30.

[190]Charmion von Wiegand, Tabernacle, oil on canvas, ca. 1951, Collection unknown.

[191]Charmion von Wiegand, The Yellow Castle, oil on canvas, 1951, Private Collection.

[192]Charmion von Wiegand, Ray of Creation, oil on canvas, ca. 1950, Private Collection. First exhibited in 1952 at von Wiegand's Solo Exhibition--"Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand," April 22 - May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1950,[193] and The Terrace of Jade, (Fig.25) 1952.[194] All these works are composed of rectangles and triangles with each painting based largely on gradations of three or four different colors. Red, blue, black, and white rectangles and triangles created Tabernacle. Blue, yellow, and white triangles and polygons composed The Yellow Castle, 1951. In The Terrace of Jade, von Wiegand arranged green, red, white and blue rectangles around the surface of the canvas. The color changes in each painting as the eye moves from one broad triangular form--composed of many smaller units--to the next polygon shape. The color appears to flow through a prism generating refracted rays of light.

Egyptian Motifs: Transition to the 1950s

H.P. Blavatsky's writings led von Wiegand not only to Tibetan and Indian color theory, but to the study of Egyptian art and architecture. In January of 1948, von Wiegand took a trip with Lydia Oswald, Karl von Wiegand's secretary, to Luxor, Egypt. They went to Egypt to purchase a house for Charmion von Wiegand's father. (He had sold his farm in Arizona and wanted to buy a small modern house about

---

[193]Charmion von Wiegand, Polar Light, oil on canvas, 1950, Private Collection.

[194]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 29-30.
Charmion von Wiegand, Terrace of Jade, oil on canvas, 1952, The Seattle Art Museum.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

15 miles outside of Cairo right next to the pyramids.[195]) Karl von Wiegand often made winter stays near Cairo, inviting family and friends for weeks at a time. This marked Charmion von Wiegand's fourth trip to Egypt. He looked forward to living out his remaining days in this warm exotic country.[196] Although von Wiegand had spent much time in Egypt, this was the first trip she had made since reading Blavatsky, and now the Egyptian temple assumed great significance for her work.

Lydia Oswald and Charmion von Wiegand ventured into the Valley of the Kings on January 9, 1948, to the Ramassium, Queen Hatsheput's temple and the Colessy. Although von Wiegand had been in Luxor when Tutankhamen's Tomb was discovered by Howard Carter in 1922, she had never been inside the structure. It was closed for several years while archaeologists excavated and studied the site.[197] A week before von Wiegand had viewed the treasures of this tomb in Cairo, but what fascinated her, was not the treasures, but the temple structures themselves. Von Wiegand wrote of the

---

[195]Ibid.

[196]"And this winter I hope to live in a little furnished house near the pyramids, and only one block from the golden sands of the desert. I have decided to try instead of a hotel. And there in peace and serenity I will think and I will work." Karl von Wiegand, Rome to Joseph Freeman, New York, 8 June 1952, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[197]Edward Bacon, Digging for History: Archaeological Discoveries Throughout the World (New York: J. Day Company, 1961), 57-59.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

experience while in the tomb of Ramses:

> I enjoyed much more the strange silence, the peculiar stillness, and the impressions that come to be in that narrow valley with its great red Palisades of rocks. Strange thoughts come to one. You do feel you are in another world and that time is eternal... Looking from here 4000 and 5000 years back to AD 1948 there is no great difference except in mechanical and scientific developments which alone is given the term "progress."[198]

One of von Wiegand's favorite temples, Cleopatra the Great, was located in Denderah, 40 miles down the river from Queen Hatsheput's temple. Von Wiegand wrote:

> There is something about that temple that always draws me. I do not know why. I just like to be around it and look at it. It is not nearly as old as some of the others nor imposing like Karnak, nor as mystic as Abidos and Edfu...[199]

Based on her experience in the Valley of the Kings, von Wiegand's conceived the painting, The Gods Are in the Valley, which she completed in 1952[200] (Fig. 26) while on a vacation in Egypt.

She had been exposed to the culture of Egypt since her father's post in Khartoum on the Nile in Ethiopia in 1936. The letters from Karl von Wiegand during the late 1930s through the early 1950s taught his daughter much about the

---

[198]Karl von Wiegand, Luxor to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 9 January 1948, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[199]Ibid.

[200]Charmion von Wiegand, The Gods Are in the Valley, oil on canvas, signed, n.d., Ciba-Geigy Corporation, Ardsley, NY, 436. Also sometimes called in the literature The Gods in the Valley. For a reproduction of the image see Stuart Preston, "Paintings by Charmion von Wiegand Shown," New York Times, 29 September 1961, 38.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Egyptian people and their art and artifacts. The visual description in her father's letters often suggested forms and colors for his daughter's paintings. Von Wiegand began to associate universal spiritual meanings with these colors and shapes. For example Karl von Wiegand wrote:

> ...and now Full Moon shimmering on the ancient Blue and White Niles as they converge and mingle into the great stream... The crystalline, cold, spiritual moonlight in the mountains of Ethiopia, and more soft and sensuous, balmy and caressing, at Djibouti, now the serene, soothing and restful Moon of the Nile at Khartoum with the promise of peace, of eternity without charge.[201]

These letters written, in the early 1950s, continued to fuel Charmion von Wiegand's imagination and passion for the Egyptian temples and their artifacts. Her father wrote many descriptions of his new home outside of Cairo. The following passage comes from a letter which he wrote in May of 1956:

> The wonderful golden sun (Osiris) setting beyond the sand hills of the western desert, was gilding the one triangle of the Great Pyramid in a shield of light contrast to the dark side turned toward us...The roses in the far right hand corner surrounding the Zodiac in blue and white tiles...[202]

Similar descriptions and her own experiences in Egypt inspired works such as Cairo, 1956 (Fig. 27),[203] Distant

---

[201]Karl von Wiegand, Khartoum on the Nile, Ethiopia, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, January 10, 1936, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[202]Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 9 May 1956, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[203]Charmion von Wiegand, Cairo, collage, 1956, Collection of Rabbi and Mrs. Jules Harlow.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Land, 1951,[204] Time of Living Midnight, 1951,[205] and Transmutation, 1951.[206] In each composition circular forms exist in the upper third of the composition symbolizing moons or suns while in the lower two thirds of the canvas triangular prisms suggest the structures of the pyramids. In Cairo von Wiegand combines rectangular pieces of painted paper in bright greens and reds and rectangles of black ink hieroglyphics on white paper, collaged on a blue ground.

Using the handiest direct source, the Metropolitan Museum, the artist continued her examination of Egyptian motifs and artifacts. A study of the proportions of Egyptian sarcophagi inspired a group of paintings, such as Sarcophagus, ca. 1951,[207] The Isis Gate, 1956 (Fig. 28),[208]

---

[204]Charmion von Wiegand, The Distant Land, ca. 1951, Private Collection. First exhibited in 1952 at von Wiegand's solo exhibition--"Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand," April 22 - May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York.

[205]Charmion von Wiegand, Time of Living Midnight, oil on canvas, ca. 1951, Private Collection. First exhibited in 1952 at von Wiegand's Solo Exhibition--"Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand," April 22 - May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York.

[206]Charmion von Wiegand, Transmutation, oil on canvas ca. 1951, Collection of William Benenson, New York. First exhibited in 1952 at von Wiegand's solo exhibition--"Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand," April 22 - May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York.

[207]Charmion von Wiegand, Sarcophagus, oil on canvas, ca. 1951, Collection unknown. Included in von Wiegand's 1952 Solo Exhibition, "Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand," April 22 - May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Kundalina Lotus, 1956, Cairo, 1956, and The Ka Door, 1950 (Fig. 29). In The Ka Door, von Wiegand borrowed the form from the Metropolitan Museum's False Door of Mechechi, Dynasty 6, ca. 2345-2181 B.C.[209] The false-door stela was placed in the chapel of Old Kingdom mastabas, oblong-shaped tombs with sloping sides and flat roofs, and served as a magic door through which the deceased in the next life received nourishment in material or ritual form. "Ka" means the dematerialized spirit of the deceased.[210] Von Wiegand copied the elongated form of the door and its rectangular compartments of heiroglyphs in her depiction. The hues of reds and blues she used at this time can be found in Egyptian as well as Neo-Plastic sources, as can the small squares, which may come directly from such Egyptian caskets at the Museum, as Coffin of Khnumnakhte and Coffin of

---

[208]Charmion von Wiegand, Isis Gate, collage and gouache, 1956, signed in red ink, lower right corner: *Charmion von Wiegand*, red ink, lower left *#155, 1956*; red pencil in upper right corner: *C.V.W.*; upper left: *#155, 1956*; inscribed in verso along the top: *The Isis Gate/by/Charmion von Wiegand/Collage #155/1956 Sunday January 29th/New York, 301,* Milwaukee Art Museum.

[209]False Door of Mechechi, limestone, Dynasty 6, ca. 2345-2181 B.C., Metropolitan Museum. For more information see: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Egypt and the Ancient Near East, intro. by Peter F. Dorman and Prudence Oliver Harper (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 23.

[210]R. T. Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978): 64, 67.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ukhhotpe.[211] In The Ka Door, von Wiegand used Mondrian's small pulsating squares of the "Boogie Woogie" series, juxtaposing them with larger, stable rectangular planes. The pulsating squares are not spread out evenly across the canvas, but are concentrated on islands of rectangles located vertically up and down the center of the canvas.[212] Vertical and horizontal rectangular planes are positioned in locations comparable to the heiroglyphs appearing on the stone slab door of the Egyptian temple. The Ka Door no longer suggests a unity of the horizontal and the vertical; the vertical has won out over the horizontal to emphasize the ascension of the spirit.

Von Wiegand spoke about Egyptian art in a talk on Mondrian's painting in 1956. Referring to Mondrian's art von Wiegand said, "certain works of pure abstract art in this century have the pristine purity and simplicity of the exquisite reliefs of the Saite Dynasty. The resemblance lies not in any external appearance but in a preference for lines and contours cleanly cut as if with a diamond chisel."

---

[211]Coffin of Khnumnakhte, Meir, painted wood, Dynasty 12, ca. 199-1786 B.C., Metropolitan Museum; and Coffin of Ukhhotpe, Meir; wood, gold leaf, alabaster, obsidian, and various organic materials, Dynasty 12, ca. 1991-1786 B.C., Metropolitan Museum. For more information on the coffins in the Metropolitan Museum of Art consult: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Egypt and the Ancient Near East, intro. by Peter F. Dorman and Prudence Oliver Harper (New York: The Museum, 1987), 34-35.

[212]Virginia Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," Woman's Art Journal (Fall 1983/Winter 1984): 32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

She also stated in the same article:

> Egypt, at the brink of the disintegration of a tradition thousands of years old, all the laws of seeing, the consummate craft, and its religious thought were condensed into a pure vision as delicate and cold as snow on a mountain lake. This is the last crystallization, limpidly clear and detached from life, from which much of the blood and organic vitality of earlier epochs, has been drained or frozen into pure essence.[213]

Von Wiegand believed the fusion of artistic craft, visual forms, and a spiritual vision created great art. She sought to emulate both Mondrian and the Egyptians for this skill in her own painting.

Von Wiegand continued her interest in Egyptian art and architecture off and on throughout her work of the 1950s and 1960s. In Desert Sanctuary, 1959-60,[214] the artist charted the plan of an Egyptian rock-cut tomb--even to the hidden serdab, represented by an isolated rectangle placed to one side of the painting's central spine. Her linear scheme of rectangles in overlaid and projecting compositions refers to the New Kingdom tomb-shaft, entry-court, and offering chambers, which she regularized to fit the requirements of a geometric format. Her architectural interest in the temple plan as a source for her paintings was not limited to Egypt;

---

[213]In a talk "The Age of Mondrian," given to the members of the American Abstract Artists association on May 25, 1956 von Wiegand gives an in-depth analysis of the historical influences and the process of Mondrian.

[214]Charmion von Wiegand, Desert Sanctuary, oil and gouache on paper, 1958, Collection unknown.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in the 1960s von Wiegand also examined Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Tibetan Temples, as well as the Western skyscraper for possible subjects of her work.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER VIII

PAINTING AND COLLAGE--1950-1959

The Korean War and the McCarthy Era

While Karl von Wiegand relaxed at his tranquil home by the Egyptian Pyramids, the Red Scare opened the decade of the 1950s. In June of 1950, warfare in Korea began between the Russian-dominated Korean People's Republic and the American-backed Republic of Korea. As the North Korean troops, well supplied from Russia, advanced rapidly southward, fear mounted that docile acceptance of the situation would encourage communist aggression in Berlin, the Philippines, and the area south of Communist China.[1]

The Korean War made the Freemans, as well as other Americans increasingly aware of threats to their national security. Alger Hiss, a former state department employee, was convicted of giving a self-confessed ex-communist "courier" several top-secret documents in January of 1950. Seemingly, the Communist threat on the homefront now had a

---

[1]For more information on the Korean War see: Richard Whelan, Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950-1953 (Boston: Little Brown, 1990); and Max Hastings, The Korean War (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

tangible basis.[2] Congress exploited public fear when it passed the McCarran Internal Security Act (September 1950), requiring the registration of all communist-front organizations with the Attorney-General and forbidding aliens who had been communists to enter the United States. At the same time the older Smith Alien Registration Act of 1940, which forbade any person to teach the desirability of overthrowing the government by force, was used to convict eleven members of the Communist Party. When the Supreme Court upheld their conviction in June of 1951, they began serving terms up to five years. This encouraged an outburst of state laws inflicting "loyalty oaths" on workers or providing for the investigation of "subversives." The leader of this "red hunt" was Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin whose indiscriminate and reckless accusations popularized the term "McCarthyism" as a synonym for the repression of civil liberties.[3]

Charmion von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman, because of their past associations with the Communist Party, did not escape the witch hunt unscathed. As a former radical,

---

[2]David Oshinsky, A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy (London: Collier MacMillan, 1983), 97-101.

[3]For more on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and the "red hunt" see: Ellen Schrecker, The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994); David Caute, The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978); and Mark Landis, Joseph McCarthy: The Politics of Chaos (London: Associated University Presses, 1987).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Joseph Freeman was subpoenaed by the House Unamerican Activities Committee and testified before it in 1953, presenting himself as a man "out of politics."[4] Although, Freeman was cleared of any wrong doing, Charmion von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman were now ostracized by their peers. If it hadn't been for the belief and support of a few influential friends, they would have been destitute. Although Joseph Freeman managed to secure a steady amount of work ghost writing, he tried until his death in 1965 to publish his own writings but to no avail.

Not only did the McCarthy hearings have a direct effect on the Freemans' daily life, but the hearings damaged the reputations of family and friends. Von Wiegand's ex-husband, Hermann Habicht, lost his job in the State Department, due to his association with the Freemans and other "comrades" as well as his previous business connections in Communist Russia. Charmion von Wiegand, when living in Moscow, and still married to Habicht, had helped her husband establish business connections with the Stalinist government. Karl von Wiegand wrote his daughter after learning the news: "I was distressed to learn from

---

[4]"The talk of the town at the moment is, among other things, The Age of Suspicion (New York: Primus, Donald I. Fine, 1953) a brilliant book of memoirs by Jimmy Wechsler, editor of The Post. He gives me a long pleasant paragraph, which is okay with me." Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Cairo, 25 November 1953, JF Papers, Hoover Institute. (Wechsler mentions Freeman's testimony before the House Unamerican Activities Committee.)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

your latest letter that Hermann in spite of everything--has been fired from his State Department job...Europe is much closer to Russia, much closer, therefore, to any possible war with Russia, yet neither on the continent nor in Great Britain is there the kind of hysterical witch hunt that is now going on in our own country."[5]

Karl von Wiegand and the Freemans also lost a very close friend; E. Herbert Norman, the Canadian Ambassador to Cairo when he committed suicide while being investigated by one of the United States Congressional investigation committees, even though he already been cleared by the Canadian government. Karl von Wiegand wrote the Freemans:

> Lester B. Pearson, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs says the suicide was due to nervous collapse brought by overwork, overstrain and "a feeling of renewed persecution." John Diefenbaker, head of the Canadian Conservative Opposition, said Norman's death was due to the witch-hunting proclivities of certain Congressional inquisitors in Washington who, lacking targets, felt impelled to malign and condemn Canadian public servants as well." Other Canadian leaders described the Ambassador's death as "murder by slander." And the General Council of the United Church of Canada has appealed to President Eisenhower to stop "politicians and partisans from assassinating the characters of innocent men."[6]

During the 1950s, Karl von Wiegand and the Freemans limited their communication fearful that their words would

---

[5]Karl von Wiegand, Cairo, Egypt, to Charmion von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman, New York, 20 May 1952, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[6]Karl von Wiegand, Cairo, to Joseph Freeman and Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 5 April 1957, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

be misconstrued and interpreted as a communist threat to the security of the United States. Von Wiegand wrote her father in 1955:

> There are so many things I would have liked to tell you or discuss with you, but I have become very reserved, because we live in a jungle and can trust no one. Particularly in writing to you [in] Egypt, I always feel as if someone were looking over my shoulder. I wish the human race could get rid of all this censorship and dictatorship, which the period of Stalin and Hitler re-initiated in the world. It is my nature to like people, to assume their good. Years of human malice, envy, and greed, disguised under various political slogans, has put a curb on my effervescent temperament. So while I have come to detest politics of all kinds, it is not necessary to become cynical but rather more compassionate toward human beings. In fact, I really was born liking people and its not something you get over.[7]

Charmion von Wiegand, like her husband Joseph Freeman, took solace in her work. Eschewing political associations, the Freemans turned to an intensive study of Eastern religions. The 1950s became one of their most prolific periods, as they melded the Eastern philosophy and literature which they studied with their art. Where Joseph Freeman wrote sonnets and narratives in prose and poetry about his hopes for a spiritual evolution of mankind; von Wiegand made dozens of paintings and collages to communicate her sentiments and beliefs about the triumph of the human soul's visual form. Both believed that the hope of human beings' collective salvation came, in Joseph Freeman's words, 'only by splitting the atom of the human soul can we

---

[7]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Cairo, 28 August 1955, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

sublimate our jungle heritage.'[8] Freeman and von Wiegand were convinced that people must understand the workings of the individual psyche through the study of religion, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology; they looked for ways to dismantle the political structure of society in order to reassemble it for the common good of humanity.

Chicago

In 1952, Joseph Freeman was awarded a fellowship year at the Newberry Library at the University of Chicago. This turned out to be a very important year for Charmion von Wiegand as well. She spent time studying the collection at The Art Institute of Chicago and used the resources of the Newberry Library, studying the relationship of art and religion, particularly Eastern religions. The most important event of her year was studying with the photographer, Aaron Siskind, at the Institute of Design, founded by the former Bauhaus instructor Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. She also attended numerous classes on photography and visited the many Chicago galleries. One of the most interesting exhibitions was a show of public school children's art, ages 7-13, displayed on one block of State Street. Watercolors were stuck inside large glass display

---

[8]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Paris, 26 September 1948, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

windows. Von Wiegand loved the contrast between the art and the shopping district in which it was displayed.[9]

Painting

Von Wiegand's paintings of the 1950s share many formal qualities with those of her contemporaries associated with the American Abstract Artists, such as Ilya Bolotwsky, Carl Holty, and Albert Swinden. These artists were involved with lush complex color, multiple divisions of the pictorial plane, and the "push-pull" between the flat picture plane and the illusion of deep space within the painting. Von Wiegand's work does not share the breadth of scale or the conceptual purity of many of the strict followers of Neo-plasticism, such as Burgoyne Diller or Fritz Glarner. Nor does her work exhibit Mondrian's underlying grid or rhythmic pattern, often depicted as a unitary field, as in the work of contemporary Barnett Newman.

Maintaining an open mind about her art, von Wiegand chose to go beyond the strict limitations of Neo-plasticism. "Her painting could be described as a sort of feminine revolt against the harshness of the Neo-plastic tenets," wrote Fairfield Porter, in the Art News of May 1952. He described von Wiegand's work currently on view at the Saidenberg Gallery:

---

[9]Charmion von Wiegand, to Anne Fineberg, 18 November 1952, Joseph Freeman Papers, Anne Fineberg, New York, NY.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> She refuses to be limited to red, yellow, blue and the "three neutrals." With stubborn grace she introduces pinks, greens, violet, and tan into her paintings... The pictures can be divided into two kinds: one in little squares, is very close to Mondrian; another, with diagonals and triangles, has an entirely different kind of structure: the angles tend somewhat to fly out to one side, and the circles sit uncomfortably within the frame.[10]

Porter believed the sources of these new compositional formats were influenced by von Wiegand's study in books. He cited the works The Ka Door, 1950[11] "about Egyptian archaeology and myth," and Emerald Tablets, 1952[12] (Fig. 30) "with its green triangles and stripes," as prime examples of these new dynamic compositions.[13]

Von Wiegand's painting became more original and strengthened during the 1950s, as did her reputation as an artist. Freeman conveyed to her father the changes occurring in his wife's work:

---

[10]F(airfield) P(orter), "Charmion von Wiegand (Saidenberg; to May 24)," Art News 51 (May 1952): 45.

[11]Charmion von Wiegand, The Ka Door, oil on canvas, 1952, Estate of Charmion von Wiegand.

[12]Von Wiegand made an earlier version of this composition in 1951 also called The Emerald Tablets, Collection unknown, shown in 1952 at her Solo Exhibition, "Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand," April 22 - May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York and reviewed in F.P., "Charmion von Wiegand" Art News 51 (May 1952): 45.

Charmion von Wiegand, The Emerald Tablets, oil on canvas, ca. 1952, Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA. The work is illustrated in "Three American Purists; Mason, Miles, Von Wiegand," The Connoisseur (1975 July): 237.

[13]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> Charmion is painting better than ever nowadays...and is widely recognized as one of the best of the new American painters. Her work is full of color, verve, insight, and originality and there is a unique fusion of Western and Eastern elements which, I imagine, she gets from you [Karl von Wiegand] and your accounts of your Asian travels and readings.[14]

By 1950, von Wiegand had finished her intensive study of Theosophy, and, in turn, immersed herself in readings on the various oriental canons--Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan--on which Theosophy's founder H.P. Blavatsky had based her theory. As a result, profound changes in von Wiegand's compositions occurred with the introduction of bilateral symmetry, elongation of the picture plane, and centralization of the axis. This new compositional format may have had its source in the traditional vertical form of the Tibetan scroll, which von Wiegand had begun to collect.

Von Wiegand and Freeman continued to attend events at the Theosophical Society, particularly lectures on Hinduism and Buddhism. They listened to Rukmini Devi, a woman member of the Indian Parliament, and Prof. Ernest Wood on the practice of Patanjali's "Eight Steps of Yoga."[15] The Freemans explored as many different religions as possible.

Joseph Freeman's work as a ghost writer for members of the United Nations brought many Asian diplomats into the Freemans' lives. On December 18, 1951, Freeman wrote to his

---

[14]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Cairo, 24 June 1955, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[15]Charmion von Wiegand, Europe, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 3 June 1952, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

father-in-law: "By a series of accidents, we are at this moment in the Asian orbit--right here in New York."[16] The Freeman's friends during the 1950s included Prime Minister Nehru's sister; Mr. Sen, Ambassador to the United States from India; Mr. Lal, the new Indian Consul General in New York; his wife, Professor Yakawa, a Japanese physicist who helped to split the atom; Chinni Sunderam, who was with TATA, the leading industrial and banking firm of India; Sir C.P. Ramaswami Alyer, a lawyer and businessman from India, who was a great friend of Annie Besant's and organized with her a nationalist-metaphysical group related to Theosophy; and Dr. Chang, a delegate of the Nationalist Chinese government at the U.N. Security Counsel.[17]

The Freemans sought like minded individuals to share their passions. Freeman wrote to his father-in-law: "There is a growing interest here in Chinese, Indian, and Japanese art and philosophy; last night, for example, a very fine woman sculptor, who was born and brought up in Brooklyn and has never been further East than Paris, told me she is working on a statue of Buddha...These are signs of the times." Also, at this time the Freemans were working with a Chinese scholar who was translating Joseph Freeman and Charmion von Wiegand's poetry into modern and classical

---

[16]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Cecil Hotel, Alexandria, Egypt, 18 December 1951, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[17]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chinese. They hoped to get their work published in China.[18]

Von Wiegand, who was enchanted by everything Chinese, wrote:

> We were invited to a Chinese movie producer and there were 50 people for an outside buffet supper, 40 of whom were Chinese. After supper, there were movies on the lawn and short colored films of Chinese art...The party was for Chinese artists and I must say they have a wonderful cultured background. I said to Joe that it is like a fairy tale, that because I have been working in Chinese color in painting, we suddenly find ourselves surrounded by Chinese intellectuals.

Von Wiegand conveyed to her father her hopes of traveling in the Orient:

> We went to a reception for U Nu, the Burmese Prime Minister, a week ago. He is a very composed looking man, a real Buddhist. New York has become so international with the U.N. that you can travel all over the world by proxy. Nevertheless, I would like to take a trip again, and I am really more anxious to see India and China. If it is to be, I am sure the way will open up.[19]

It is not until twenty years later, however, that the opportunity to travel in India presented itself.

Americans look East

The Freeman's were not alone in their fascination with Eastern people and their religions. In the United States at the turn of the century the East was portrayed as a peaceful fairy-tale land, and Buddhism was considered a means of

---

[18]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt 24 June 1955, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[19]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 17 July 1955, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attaining inner peacefulness.[20] Americans established learned societies devoted to the East and provided a market for translations of Oriental literature.[21] Such works as Percival Lowell's Soul of the Far East, 1892[22] and Edwin Arnold's Light of Asia, 1887[23] enjoyed enormous popular success throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, as did the pseudo-Oriental verse of Edward Fitzgerald's The Rubaiyat, 1884.[24] (Von Wiegand's estate

---

[20]Howard Murphet, Yankee Beacon of Buddhist Light (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1988), 21; and Arthur Christy, The Orient in American Transcendentalism (New York: John Day, 1945), 38 and 43.

[21]The growth of formal Buddhism in American can be traced back to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Before this date the first Chinese temple appeared in San Francisco in 1853, and there was a significant influx of Japanese immigrants in 1885. Many New England Transcendentalists spread knowledge of Eastern religions, beginning with James Freeman Clarke's Ten Great Religions (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1882-1883) and Samuel Johnson's Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion (Boston: J.R. Osgood & Company, 1872). Emerson and Thoreau published excerpts of Eastern classics in their magazine Dial. The Theosophists propagated the ideas of Buddhism. The first book on Buddhism, The Light of Asia, was published by Edwin Arnold in America in 1878. Joseph Tamney, American Society in the Buddhist Mirror (New York: Garland, 1992), xii.

[22]Percival Lowell, Soul of the Far East (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892).

[23]Edwin Arnold, Light of Asia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884).

[24]Edward Fitzgerald, The Rubaiyat (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

contained all three books at her death.)[25]

Von Wiegand and many of her contemporaries during the 1920s were influenced by the teachings of Ernest Fenollosa, the Curator of Japanese art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and Arthur Wesley Dow, whose work served as an important precedent for the development of modernism in the United States and the propagation of oriental thought and art.[26] Fenollosa and Dow advocated a synthesis of Eastern and Western artistic practices. They loudly deplored an art of realism as lacking in spiritual value. Due to the influence of Dow and Fenollosa, Oriental art was often cited by the supporters of modernism as a stylistic paradigm.[27]

Not only did Von Wiegand own a copy of Dow's

---

[25]Charmion von Wiegand, "Inventory of Book and Manuscript Collection, 1983," Estate of Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY.

[26]Fenollosa, an oriental art historian who developed a method of explaining the basis of oriental art to Western students, introduced Dow to Oriental art and theory when they were both working at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Dow, who later taught at the Art Students League and Pratt Institute, provided students with simple exercises to help them learn to manipulate line, color, and notan (a Japanese word referring to tonal and value relationships within a composition). His teaching methods were published in Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1899), which von Wiegand read 28 years later. In 1903, Dow became head of the art education department at Columbia's Teachers' College. Marianne W. Martin, "Some American Contributions to early Twentieth Century Abstraction," Arts Magazine 54 (June 1980): 158-65.

[27]Charles Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions," Camera Work (October 1905): 15-17 and Caffin,"The New thought which is Old," Camera Work (July 1910): 21-24.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Composition[28] but her friendships with a variety of painters taught by Dow--the most influential being Max Weber--exposed her to the Fenollosa-Dow aesthetics. Dow's most significant ideas, that art need not imitate nature but could grow out of formal abstract relationships and that art must have some kind of spiritual value, greatly influenced von Wiegand's thinking.[29]

Modernity and Buddhism

Many of Charmion von Wiegand's Eastern ideas were formed and reinforced by her father's experiences abroad. Karl von Wiegand wrote on December 27, 1951, from Mena House Hotel at the Pyramids to the Freemans:

> Spirituality recedes as mind, heart, and soul becomes more and more filled with materialism. That is the case in our USA and in Russia but in the latter there is still a strong spiritual current underneath all, though not easily apparent. Russian people are deeply religious, mystically so. In the Vatican they still speculate that it will become the great field of the Church one day...Long ago I wrote that India will be

---

[28]Arthur Dow, Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1931).

[29]For more information on the ideas of Ernest Fenollosa and Arthur Wesley Dow consult the following: Arthur Wesley Dow, Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1899); Marianne W. Martin, "Some American Contributions to Early Twentieth Century Abstraction," Arts Magazine 54, no. 10 (June 1980): 158-165; and Arthur Wesley Dow and His Influence, exh. cat. by Nancy E. Green (Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 1990).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> the spiritual center, religious and philosophic center of the new Asia, and in all probability China the military might.[30]

Earlier, Joseph Freeman in a letter to his father-in-law expressed much the same sentiments: "For the curious thing is that we Americans are not very different from the Russians in one respect: we too tend to reduce all existence to material factors; whereas the Chinese recognize the importance of time and ethics; and the Indians, going even further, recognize the priority of mind and spirit and their universality."[31] Karl von Wiegand, Joseph Freeman, and Charmion von Wiegand believed that the burdens of modernity for the individual included more than the personal costs associated with work, reason, and profit. The East represented a peaceful utopia where the pursuit of the spiritual was of prime importance.

Buddhism developed a strong following in the United States beginning in 1931 when Sokei-an Sasaki, a Zen teacher, came to New York and formed The Buddhist Society of America.[32] World War II heightened American interest in

---

[30]Karl von Wiegand, Mena House Hotel, Alexandria, Egypt, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 27 December 1951, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[31]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand at Cecil Hotel, Alexandria, Egypt, 18 December 1951, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[32]Nyogen Senzaki, also a teacher of Zen, came to Los Angeles about the same time. Tamney, American Society in the Buddhist Mirror, xiii.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Asian cultures.[33] Americans altered Buddhism into what they termed "Beat Zen," this country's customized version of the Eastern religion.[34]

Von Wiegand, like many Westerners, was drawn to Buddhism as an escape from modernity. In part she was undoubtedly repelled by the boorish quality of Western society's profit-driven people. Also, her interest in Buddhism was partially fueled by the desire to lose the self. The modern world placed a great burden upon the individual to invent a self. William Bigelow, a Harvard Medical School doctor who went to Japan to study Buddhism instead of practicing medicine, wrote, "Autonomy had become a burdensome ego ideal."[35] Bigelow, like many others of the early 20th Century, was tired of the expectations placed on the person by modernity.[36] As Bigelow said at Harvard, the

---

[33]One of the Americans influenced during the war was Philip Kapleau, who went on to found the Zen Meditation Center in Rochester, New York in 1966, after becoming interested in Zen while working with the International Military tribunal in Tokyo. Rick Fields, How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America (New York: Random House, 1981), 195.

[34]Tamney, American Society in the Buddhist Mirror, xiii.

[35]As quoted in T. J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 229.

[36]In 1908, the year Bigelow was appointed lecturer on Buddhism at Harvard, Bigelow spoke on "Buddhism and Immortality." Some of his remarks were as follows: "The self is coextensive with the universe." ...Consciousness is continuous: there is but one ultimate consciousness; all beings are therefore one." Ibid., 232.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

goal is nirvana or peace.[37]

Von Wiegand may have not been familiar with William Bigelow's writings, but she did read Erich Fromm's book Escape from Freedom, originally published in 1941, which echoed Bigelow's ideas.[38] In this work Fromm stated that modernization had meant a change from dependence on tradition and authority to a dependence on rationality. Modernization had also augmented personal insecurity and loneliness. Increasing freedom, he wrote, means growing isolation and thereby growing doubt concerning one's role in the universe.[39]

Von Wiegand's belief in the Buddhist principles of nirvana helped her to understand Freud's work in this area. Von Wiegand, who had been psychoanalyzed in the mid-twenties, was an avid believer in Freud. In the early twenties Freud made reference to the "nirvana-principle," which he said 'belongs to the death instinct.' The nirvana-principle, as defined by Freud, sought to promote the elimination of all tension in peoples lives.[40]

---

[37]"I hope and pray for obliteration, not of my Bongos (lusts), but of myself," said Bigelow. Ibid., 234.

[38]Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Avon Discus Books, 1941) was also included the von Wiegand estate.

[39]Fromm, Escape from Freedom, 48 and 51.

[40]Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," in Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers, vol. 2. (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 256. Freud's Collected Papers were among the Freeman's books at Joseph Freeman's death in 1965. The

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand also read Alan Watts,[41] a British-born writer who, more than anyone else, popularized Buddhism in America.[42] His best known work was published in the United States in 1957, after he had immigrated to this country.[43] Watts portrayed Buddhism as a critique of culture. He explained the Buddhist belief that "one must be in the world but not of it" to mean that a Buddhist lives his life free from attachments, such as social roles. [44] This interpretation of Buddhist detachment had great appeal for von Wiegand and probably reminded her of her early spiritual interest in the teachings of Gurdjieff.[45]

Another psychologist, Carl Jung, made Oriental ideas accessible for von Wiegand and many other artists, such as Pollock, Reinhardt, Gottlieb, Graves, Lassaw, MacDonald-

---

volumes were given to Stanford University.

[41]A copy of Alan Watts, The Spirit of Zen: A Way of Life, Work, and Art in the Far East (New York: Grove, 1957) is in Charmion von Wiegand's estate. It is inscribed to von Wiegand from Mark Tobey and dated 1958.

[42]Watt's first book was published in Great Britain in 1935 and was entitled The Spirit of Zen: A Way of Life, Work, and Art in the Far East; quoted in Fields, How the Swans Came to the Lake, 195.

[43]Although Watts was a Catholic, his reading in secondary school included such Eastern classical texts as the Bhagavadgita and the Diamond Sutra and books by authors such as D. T. Suzuki, Lao-Tzu, Madame Blavastky, and Carl Jung. Tamney, American Society in the Buddhist Mirror, 37.

[44]Alan Watts, Psychotherapy East and West, (New York: Vintage, 1961), 13, 67-68.

[45]See Chapter III.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wright, Jenkins, Onslow-Ford, Lippold, Motherwell, Rothko, Tobey, Baziotes, Krasner, Roszak, and Graham.[46] Through Jung's discussion of alchemy and primitive myths he moved beyond a dualistic vision in his psychological writing. Jung provided an understandable framework for the concepts of Oriental thought for a Western audience. His notion of the collective unconscious--a universal mind underlying the individual consciousness--made the ideas of Oriental metaphysics accessible to von Wiegand.[47]

Von Wiegand also read the leading Beat Movement writers. One of the seminal figures of the Beat generation was the novelist Jack Kerouac. His book, The Dharma Bums, first published in 1958,[48] told the story of the relationship between Ray Smith and Japhy Ryder; it was based on the real life friendship of the author and highly-regarded Beat poet, Gary Snyder. The Dharma Bums was the first piece of popular American fiction that made Buddhism a central theme of the story and, even more important, that presented it as a useful guide for daily living in modern

---

[46]Maurice Tuchman, "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art," The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985 (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 49-51.

[47]Ibid., 53.

[48]Jack Kerouac, The Dharma Bums (New York: New American Library, 1958).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

America.[49] It is interesting to speculate that Charmion von Wiegand may also have been particularly interested in the real life experiences of Kerouac and Snyder given their interest in Buddhism. Snyder in particular had an extensive knowledge of Buddhism and spent a great deal of time in the Orient. He also practiced as a monk in a Buddhist monastery in Japan.

Suzuki

Some time during the winter of 1950-51 von Wiegand and Joseph Freeman attended a lecture given at the Church of the Peace Union in New York by the scholar of Zen Buddhism, Daisetz Suzuki.[50] Von Wiegand had known of Suzuki's ideas at least five years before she probably read his book Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture in Our Inner Conflicts, published in 1945.[51] At the time of this lecture Suzuki was eighty years old--a small, wiry man with a wisp

---

[49]Snyder hung out with the Beat writers after they moved from New York City to San Francisco. He studied Oriental Languages at Berkeley and later Buddhism in Japanese monasteries. For more information on Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder see Fred W. McDarrah, Kerouac and Friends: A Beat Generation Album (New York: W. Morrow, 1985); and Jeffrey H. Weinberg, Writers Outside the Margin (Sudbury MA: Water Row Press, 1986).

[50]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, NY, to Mark Tobey, Seattle, WA, 21 February 1951, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York, NY.

[51]She was most likely introduced to this book by Mark Tobey.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of a voice and memorable eyebrows, "ferocious eyebrows."[52] Many who met him or heard him lecture sensed some ineffable Buddha-like quality in him.

Suzuki was not himself a Zen master, or roshi, but a scholar and writer of great authority.[53] His learning was formidable--he knew Sanskrit, classical Chinese, and Pali, as well as Japanese and English--but his most remarkable gift was his ability to explain Zen to the West. Using examples and anecdotes from Buddhist life and the arts, Suzuki wrote lucidly about a subject that largely refused to be contained in words. As he frequently acknowledged, writing about Zen was in itself an impossibility, since true enlightenment must come through personal experience.

By the time von Wiegand met him, he had landed at Columbia University, under a Rockefeller Foundation grant, and was living in rooms known, appropriately, as the Prophets' Chambers. It is easy to see why von Wiegand would have been attracted to Suzuki, and to Zen Buddhism. She would have liked Suzuki's immediacy and his ability--not

---

[52]Winthrop Sargent wrote in a New Yorker profile some years later, "[Eyebrows] which project from his forehead like the eyebrows of the angry demons who guard the entrance of Buddhist temples in Japan." Winthrop Sargent, "Great Simplicity," New Yorker (31 August 1957): 53.

[53]What gives Suzuki's writings their unique authority, particularly in the eyes of practicing Zen Buddhists, is the fact that he immersed himself first in Zen practice and only later in scholarship. For more information on Suzuki see: William Barrett, "Introduction" to D T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki, ed. William Barrett (New York: Anchor Books, 1956).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unlike her own--to explain himself. She would have enjoyed the deeply humorous strain in Zen, and, perhaps most of all, its lack of doctrine. "Truth, in the sense of reality," Buddha tells his disciple in the Diamond Sutra, "cannot be cut up into pieces and arranged into a system."[54] Von Wiegand's favorite book on Zen Buddhism was Zen and the Art of Archery recommended to her by Mark Tobey.[55] For a woman who had spent her life resisting orthodoxies, Zen's antidoctrinaire spirit held natural appeal. Unlike some Westerners in the sixties, who took to Zen because it seemed exotic and the "thing to do," von Wiegand's attraction was part of a broader search over a longer period of time. Several of von Wiegand's collages and paintings were directly inspired by Zen, including Pillars of Zen, #124,

---

[54]Quoted in Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy (New York: Hapre, 1945), 263.

[55]"You wrote me about the book, Zen and the Art of Archery. I read it with great delight when it first came out. After all it gets to the crux of the matter. But how to attain it? It's a book I would love to have around. I'm trying in another way. I started taking Yogi exercises and so far have had 4 lessons. A friend, an abstract painter, Jean Miles, persuaded me. Our teacher is Yogi Vithaldis, who is the teacher of Yehudi Menuhin, the violinist. Its pure Hatha-yogi and it has made me realize how unhealthy a life we lead in New York. An hour of exercise, very quiet ones, and one feels full of energy. I haven't exercised in years and simply creak, but when he tied me up in a lotus pose I was painfully thrilled. Hope I can learn." Charmion von Wiegand, The MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NN, to Mark Tobey, Seattle, WA, 21 May 1957, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1959.[56]

Mark Tobey

Von Wiegand's knowledge of Zen Buddhism, before her introduction to Suzuki, was based on the letters and books she received from Mark Tobey. In 1947, the Seattle art dealer Zoe Dusanne visited von Wiegand in New York, bringing along Mark Tobey, one of the artists in Dusanne's fold. Dusanne believed von Wiegand and Tobey had similar interests and aesthetic sensibilities and was anxious for the two artists to meet.[57] After the initial introduction, von Wiegand and Tobey corresponded regularly and met at least once a year usually in Basel, Switzerland, where Tobey lived as an expatriate. Von Wiegand and Tobey shared the same belief that art describes reality, a spiritual reality.

Buddhist Images--The Golden Flower

Shortly after von Wiegand heard Suzuki lecture, the sculptor Ibram Lassaw,[58] another friend of von Wiegand's pursuing spiritual interests, gave her the book The Secret

---

[56]Charmion von Wiegand, Pillars of Zen, #124, gouache on paper, 1959, André Zarre Gallery, New York.

[57]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Zoe Dusanne, Seattle, WA, 14 July 1947, Zoe Dusanne Papers, Washington University, Seattle.

[58]Ibram Lassaw, Interview by Jennifer Hersh, 12 December 1992, Collection of the Author.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the Golden Flower.[59] Inspired by the philosophy it presented, von Wiegand created numerous works with Buddhist themes. She repeatedly emphasized that, for her, theory was primarily a means of inspiration, and she never attempted to copy Eastern motifs. Rather, she strove to explore "the play of opposition between Western geometric structure and Eastern color gamut."[60] In actuality, however, she was deeply involved in Buddhist theory and practice (she long had a shrine in her home from around 1950 to her death), and firmly held that art had "one foot in life and the other in eternity."[61]

One of the first paintings created with a Buddhist theme was titled, Golden Flower, 1950-51.[62] The image suggested the third eye (or urna) in Buddha's forehead. The artist departed from basic right-angled relationships to include circles. Two strong symbols make their appearance--

---

[59]A Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life, trans. Richard Wilhelm, introduction C. G. Jung (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931).

[60]Charmion von Wiegand, undated text by the artist, Charmion von Wiegand Papers, Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York.

[61]Charmion von Wiegand quoted in Susan Larsen, "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones," Arts Magazine 60 (November 1985): 31.

[62]Charmion von Wiegand, The Golden Flower, gouache on board, 1950-51, Marilyn Pearl Gallery. A later version of this composition exists as reported by Virginia Rembert; Charmion von Wiegand, Golden Flower, 1952-53, Collection unknown. For more information on this work consult: Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," 32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the hexagonal star and lotus, which are formed from diagonal lines. To unite these new triangular and circular shapes, von Wiegand used darker values to superimpose diagonals upon the original right angled forms. In the checklist for the 1952 exhibition at the Saidenberg Gallery in which this painting was shown, von Wiegand quoted from the Secret of the Golden Flower, A Chinese Book of Life: "In the midst of primal becoming, the radiance of the light is the determining thing. In the physical world it is the sun; in the man the eye."[63]

The Golden Flower inspired many works, including Finger of Buddha, #103, 1953 (Fig. 31),[64] The Eye of Buddha, 1953,[65] and Chinese Labyrinth, 1954 (Fig. 32).[66] Finger of Buddha was collaged with small sheets textured with a brush and paint.[67] Also influenced by this Chinese philosophy book, von Wiegand created Sequence of Earlier Heaven, 1954[68]

---

[63]"Exhibition of Paintings, Charmion von Wiegand, April 22 to May 24, 1952, Saidenberg Gallery, 10 East 77th Street, New York, Oils and Collages," Art Digest, 26 (15 May 1952): 16.

[64]Charmion von Wiegand, Finger of Buddha, #103, paper and gouache collage, 1953, Isabel and William Berley collection.

[65]Charmion von Wiegand, Eye of the Buddha, #104, collage, 1953, Collection of Marilyn Pearl, New York.

[66]Charmion von Wiegand, Chinese Labyrinth, collage, 1954, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York.

[67]Herta Wescher, Collage (Abrams: New York, 1978).

[68]Charmion von Wiegand, Sequence of Earlier Heaven, oil on canvas, 1954, Private Collection.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

(Fig. 33), a transitional painting comprised of rectangles in flat pure color--red, blue, yellow, light blue and white--arranged to lead the eye to the center of the composition. In the middle of the canvas a tiny black rectangle suggests a possible entrance to another dimension.[69]

In the press, Charmion von Wiegand received praise for her attempt to unite Eastern imagery and a Western aesthetic. One Art Digest critic wrote:

> Eastern and Western formal ideas can't be fused so easily. Miss von Wiegand is more successful when she is more radical, when the whole painting becomes a mandala, with beams of lighter color cutting diagonally across a quilt of diamond-shapes like light refracted by a prism. How to construct a mandala that is an authentic icon--not static, not merely decorative and satisfying to our Western aesthetic sense--that is quite a problem. In the deceptively simple Fine Wheel, and in Tabernacle and The Golden Flower, the artist has hit upon a few solutions.[70]

Tabernacle, 1950-52[71] was singled out in several other reviews as being one of von Wiegand's most successful compositions of the period.[72]

---

[69]For an image of Sequence of Earlier Heaven consult: Blair Birmelin, "Charmion von Wiegand at Marilyn Pearl," Art in America (October 1985): 154.

[70]"Charmion von Wiegand: Exhibition of Oils at Saidenberg Gallery," Art Digest (15 May 1952): 16.

[71]Charmion von Wiegand, Tabernacle, oil on canvas, 1950-52, Cincinnati Art Museum.

[72]"Charmion von Wiegand: Exhibition of Oils at Saidenberg Gallery," Art Digest (15 May 1952): 16.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

I Ching

In 1953, Joseph Freeman gave von Wiegand The Book of Changes,[73] an ancient Chinese book of divination revised and annotated by Confucius.[74] Freeman and von Wiegand consulted the book for advice on the simple and difficult decisions of their lives. Under the influence of this book, Charmion von Wiegand's painting underwent another remarkable transformation. Koo Hsien Liang, an art critic in New York largely writing on Asian art for Art Digest, described this important influence on von Wiegand's painting:

> In changing the traditional treatment of form and space, she is also first among Western painters, as John Cage is among the composers, to draw inspiration from "I Ching," The Book of Changes, one of the five classics of ancient China. This book, which existed before the arrival of Buddhism in China in the first century A.D., is a great compilation and systematization of popular Chinese thought and ways of thinking. It is a book of life and the universe, of social, political and cultural philosophy and is based on the universal law of change.[75]

Her works: Ascending Trigrams, 1953;[76] Hexagrams, Study 2,

---

[73]I Ching, translated by Richard Wilhelm, rendered into English by Gary F. Baynes, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[74]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 24 June 1953, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[75]Brochure, "Charmion von Wiegand: New Paintings and Collages," (New York: John Heller Gallery, 1956) in Charmion von Wiegand Subject File, Archives, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

[76]Charmion von Wiegand, Ascending Trigrams, collage, 1953, Collection unknown. This work was first exhibited in 1974 at "Charmion von Wiegand Retrospective," Annely Juda Fine Art, London, May 29 - June 29, 1974 and was most likely sold through Annely Juda Fine Art.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1953-5;[77] The Eight Categories of Fate, 1953-1955;[78] Eight Categories of Fate II, 1953-54[79] (Fig. 34); The Eight Categories of Fate, 1955 (collage);[80] The Sixty-four Hexagrams, ca. 1955;[81] and Image of Fire in Heaven (I Ching series TAYU), 1955,[82] were all inspired by the I Ching.[83]

The book is arranged with 64 pairs of 8 symbols given to various interpretations. The common theme of the eight

---

[77]Charmion von Wiegand, Hexagrams, Study 2, oil on canvas, 1953-5, Collection of Elaine Wrong, New York.

[78]Charmion von Wiegand, The Eight Categories of Fate, oil on canvas, 1954-1955, Collection unknown. A photograph of the work exists in the Rose Fried Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Museum, New York, NY.

[79]Charmion von Wiegand, Eight Categories of Fate II, oil on canvas, (on verso "The Eight Categories of Fate, Study II, The Pa K' Wa, Charmion von Wiegand, May 1953-Feb. 1954"),Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art. For a color illustration consult May Brawley Hill, Three American Purists: Mason/Miles/von Wiegand (Springfield, MA: Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, 1975), 29, cat. no. 33; and The World of Abstract Art (New York: Wittenborn: New York, 1957), 57.

[80]Charmion von Wiegand, The Eight Categories of Fate, collage and oil, 1955, Collection of Anne Feinberg, New York.

[81]Charmion von Wiegand, The Sixty-four Hexagrams, ca. 1955, Collection unknown. This work was first exhibited in 1956, Solo Exhibition, "Charmion von Wiegand: New Paintings and Collages," January 4 - 21, 1956, John Heller Gallery, New York.

[82]Charmion von Wiegand, Image of Fire in Heaven (I Ching series TAYU), oil on canvas, 1955, Estate of Charmion von Wiegand, New York.

[83]For a photograph of Eight Categories of Fate II see: May Brawley Hill, Three American Purists: Mason/Miles/von Wiegand (Springfield, Massachusetts: Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1975), 29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

categories refers to the eight trigrams, Chinese symbols of the elements: heaven, earth, fire, water, wind, thunder, lake and mountain. The I Ching's binary system is incorporated into trigrams--a yes/no and a union of the two. Three lines in a variety of combinations create each of the ancient Chinese tri-grams (T. jung-kham; C. pa-kua in Tibetan), attributed to a legendary emperor named Fu-Hsi. The three unbroken lines symbolize the active male principle, Yang, of which the most complete expression is heaven. The three broken lines symbolize the female, passive principle, Yin, expressed by earth. The combinations of broken and unbroken lines symbolize essential elements in the universe in which Yang and Yin are variously combined: sky, lake, fire, thunder, wind, river, mountain and earth. Not only did von Wiegand study the Chinese use of these trigrams, but she also explored the Tibetans employment of trigrams in astrology and divination.[84]

The form of the triangle, inspired by the I Ching, emerged in many of von Wiegand canvases. According to the I Ching, the triangle represents the trinity of the "primal powers," human beings, linked to the heaven--the suprasensible world of ideas, and to earth--the material

---

[84]For more information on the Tibetan trigram see: The Newark Museum, Catalogue of Newark Museum Tibetan Collection, vol. 1 (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum, 1983), 67.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

world of visible things.[85] Von Wiegand composed the Emerald Tablets, 1952, with triangular shapes in the format of a triptych, suggesting Renaissance religious paintings. In the Emerald Tablets, interlocking triangles and color bands appear in combination with earlier rectangular patterning. The proportions of the canvas--11 inches wide by 23 inches tall--on a small scale, suggest the proportions of a door. The vertical orientation of the canvas and the placement of elements of the composition move the viewer's eye from lower left to upper right, strongly suggesting ascension. The title, "Emerald Tablets," refers to the sacred scriptures--'emerald' signifying a jewel or a precious object and 'tablets' the word of God.

In an interview with Paul Cummings von Wiegand stated that "limitation" was her favorite hexagram of the I Ching: "Without limits you can do nothing. The Chinese said limitation is too galling and bad for the spirit. So there is a fine line that has to be drawn."[86] The Study for Chinese Horoscope of 1960 (Fig. 35)[87] has a similar geometric pattern as the hexagram of limitation in the I Ching. Besides directly illustrating the hexagram of limitation in her painting, von Wiegand used limitation as

---

[85]I Ching, 4.

[86]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 34.

[87]Charmion von Wiegand, Study for Chinese Horoscope, gouache, 1959-60, Collection unknown.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

one of the major principles of creation. She would invent problems to solve, such as working with limited materials or specific placement of a shape to determine the relationship of all other elements in her composition. These limitations then allowed von Wiegand the freedom to explore and find the infinite among the finite: "...it's a problem of freedom and constraint and it's how you integrate those two factors that make the art..."[88]

Pythagorean Logarithmic Spiral

Out of von Wiegand's study of The Secret Doctrine, I Ching, and other occult, Chinese, and Buddhist sources, a new form appeared in her work, notably the logarithmic spiral. Artist and critic Fairfield Porter wrote in 1956, "The paintings that are influenced by reading about pre-confucian symbolism make use of a spiral form expressed in an arrangement of almost square rectangles that circle down to an intense center. ...[Von Wiegand] uses freely symbolism of color to express the four directions and the four elements: it is as if she were painting her own Book of Changes."[89]

The spiral first appeared in von Wiegand's work Sign of

---

[88]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 102.

[89]F(airfield) P(orter), "Reviews and Previews--Exhibition of Paintings at Heller Gallery," Art News 54 (January 1956): 55.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Keeping Still, 1956 (Fig. 36).[90] In this work she maintained an equilibrium between the vertical and horizontal elements placed on a white ground, thus the variety of positions and sizes of the rectangles create a spiraling effect. The spiral, reminiscent of the I Ching's Theory of Change-- "Everything flows on and on like a river without pause, day and night"[91]--also originated in The Secret Doctrine where H.P. Blavatsky wrote:

> Pythagoras esteemed the Deity (the Logos) to be the center of unity and "Source of Harmony." ...Pythagoras had studied Esoteric Science in India; therefore we find his pupils saying: The monad (the manifested one) is the principle of all things. From the Monad and the indeterminate duad (Chaos), numbers; from numbers, points; from points lines; from lines, superficies; from superficies, solids; from these solid bodies, whose elements are four--Fire, Water, Air, Earth...[92]

Blavatsky harks back to India and the myth of creation to explain the meaning of the spiraling circle with an infinite center as described by Pythagoras:

> The first, or rather one, principle was called "the circle of Heaven," symbolized by the heirogram of a point within a circle or equilateral triangle, the being the Logos. Thus in the Rig Veda, wherein Brahma is not even named, Cosmogony is preluded with the Hiranyagarbka, "the Golden Egg," the Prajapati or Brahma, from whom emanate all the hierarchies of

---

[90]Charmion von Wiegand, The Sign of Keeping Still, oil on canvas, 1953, The Newark Museum, Newark, NJ. For a color reproduction of the work see: American Art in the Newark Museum (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum, 1981), 390.

[91]I Ching, 5.

[92]Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, v. 2, 433-434.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"creators." The Monad, or point is the original and is the unit from which follows the entire numeral system.[93]

Other paintings based on the logarithmic spiral had titles that suggested Taoist themes of paradise. Two of these, Joyous Lake, 1954-6[94] and Image of Abundance, c. 1955[95] (Fig. 37) employ prismatic colors. According to Paul Cummings, these works were prompted by an "armchair trip von Wiegand took to the Gobi Desert in the wake of Sir Aurel Stein."[96]

The Gobi Desert, in central Asia, extends across Southeast Mongolia and North China. The narrow grass area surrounding the Gobi desert supported a small number of

---

[93]Ibid., 426.

[94]Charmion von Wiegand, Joyous Lake, oil on canvas, 1954-6, Collection unknown. For a photograph of the work see: "Von Wiegand Oils on View," New York Journal America (6 September 1961): 59.

[95]Charmion von Wiegand, The Image of Abundance, oil on canvas, ca. 1955, Collection unknown .

[96]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 19.
The accounts of Aurel Stein's expeditions were quite popular in the 1950s. Von Wiegand read Aurel Stein's Ruins of Desert Cathay (New York: Macmillan, 1912), the popular account of his second expedition (April 1906 to October 1908) in which he goes to Chinese Turkestan and travels north via Chitral and Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan. He revisits old sites and digs at new ones, including Lou-lan, Miran, the 'Chinese limes' and Ming-oi. Eventually Stein arrives in Tun-huang in March 1907 and obtains thousands of manuscripts and paintings from the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. In 1908, he crosses Taklamakan Desert from north to south. His team surveys in Nanshan Mountains and traces Khotan River to its source. For more information on Aurel Stein see: Annabel Walker, Aurel Stein: Pioneer of the Silk Road (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1995).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

nomadic Mongolian tribes living by herding sheep and goats along the many ancient trade routes cut through the desert. Von Wiegand reported to Paul Cummings:

> I was fascinated by the art of the Gobi Desert, the early route between China and India. And particularly the Buddhist art...I traveled extensively in the library and in my arm chair...I did it for about two years. And the result was these pictures in 1950s... I put a circle in the midst of all the very geometric plane with the squares and suddenly a circle came on... the circle enlarged and drove out the squares.[97]

Von Wiegand described these works from the mid-1950s as 'geometric with dynamic symmetry.' "I used a lot of rhythmic spirals but they were geometric."[98] In the late 1950s, the spiral catapulted von Wiegand beyond the strict limitations of Neo-plasticism into unchartered territory of the circle with the square, fully manifested.[99]

Throughout all her work of mid-1950s, von Wiegand based geometric decisions on the I Ching and her color on H.P.

---

[97]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 19.

[98]Ibid., 67.

[99]Later the logarithmic spiral transforms into the "whirling emblem" (T. gakhil), the circle enclosing three (sometimes four) whirling segments as found in Tibetan Buddhism. This form signifies the blissful mind radiating compassion. Alternately, it can represent ceaseless change and movement. A similar form of the three segmented circles also occurs in Chinese mythology. "Symbols in Tibetan Art," Catalogue of Newark Museum Tibetan Collection, vol. 1 (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum, 1983), 67.

A prime example of this construct can be found in von Wiegand's painting, Mandala of the White Arrow, 1963-64. (Charmion von Wiegand, Mandala of the White Arrow, #220, gouache on canvas, 1963-64, Collection unknown.) The central yellow and red circular pattern, a symbol of mercy, contains four whirling segments.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Blavatsky's seven tone scale. "I used the primaries more or less from red through middleviolet and then into red again," von Wiegand explained in an interview. "So it's a circle really. And that's purely a schematic thing."[100] The Wheel of the Seasons, 1957[101] (Fig. 38), is a prime example of von Wiegand's work which employs the logarithmic scheme. The colors in this painting proceed circularly, unwinding outward from the center and reflecting a visual process of organic "evolution and involution," so vital to the artist's thinking. In The Wheel of the Seasons H.P. Blavatsky's "prismatic" colors have completely replaced Mondrian's primaries. In addition, von Wiegand's study of Tibetan number theory determined the composition of the Wheel of the Seasons.[102]

---

[100]Ibid., 93.

[101]Charmion von Wiegand, The Wheel of the Seasons, oil on canvas, 1957, signed, inscribed, and dated on verso c: "Charmion von wiegand/ The Wheel of the Seasons/ (Magic Square 7/7--no 3)/Peterborough N.H.--New York/June-Oct 1957, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. The Wheel of the Seasons was begun while von Wiegand was in residence at the MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH, probably in early June of 1957, and was most likely finished in New York; it was exhibited in the Whitney annual that fall.

Von Wiegand based later works, such as Sanctuary of the Four Directions, 1959 (fig. 47), on the composition and concept of The Wheel of the Seasons. Von Wiegand used the terms "directions" and "seasons" interchangeably. For example she alternately called one painting of 1959 both Sanctuary of the Four Directions and Sanctuary of the Four Seasons.

[102]In 1957, Joseph Freeman, inspired by similar sources in oriental thought as von Wiegand, wrote an essay titled "The Wheel," which may give some insight into von Wiegand's paintings by the same title. He wrote:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Wheel of the Seasons contained the syncopated play of color in a slightly off center image of the "magic square," held tightly by an armature of black bands and surrounded by open planes. Forty-nine small units of intense hues compose one of the earliest occurrences of von Wiegand's "magic squares."[103] Each unit of the square is a different color, creating a square of seven units across and seven units down. The colors are strategically placed so that the numerical value of the colors in any one row, up or down, when added, amounts to the same whole number. Tibetan tantric artists often gave color numerical values in composing their compositions.[104] This game of the "magic squares" dates all the way back to the Egyptians and Pythagoreans.[105]

> ...the phoenix of life will rise toward the ever-alluring, ever-inspiring, ever-receding, ever-consoling, ever-creating horizon of time which leads us from the abyss of birth and existence and death and reincarnation...and the fact and the myth of eternity, hub of the wheel of fortune, wheel of rebirth, hubbub of wheels that wheel us from nothing to all to nothing to what...

Joseph Freeman, "The Wheel," (5 January 1957), Joseph Freeman Papers, Columbia College, New York, NY.

[103]It is listed on the verso of the canvas as being number three in a series.

[104]For more information on Tibetan number theory consult: Ajit Mookerjee, Tantric Art (Paris, New Delhi, New York, Paris, Basel: Kumar Gallery, 1966), 10-27.

[105]Edward Falkener, Games Ancient and Oriental and How to Play Them (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892) was in the artist's collection of books at her death. Charmion von Wiegand, "Inventory of Books and Manuscripts," Estate of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Magic Squares

Later in the early 1960s, von Wiegand painted many "magic squares," mostly small gouaches and several larger paintings, including Expanding Magic Square, 1960 (Fig. 39).[106]

> My reading when I have time is confined to other fields. Two things this fall gave me great joy: the geometry of organic forms and magic squares. I am now painting magic squares with abandonment--transposing numbers into colors. Its [sic] a fascinating game.[107]

The grids in these works are not always square and range from 7 by 7 inches to 15 by 15 inch units. Colors also vary widely from multihued to relatively monochromatic. Checkerboard Magic Square, #32, 1957[108]--a composition based on two magic squares of approximately 8 x 8 inches in purple, blue, red, green, yellow, white, and black--and Advancing Magic Squares, 1957-58[109]--containing a shifting

---

Artist, New York.

[106]Charmion von Wiegand, Expanding Magic Square, oil on canvas, 1960, Collection of the University of Notre Dame Art Gallery, South Bend, Indiana.

[107]Charmion von Wiegand, The MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH, to Mark Tobey, Seattle, WA, 21 May 1957, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York, NY.

[108]Charmion von Wiegand, Checkerboard, Magic Square #32, oil on canvas, 1957, Collection unknown.

[109]Charmion von Wiegand, Advancing Magic Squares, oil on canvas, 1957-58, The Holladay Collection, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

square of 12 x 12 inches--are both works she designed using the Tibetan mathematical system.

Golden Section

Related to von Wiegand's interest in the game of magical squares was her knowledge of classical architecture and the ideal proportion for a rectangle, whose sides are in the ratio of five to eight. According to Leonard Shalin, Greek temples were laid out using this formula, and this model of perfection became know as the "golden rectangle," which has its roots in the artistic aesthetics of the Greek ideal of the perfect human face. When divided into eighths, the physiognomic features are all in the lower five eighths, and the distance from eyebrow to crown is the remaining three eighths.[110]

Von Wiegand often examined the work of other artists based on the ideal proportion of Greek architecture:

> You asked me about Richard Lippold and his golden sculpture. It is called "The Sun" and it is a pure geometric construction in gold wire that looks almost like a mathematical model, if you have ever seen one of these dodecahedrons. But it makes me think of Ankhnaton's golden rays with the hands extended from them. It is something, that the Pythagoreans would have delighted in, not a conventional sculpture, but the expression of divine proportion...[111]

---

[110]Leonard Shalin, Art and Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time and Light (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991), 36.

[111]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Europe, 28 August 1955, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand's application of the "golden section" was a more general definition of the division of space: a line or area is divided into two unequal parts in such a way that the ratio between the smaller and larger segments is the same as that between the larger segment and the whole.[112] She considered this a "perfect" or "divine" ratio because, unlike any other, the sum of its two means is equal to 1.[113]

Von Wiegand had studied the golden section in the classes with John Graham.[114] She also read Paul Sérusier (1865-1927) whose book, A, B, C, de la peinture, written in 1909, treated, among other concepts, the "eternal truths" of art as embodied in mathematics and geometry. He described in great detail the mathematical relationships of the Golden Section. Although Sérusier's book was published in 1921, von Wiegand only read the work in the 1940s.[115] Applying

---

[112]A more complete discussion of the proportion, its analysis, and its implications is in William A. Camfield's "Juan Gris and the Golden Section," Art Bulletin 47, no. 1 (March 1965): 128-34; and Robert West's Painters of the Section d'Or; or the Alternatives to Cubism (Buffalo: Albright Knox Gallery, 1967).

[113]A.M. Borissavlievitch, The Golden Number and the Scientific Aesthetic of Architecture (New York, 1958).

[114]"John Graham--a devotee of Pythagoras' Golden Section and a follower of Freud--was an Orphic. He understood the importance of the person for the redemption of society and the importance of art for the redemption of the person. And he saw all this in terms of the world and in terms of America," wrote von Wiegand in Charmion von Wiegand, "John Graham, n.d." JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[115]Charmion von Wiegand, "Inventory of Charmion von Wiegand's Books and Manuscripts, 1983," Estate of Charmion von Wiegand, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the mathematical principles of the magic squares and the proportions of the Golden Section resulted in regularized, symmetrical compositions in her paintings of this period.

Tibet

In 1922, von Wiegand had first become aware of Tibetan mysticism and culture from her exposure to Gurdjieff's mystical dances.[116] The popular novel, Lost Horizon, further awakened von Wiegand's and America's consciousness to Tibet in 1933. To America, Tibet represented paradise and a peaceful and serene kingdom. People wanted to believe this utopia actually existed.

Von Wiegand dated her own interest in Tibetan art to 1950, when she began to research Central Asian art extensively.[117] On December 17, 1951, von Wiegand wrote to Mark Tobey that she was reading Tibetan Painted Scrolls,[118] which Louis James had loaned her. She described the work as a fat tome detailing all the Gods of Northern Buddhism.

> I hope that one day I shall have them all in my mind with their symbols and mudras complete. For I love every one of them, from those dark, furious deities risen from the Shamanist cults to the high dhyani-Buddhas of infinite compassion and endless light. They are real because the mind has conceived them, and what light and shadow it has, and what diversity, this human mind. And I like the idea that all is mind, according

---

[116]For more information on Gurdjieff and the mystical dances see Chapter XII.

[117]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 21-22.

[118]G. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls (Rome, 1949).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> to the Mahayana, and materializes from the thought, and passes away when the mind is stilled.[119]

One of the books on Tibet von Wiegand and Freeman read together was The Roof of the World: Tibet, Key to Asia by Amaury de Riencourt.[120] Joseph Freeman wrote:

> ...Charmion and I have been reading a great deal about Tibet. The Buddhist ideals are wonderful, but in Tibet, as elsewhere, there seems to be an immense gap between the ideal and the real; and the intrigues of the great powers for control of the Roof of the World have a familiar aura even though it is carried on over yak-buttered tea instead of cocktails.[121]

According to Freeman and von Wiegand, de Riencourt served with the International Brigade in Spain. In one of Franco's prisons he met a Hindu who fired his imagination about Tibet. De Riencourt worked his way to Tibet and when he came out he not only had an enthusiasm for Buddhism and Tibetan Yoga, but had gained a clearer understanding of the political situation in Asia. "He understands the key role which religion plays in that part of the world, and just why Marxism is a religion in Asia in a way that it cannot be in the West," wrote Joseph Freeman.[122]

Charmion von Wiegand also read The Tibetan Book of the

---

[119]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Mark Tobey, Europe, 17 December 1951, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

[120]Amaury de Riencourt, The Roof of the World: Tibet, Key to Asia (New York: Reinhart, 1950).

[121]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 20 August 1952, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[122]Joseph Freeman, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 21 August 1952, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Dead.[123] She wrote to Karl von Wiegand

> I am deeply indebted to the Bardo Thol--the Tibetan book of the Dead. I love the book for its passionate, primitive and colorful vitality. I do want to compare it passage by passage with the Egyptian Book of the Dead, but I don't' know what is the best translation of the latter. Do you?[124]

Karl von Wiegand responded:

> Yes, I have the Budge translation of the Book of the Dead now...It really ought to be called the "Book of Life." Some of the hymns are very wonderful and wise.[125]

Von Wiegand also spent time at the American Museum of Natural History viewing a collection of visual forms to accompany her months of reading--the Tibetan Art Collection: "You must see those Tibetan antics--such vitality in it all."[126]

Mondrian Reinterpreted

During von Wiegand's extensive study of Tibetan art and religion, she reinterpreted Mondrian's painting. In a talk titled "The Age of Mondrian," given to the members of the American Abstract Artists Association on May 25, 1956, the

---

[123]The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Liberation Through Understanding in the Between, trans. Robert A.F. Thurman (New York: Bantam Books, 1994).

[124]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 28 August 1955, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[125]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Karl von Wiegand, Egypt, 8 September 1955, KVW Papers, Hoover Institute.

[126]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Joseph Freeman, California, 30 October 1952, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

artist relayed the historical influences on Mondrian's process of painting. Von Wiegand suggested the foundation for Mondrian's ideas could be found in the laws of proportion and symmetry, based on Pythagoras, Plato, and Euclid. Von Wiegand also compared Mondrian's painting to Chinese art:

> Mondrian's principles are closer to the first Chinese canon of painting which holds that art must express the rhythmic vitality of life. Mondrian came to see all life and all art as the expression of pure rhythm. In his law of oppositions, there are points in common with the yang and yin theory.[127]

Her conclusion centered on the belief that Mondrian's was the only Western art which comes close to the idea of the void in Mahayana Buddhism, "not the nothingness which the West assumes it to be, but the shining Void of the life source which is beyond name and form: the great livingness in which all duality comes to rest. Mondrian's art is a confession of faith in man and in life: plastic interpretation of the life principle in action."[128]

A year later in her 1957 article "Oriental Tradition and Abstract Art," von Wiegand again likened Mondrian's painting to Eastern Art:

> Mondrian's theory of oppositions is akin to the Chinese theory of duality: Yang and Yin. Chinese rhythm was organic accomplished through the

---

[127]Charmion von Wiegand, "The Age of Mondrian," May 25, 1956, Zoe Dusanne Papers, University of Washington Libraries, Manuscripts and University Archives Division, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

[128]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> circle; Mondrian's was angular and oppositional. But this final summation that all art and life is rhythm brought him close to the first canon of Chinese art, formulated by Hsieh Ho in the 5th Century A.D., that painting must be the expression of the rhythmic vitality of life, the revelation of spirit in space...[129]

Von Wiegand searched for parallels among the aesthetic systems--Theosophy, Neo-Plasticism, and Tibetan Art--in order to arrive at a comprehensive and cohesive theory of her own.

Painting Influenced by Tibetan Art

Drawn to Tibetan Art and philosophy for many of the same reasons she studied Mondrian's work and the I Ching, von Wiegand turned to Thangka painting for inspiration. In Tibetan painting, as in all of her sources, she found the similar theme of constraint:

> And when you painted a certain subject the color symbolism was already worked out and organized so that you had a sort of framework. But within that there were tremendous individual variations. Each artist expressed his own personality but it wasn't primarily that, that he set out to do... but to express the ideas of Buddhism and there were certain set formulas for certain gods and goddesses and they painted the Buddha in a certain way. But that is not any more lack of freedom than say Mondrian's principles. He had the same thing. He had a set of principles by which he was

---

[129]Charmion Von Wiegand, "The Oriental Tradition and Abstract Art," The World of Abstract Art, ed. Paul Land (New York: George Wittenbourn Inc. for American Abstract Artists, 1957): 66.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> guided. That is he often said he made it work and sometimes he had to change the theory on account of unexpected surprises.[130]

Moreover, Tibetan art answered the problem of how to visually express the main life principle--duality or the uniting opposites. "It [Tibetan art] has the ability to heal the opposing forces of our culture. It is a magic instrument deliberately designed to destroy ignorance and transform consciousness, to bring one face to face with the reality underlying the world of appearances." [131] Von Wiegand recognized the Tibetan ability to shatter visual perception in order to bring the viewer closer to reality as the most important goal of her own painting.

At her first introduction to Tibetan art, von Wiegand commented she disliked the painting; it seemed "neither fish nor fowl, neither Chinese nor Indian."[132] After reading extensively on Tibetan art, Von Wiegand found that scholars understood very little; "And everybody in the books and the art histories of the 19th Century, if they mentioned [Tibetan art] at all, said that it was just a craft art, the artists were anonymous, it was just a mixture of Chinese and Indian...a sort of bastard art."[133]

---

[130]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 101.

[131]Charmion Von Wiegand, "Adamantine Way," Art News (April 1969): 39.

[132]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 30.

[133]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand read a series of articles on the mandalas of Tibetan painting by a German who wrote on Tibetan Art for the Asiatic Review. She copied the German article and carefully translated it into English. It discussed at length the color charts and color chords of Tibetan painting. At that point, von Wiegand came to the conclusion that H.P. Blavatsky had derived her color chart from Tibetan painting.[134] Simultaneously, von Wiegand became intrigued with formal aspects of Tibetan architecture and mandalas. Motifs--including the chakras, which locate seats of energy in the body and indicate the path of meditation; temple structures, themselves actually three-dimensional mandalas; and the mandala, a meditational painting symbolizing universal order, invaded von Wiegand's art. The mandala paintings, von Wiegand's favorite, combined the circle with a square and a central seed-form or deity.

Von Wiegand created her first composition under Tibetan influence in 1956, at the time the Freemans attended the UN Celebration of Buddha's Birthday. The Tibetan Buddhist sutra, a Tibetan blessing, which was read at the ceremony provided von Wiegand a new direction for her own work. She came home and produced a collage for the occasion titled, Tibetan Altars, #251, 1956.[135] Words written on the back

---

[134]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 30-31.

[135]Charmion von Wiegand, Tibetan Altars #251, Collage, 8 x 10 inches, Andre Zarre Gallery, NY. For more information on the image consult: Charmion von Wiegand: In

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the canvas--"Three Jewels--Buddha, Norm and Monkshood"--were taken directly from the blessing:

> Salutation to the Three Jewels, (The Buddha, his Norm, and the Monkshood). Thus I once heard: The Lord was residing in the pleasure ground called Jetavana in the park donated by Anatha-pindada within the city limits of Cravasthi. Once at night divine beings illumined the whole pleasure ground with multicolored beams of light, flocked together at the place where the Holy Man was seated and, taking up positions at one side, addressed to him the following versified question: Many are the blessing (--bearing acts) Done by beings both divine and mortal; Doubts have grown (as to the fruits they bear) Tell us now about the highest blessings. 1. Said the noblest god of all the gods: Vanquishing all sins from now henceforth For the Benefit of all this world Is the foremost blessing which I bring.....[136]

Forms throughout the composition appear in threes: three diamonds are positioned across a cobalt blue canvas, echoed by three faint circles juxtaposed on the diamond forms.

Collecting Oriental Art

In 1952, while reading on Tibetan art and culture, von Wiegand bought her first Tibetan painting. She was on her way to Europe but stopped in route in London to attend a Parke-Bernet auction. Von Wiegand recalled:

> It wasn't a Tibetan auction or an Oriental auction. But I saw a little Tibetan painting. And I had to have it. It was looking at me, it wanted me, and I had to have it. And I said I can't afford it, because if I'm going to Europe I can't go out and spend money but I'll

---

Search of the Spiritual (West Hartford, CT: Joseloff Gallery, 1993), 12.

[136]Von Wiegand meticulously saved the original blessing among her personal papers, now in JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> just go up there with what little I have. But I shouldn't. So I took up about $150 or $200 that was in my pocket and I thought with that I can't buy it and I shouldn't anyway. And so I got the picture. It came to me for $15.00. [137]

Another Tibetan painting she bought had been exhibited in Europe. She saw the painting in a show organized by the Italian scholar, Giuseppe Tucci, at the Chanushi Museum. The work depicted a saint in flowery landscape. Von Wiegand described the work:

> I thought it was very artificial. If they called that a religious painting it seemed odd to me. It had a very 18th century atmosphere. But the point is I photographed it in my eyes. And I remember it. So only four years ago [1960] it turned up in the Parke-Bernet Gallery. I put my little savings in my pocket and I went up. And I bought it very reasonably. It had gone up into the hundreds and then I discovered that it had a full color plate in Tucci's book of Tibetan scrolls.[138]

Von Wiegand never saw herself as a collector, but that objects would speak to her and she had to have them.[139]

---

[137]"And I still have it. The frame is worth $50.00. And at the time I thought well it isn't a very good picture at that price. Now I've discovered it's a very good picture. It's a little defaced. And that was my first acquisition [of a Tibetan painting] that way." Ibid., 23.

[138]Ibid., 23-24.

[139]"I'm not a collector. Things magnetize me and they come to me. I don't want to have a lot of objects. As Joe used to say about me, for a non-objective artist I was the greatest object-lover he ever met." Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 34.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Tibetan Buddhist Temple

The ground plans of the Tibetan temples fascinated von Wiegand. "I was always working then with the square and the circle or the half circle. You wouldn't believe that comes out of Central Asia, would you? You'd think it comes out of Mondrian."[140] In her painting, she worked with the geometric forms--square, circle, and the half circle--and created architectural maps of the temples she studied. In Sanctuary of the Four Direction, 1959 (Fig. 40),[141] a work structured on a grid, von Wiegand mapped the placement of adjacent shrines and climactic stupa in a Buddhist nave. Von Wiegand was reading extensively about Tibet in 1959 and in one of her books she must have seen the ground plan for the Temple of Lhasa. The plan of Lhasa corresponds closely to this geometric composition. If one compares Sanctuary of the Four Direction to the architectural plan for the ground floor of the main temple at Lhasa, the viewer reads each color square as representing one of the chapels. The black square surrounded by the white border in the upper center of the painting symbolizes the Chapel of Amitabha. Moving

---

[140]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 28-29.

[141]Charmion von Wiegand, Sanctuary of the Four Directions, oil on canvas, 1959, Museum of Modern Art, NY. Von Wiegand commented on Mondrian's influence still present in Sanctuary of the Four Directions: "I tried to eliminate the red in the upper left--took it out, then put it back, but the format lent itself perfectly to a plan of climactic stupa and its adjacent shrines in a Buddhist nave." Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," 32.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

counterclockwise around the spiral of grid lines are blue, yellow, and red squares orbiting this central chapel. The first blue square represents the Chapel of the Lake and the purple blue square corresponds to the Chapel of Avalokiteshvara. The red square suggests the Chapel where Jhowo was hidden. The final chapel depicted is the Chapel of Sempa Tsokhor. The small black square in the lower left is Tagpa Stupa. The small squares of color inside the larger squares depicts the statues located inside the chapels, such as the main Statue of Shakyamuni in the Chapel of Amitabha. Von Wiegand clearly marked the other storage areas and chapels on this abstract architectural map. Architectural plans of temples inspired other works, such as Precious Pagoda, #114, 1959 (Fig. 41);[142] Precious Blue Pagoda; The Five Buddhas, #243, 1959,[143] composed of an abstract figurative form on a white square; The Blue Temple, #72, September, 1958,[144] on a light blue background, small dots of yellow, red, and blue on yellow and white rectangles;

---

[142]Charmion von Wiegand, Precious Pagoda, #114, gouache and oil on paper, 1959, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC.

[143]Charmion von Wiegand, Precious Blue Pagoda: The Five Buddhas, #243, gouache on paper, 1959, Estate of Charmion von Wiegand, New York.

[144]Charmion von Wiegand, The Blue Temple, #72, gouache, September, 1958, Estate of the Artist, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chotscho--Asian Sanctuary, #84, 1958,[145] a painting of green, red, blue, black and white gouache on watercolor paper; The Shore Temple, #44, September 14, 1958,[146], made up of small red, yellow and blue rectangles with small red dots on yellow rectangles; Southern Sanctuary, 1958,[147] designed with small squares of green, blue, purple rectangles on grey; Untitled, 1960; and Untitled, 1958.

Tibetans believe the temple is a mandala form. These are three-dimensional perfected environments, Buddhaverses or Buddha-lands, created by the enlightenment of an individual as a place that expresses his or her enlightenment. They are realms through which other beings can be incorporated into that enlightenment. A Tantric practitioner learns the mandalic architecture of a particular type of enlightenment when she is initiated into a Tantric yoga practice, and the creation stage consists largely of developing the ability to visualize every detail of the total mandalic environment, to the degree where the yogini can feel completely secure in the divine surrounding. In addition, mandalas have a central space for the mediatator's divine Buddha-embodiment, a palace or mansion

---

[145]Charmion von Wiegand, Chotscho--Asian Sanctuary, #84, gouache on watercolor paper, 1958, Estate of the Artist, New York.

[146]Charmion von Wiegand, The Shore Temple, #44, gouache, 1958, Estate of the Artist, New York.

[147]Charmion von Wiegand, Southern Sanctuary, gouache, 1958, Estate of the Artist, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

with a highly complex and beautiful architecture.[148]

Man as Microcosm; The Work of Mark Tobey

Being able to imagine the vast as the small, as von Wiegand had done in the construction of her "temple" paintings, originated in the meditation exercises she had performed with Mark Tobey. Mark Tobey's philosophy of painting related most closely to von Wiegand's in the 1950s. Each of Tobey's paintings expressed the idea of the vast set against the small, or the macrocosm of the Universe revealed in the microcosm of the painting. She described Mark Tobey's way of seeing as "truly Oriental with the adoption of the reduction of infinite space to a microscopic size. Tobey chose organic forms for his compositions as if one was looking through a microscope."[149]

In Birth of a Planet, 1958 (Fig. 42),[150] an organic work, von Wiegand emulated the Tobey-like, circular forms against Mondrian rectangles, creating what she described as a yin/yang relationship. Von Wiegand created the struggle of the birth of a planet independent of scale. The work could just as easily express the birth of a cell. Von

---

[148]The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Liberation Through Understanding in the Between, trans. Robert A.F. Thurman (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), 265.

[149]Von Wiegand, "The Vision of Mark Tobey," 36.

[150]Charmion von Wiegand, Birth of a Planet, #212, collage, 1958, Mr. and Mrs. Fong Chow.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand admired the ease with which Tobey could shift from the large scale to the small, allowing powerful energies into the smallest fragment of his work. Von Wiegand stated: "Learning to imagine an object in natural size, enlarged to supersize and reduced to the minute size of a seed is to demonstrate that time and place, size, and shape are merely mental concepts and that all natural phenomena are illusory. An awareness of living essence in all things alike can be attained and truly experienced."[151]

The Circle

Von Wiegand's use of the circle represented the most notable break with Mondrian's Neoplastic theory. Von Wiegand, fascinated by the conflict between the circular form and the rectangular canvas, commented: "It was an aesthetic conflict [between the circular form and the rectangular]. You see Mondrian felt--and I think it's quite true--that a circle is indeterminate in relation to a painting which is a rectangle. It's an undetermined figure which becomes an object."[152] Mondrian had moved away from the object in his compositions and thus had rejected circular forms. Like Mondrian, von Wiegand accepted the circle and the square or rectangle as two different principles plastically. At the same time, von Wiegand

---

[151]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 35-36.

[152]Ibid., 23.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

studied paintings created in "revolutionary times," including works such as The Resurrection in the right hand wing of Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece. Von Wiegand described the painting:

> A tremendous Christ rises out of a rectangular tomb, with the soldiers falling back in very grotesque positions in their armor. The [Christ] figure rises up. And there's an enormous circle of light around him like a mandala that disappears into the space, it's a greenish-black night."[153]

In Grünewald's altarpiece and in the work of other Renaissance artists, such as Piero della Francesca, von Wiegand found the solution for an integration of the circle and the rectangle, going against Mondrian's aesthetic.

Nebulae, 1955[154] (Fig. 43) was one of the first works employing the form of a circular mandala. Here von Wiegand portrayed as the central motif a large black twelve-inch circle outlined by bright blue and in the center a small blue 1" circle. Around the center small squares of glued colored and painted paper are scattered, giving the illusion that they are being spun to the outer edges of the circle. Smaller squares fill the central space, larger ones of a deeper hue dominate lower and left outside section. This strong central circle pushes and pulls against the outer restraint of the rectangular frame of the canvas. Other

---

[153]Ibid., 22-23.

[154]Charmion von Wiegand, Nebulae, collage, 1955, The Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

works employing the circle are Mandala, 1957 (Fig. 44);[155] Abstract Halos, #98, January, 1959, composed of color circles in the middle of a gray prism.[156]

The Mandala

Mandalas are best known as geometrical paintings or drawings revealing the floor plan of a building or the orbit of a planet. The "mandala" literally means "an essence-protecting environment." They are symmetrical images, usually circular but frequently square or floral. The mandala can be a purely geometrical composition--for example, interpenetrating triangles within concentric circles and squares--or it can be figurative, depicting spiritual beings such as buddhas, bodhisattvas, demons, and deities, whose placement forms geometrical patterns from the center to the outer edges of the image. The mandala is a microcosm or spiritual diagram of the universe. It illustrates the various principles, qualities, and forces in the world. By meditating upon the components of the mandala, the mediator moves toward his own center and the center of reality.

---

[155]Charmion von Wiegand, Mandala, watercolor on paper, 1957, Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, New York.

[156]Charmion von Wiegand, Abstract Halos, #98, gouache, 1959, Estate of the Artist, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand studied the tantric Buddhism of Tibet which made use of such mandalas as meditational tools. The basic form involves an outer circular border of flames and an inner border of lotus petals. The inner sanctuary is a "divine mansion," shown as a square with four symmetrical gateways. The walls and gateways are often shown decorated, similar to those of a Tibetan temple. The arching prongs over each gateway are the tips of the underlying crossed vajras or thunderbolts, below. Each form and color of the mandala symbolizes attributes and qualities that constitute a state of enlightenment. Inside the walls of the castle is the innermost realm of divine power.[157]

Von Wiegand was also familiar with psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung's isolation of the archetypal symbol of the mandala in his writings.[158] According to Jung, the mandala served as a means to symbolically express the integration of the different aspects of the psyche--psychic centers of the

---

[157]The perfect nature of the circle came in later Buddhist doctrine to be embodied in the mandala (T. kyil-kor) or mystic circle. The most common form of the mandala is the two-dimensional complex of circles and squares, representing a sacred enclosure and related to the concept of chorten as a container of sacred power. Newark Museum, Catalogue of Newark Museum Tibetan Collection, vol. 1 (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum, 1983), 67.

[158]An important introduction by Jung was Wilhelm's translation of a Taoist alchemical text "The Secret of the Golden Flower." In this introduction Jung describes the Mandala form. A Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life, trans. Richard Wilhelm, introduction by C. G. Jung (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

personality.[159] Von Wiegand did not totally disagree with Jung's analysis of mandalas, but emphasized her study of the image was a search for a spiritual wholeness.[160] Constructing mandalas marked von Wiegand's new level of understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. She had begun her exploration into the tantric forms of Tibetan art. This will become the sole occupation of her art of the 1960s.

---

[159]Jung contended that mandala images appear spontaneously in dreams of patients suffering from certain kinds of conflict and schizophrenia. For persons experiencing disorientation and fragmentation, dream mandalas are manifestations of the need for wholeness and integration of the self; they represent a natural attempt at self-healing by the psyche. Carl Jung, Mandala Symbolism, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[160] Von Wiegand read Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York, 1953). A copy of this work is in the artist's estate, New York.

Mandala forms also occur in the work of many of her contemporaries who were more strongly influenced by Jung and the work of Joseph Campbell--Morris Graves, Paul Jenkins, Ibram Lassaw, Ad Reinhardt, John Ferren, John McCracken, and Sam Frances.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER IX

PAINTING AND COLLAGE--1960-1983

Tibet

In the 1960s, Charmion von Wiegand aspired to raise the awareness of friends and family to the plight of the Tibetan people and aid the Tibetans exiles, whom she met in New York and New Jersey. She relayed the story of Tibet's plight to her circle of artists and writers.

At dusk on March 17, 1959, Tendzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, disguised as a Tibetan peasant, slipped out a back door of the Norbu Lingka Summer Palace, and passed through the lines of the Chinese troops surrounding Lhasa.[1] He was met on the banks of Kyichu River by a party of Khampa (East Tibetan) horsemen, and two weeks later crossed the Himalayas into India. By the time the

---

[1]To Tibetans, the Dalai Lama was not only the political ruler of their country, he was also the incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. The basis of this rebirth was considered to be the bodhisattva vow of Mahayana Buddhism--a deep motivation, strengthened through lifetimes of spiritual practice, to delay one's own entry into nirvana in order to liberate all sentient beings. Philip Rawson, Sacred Tibet (London, England: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 12-20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chinese sealed the border, close to a hundred thousand Tibetans had followed him into exile.

India was not an easy country to be a refugee in, but it was the birthplace of the Buddha and the home of the religion the Tibetans valued above all else. Tibetan Buddhism was, for the most part, Indian Buddhism.[2] Indian Buddhists had founded the first Tibetan monastery, Samye, in the seventh century; all four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism traced their origins back to Indian masters; and the Tibetan Tripitaka had been translated directly from the sanskrit by teams of Tibetans and Indians.[3] In 1959, that refuge had been destroyed. If Tibetan Buddhism was to survive and grow, it would have to do so, once more, from the land of its birth.

The situation in Tibet was tragic: the Chinese had swiftly and brutally suppressed the revolt of 1959, a half million people lost their lives, and Tibetan culture had been nearly eradicated. Monasteries were transformed into barracks, and many of the ancient texts of Tibetan and

---

[2]For more information on Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama see the introduction to Antoinette Gordon, The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism (New York, NY: Hacker Art Books, 1988).

[3]There had not been any Buddhism in India for more than seven hundred years--not since the great Buddhist University of Nalanda had been leveled to the ground by the Moslem armies invading from the north. But by that time a large part of the Indian Buddhist tradition, both written and oral, had safely been transferred to Tibet. Max Weber, The Religion of India (New York, NY: The FreePress, 1967), 32-57.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Indian Buddhism burned. To the Chinese, Buddhism and feudalism were one and the same, and both had to be destroyed.

There was not much the Tibetans in India could do. Some Khampas, the fiercely independent Eastern Tibetans, harassed the Chinese with guerilla actions in the border regions, but they were hopelessly outclassed militarily, and were no match for Chinese airplanes and machine guns. Prime Minister Nehru had offered sanctuary, but he could not recognize the Tibetan government-in-exile. To do so would have further endangered India's relationship with China, which was already threatened by a longstanding border dispute. The rest of the world looked away. No one wanted to risk a war with China over as obscure a country as Tibet.[4]

In April of 1962, von Wiegand was honored for her work on behalf of the Tibetan people with an invitation to a dinner for Colonel E. Kdvall. The Colonel, who spoke fluent Chinese and Tibetan, had lived in Tibet for seven years and was currently escorting Tibetan refugees to the United States. He was affiliated with the University of Washington in Seattle. Von Wiegand, thrilled with the invitation, viewed the event as an opportunity to meet the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Thubten Jigme Norbu, who had recently come to

---

[4]Rawson, 22.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the United States,[5] and converse with others who shared her passion for this mysterious land and its people. That evening von Wiegand met Mr. Wesley E. Needham, Curator of the Tibetan Collection at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, Curators Fong Chow and Jean Mailey of Far Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Eleanor Olson, Curator of the Oriental Collection of the Newark Museum. These connections would later help von Wiegand when she mounted the first exhibition of Tibetan art to tour the United States.

Loss

In May, 1961 Karl von Wiegand grew ill with cancer and was overcome by pneumonia. Von Wiegand raced to be by his bedside in Switzerland. For two weeks she watched as he died. Joseph Freeman wrote to comfort his wife during these difficult days:

> The house and the city are empty without you. I thought of you all night. In the morning I thought of your father and sent him a cable. No doubt you have seen it by this time.
>
> All the external things are illusions. That you and Norman rushed to his side is one more sign that he is a good man and has led a good life. I pray he will

---

[5]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Mark Tobey, Seattle, WA, 19 April 1962, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> recover and go on living. The good can never have enough of life and we can never have enough of them....[6]

Karl von Wiegand died June 7, 1961 at age 87. Von Wiegand tended to the arrangements--the groupings of blue cornflowers, white carnations and red roses, picking the Bible quotations from Revelations, and selecting a minister. In utter despair, she wrote Freeman: "We get buried on the conveyer belt just as we live on it. I can't feel emotion in those circumstances-just a frozen horror. I felt papa was gone last week when they put him under sedation. In such moments all our philosophy evaporates." Von Wiegand, still in shock, headed to Basel to find rest and solace with

---

[6]Joseph Freeman included with his letter a poem he composed in von Wiegand's father's honor:

> Another year, another day,
> Another friend is going away
> Beyond the last unknown frontier
> That is neither there nor here.
>
> Money and power are of the will,
> Who likes to conquer likes to kill;
> In the end we all must die
> And ask who are we, whence and why.
>
> Empires come and go, the lord
> Who lives by the word dies by the sword;
> The father goes, like poets and seer,
> Followed by our love and tears.
>
> Deeds are dreams and words are lies,
> Eros only never dies--
> The clear enduring light of art,
> The phoenix of the loving heart

Joseph Freeman, New York, to Charmion von Wiegand, Switzerland, 30 May 1961, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her friend, Mark Tobey.[7]

On her return to New York, von Wiegand received further devastating news. Her husband, Joseph Freeman, confirmed that his chronic pain and illnesses were caused by cancer. He valiantly fought for his life for many months until August 1965 when the disease took its final course. While von Wiegand nursed Freeman, her artistic production trickled to less than a painting or collage a month. In the remaining time she and Freeman shared, they read avidly on Tibetan art and culture.

Von Wiegand decided to make a great financial sacrifice for her husband. She moved the couple into a much larger apartment, with views of the East River. Her only desire was to ensure Freeman's comfort in his remaining months. Unbeknownst to Freeman, in order to pay the doctor's bills and higher rent, von Wiegand sold the majority of her beloved art, which included Kupkas, Vantongerloos, Herbins, Tobeys, Sonya and Robert Delaunays, and--most important to her--the Mondrians.[8]

On Monday night, August 9, 1965 Joseph Freeman died at the age of 65 in his home in New York City. No funeral was performed. Numerous friends sent letters and telegrams.

---

[7]Charmion von Wiegand, Switzerland, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 10 June 1961, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[8]Many documents concerning Joseph Freeman's medical expenses and von Wiegand's art sales records can be found in "Finances," Box 10, Folder 4, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The New York Times ran an 800-word obituary.[9] No one could provide her comfort. Paul and Hazel Strand wrote a letter, which von Wiegand later commented expressed what the public had lost with the death of Joseph Freeman:

> ...Then last night, another light was extinguished. Joe Freeman. To me, a kind of hanger-on of the Radical Intelligentsia, Joe symbolized my life and times. ...Joe Freeman spoke...and suddenly it became possible that one could have Art and Social Progress side by side, and not neglect the life of the mind either...He chronicled our times as few men could.[10]

Of a more personal nature, von Wiegand found her greatest source of comfort in the communication with her first husband, Hermann R. Habicht.

> Although the sad news was not unexpected, it was a real shock, for a while there is life there is always hope that the miracle will occur. For those that survive the knowledge that death had spared a beloved one great pain and misery is scant consolation. There is a gap--a great deep void--and nothing and no one seem to be able to fill it, though perhaps with time the vacuum grows less and habit makes the emptiness seem less poignant. May you fare better than I have in this respect, for there has been no diminution in my case--on the contrary. My return to Ruth's house--where we had spent so many lovely hours and days and years--and had experienced joy and happiness as well as disappointments and misfortune together, was bitter. Certainly the loneliness here is greater and deeper than at home, where I am really rooted and have so many good friends. A warm handclasp--in sympathy and understanding. Requiescat in peace.[11]

---

[9]"Joseph Freeman, Author, 67, Dies: Wrote 'Never Call Retreat'--Edited Leftist Periodicals," New York Times, 11 August 1965, 35 (A).

[10]Paul and Hazel Strand, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 10 August 1965, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[11]Hermann R. Habicht, Germany, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 26 August 1965, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

They both had recently lost a spouse and for several months after Freeman's death von Wiegand leaned on Habicht through letters, so he could guide her through the mourning process.[12]

Tibetan Art Exhibition--1967

By 1965, von Wiegand, back on her feet, found new energy in the friendship with the Tibetan exiles. She attended the Oriental Congress in New York in the summer of 1965, where she proposed to arrange an exhibition of Tibetan Art for the American Federation of the Arts (AFA). Little did she realize the amount of time and work it would take to accomplish her task--a medium size traveling show of Tibetan art and artifacts. The AFA decided on no less than 100 objects. Von Wiegand journeyed to a variety of Tibetan collections on the East Coast to choose the works for the show. Although a scholarly committee was assembled to oversee the decisions on the exhibition, von Wiegand selected every object.[13] She found the majority of her

---

[12]Hermann R. Habicht, Germany, to Charmion von Wiegand, New York, August - November 1965, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

For more information on the Oriental Congress held in New York in 1965 see Fields, 255.

[13]Von Wiegand's curatorial work for the Tibetan art exhibition for American Federation of the Arts was brought to the attention of the Dalai Lama, who in appreciation granted her audience at his monastery in exile in India. Khyongla Rato, Interview by the author, 22 August 1996, New York, Collection of the Author, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

paintings and sculptures in the Newark Museum and the Buddhist Monastery of Freehold.[14] Von Wiegand also spent a large amount of time researching and visiting the private collections of Tibetan art in New York and New Jersey.[15] She wrote to her friend Mark Tobey of the experience:

> But what fun to encounter the people who collect this art and the various reason for it--and the woods are full of them--like the very gentle soft-spoken man who collects only the terrifying deities or the insurance broker who asks how much did it costs and how much has it gone up and the religious person who reveres art as an icon and never can see it with an aesthetic eye--the human comedy is never ending and the levels cut across all cultures and times.[16]

Von Wiegand indicated to Tobey that changes were taking place in her thinking:

> It is so marvelous to find yourself in a totally different world and encountering such strange adventures. Your accustomed points of reference leave you disoriented between the heights and depths, between the beauty and horror--all of it in the painting. And what it does to your view of Western art, seeing it with detachment more objectively for the first time.[17]

Von Wiegand reported: "I was spell-bound--knocked out by the color. That is why my pictures changed. You can't change your color and not your format, so that is why my

---

[14]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Mark Tobey, Seattle, WA, 9 December 1967, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

[15]Many collectors shared von Wiegand's passion for Tibetan art including: Braham Norwick, Louis L. Horch, David K. Spector, and Alice Heeramaneck.

[16]Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Mark Tobey, Seattle, WA, 11 December 1967, Mark Tobey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, NY.

[17]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

format changed."[18] Von Wiegand's content also changed. Acquainted with many of the Tibetan refuges in the Freehold group, she studied the texts and paintings they had brought with them from Tibet. Their mutual affection and reverence steadily deepened.

At this point von Wiegand's interests shifted from general Buddhist art to an exploration of Mahayana Buddhism, particularly the Tantric school.[19] In the introduction for the catalog, The Art of Tibet von Wiegand wrote:

> While all Buddhists accept the Sutras, the doctrinal treatises of Buddha's teaching, his esoteric instructions in spiritual methods for obtaining Buddhahood in one lifetime, called the Short Path, are embodied in the Tantric texts. The arts of Tibet are the visual and plastic expression of this Tantric doctrine.[20]

Von Wiegand shared with her new friends the paintings she completed while studying Tibetan art and spiritual texts. Her Tibetan companions said they could 'read' her works partly because she used some of the canonical colors and imagery of Tibetan art, but more importantly the vocabulary of von Wiegand's paintings was geometric and Tantric art was based on geometry.[21] According to Tantra specialist Ajit

---

[18]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 104.

[19]Rembert, "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian," 32.

[20]The Art of Tibet, Introduction by Charmion von Wiegand (New York: The American Federation of the Arts, 1967), 5.

[21]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 100.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mookerjee, the Tantric artist's contemplation before the "mystery of the universe" and "the break-down of human language before the memory of that experience....[drove the artist] to a highly abstract symbolism of vertical and horizontal lines, dots, and circles."[22]

Von Wiegand applied to her painting yantras, pure geometric configuration without any iconographic representation. Some yantras are constructed wholly before meditation and are images of the cosmos, while others are built up in stages during the entire process of meditation. Yantras represent deities, like Siva, Vishnu, Krishna, Ganesa, and various manifestations of Sakti, such as Kali, Tara, Bagala, and Cinnamasta. The predominant elementary forms of which yantras are constituted are the point, line, circle, triangle, square, and the lotus symbol. Von Wiegand found her new vocabulary. These forms in Tibetan art and in von Wiegand's work, are juxtaposed, combined, intersected, and repeated in various ways to produce the desired effect.

In her article, "Adamantine Way,"[23] written in connection with a Tibetan art exhibition at Asia House, von Wiegand stated:

> There are two ways to understand this art. The long study of a complex pantheon of deities, their symbolic forms and their religious meaning, or the direct path

---

[22]Mookerjee, Tantra Art, 13.

[23]Charmion von Wiegand, "Adamantine Way: Exhibition of Tibetan Pictures and Sculptures at Asia House," Art News 68 (April 1969): 38-41.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> of immediate experience through seeing, feeling and participation. Tibetan art operates so directly on the viewer that all he needs to appreciate it is an open mind and a seeing eye.[24]

Von Wiegand believed in the immediate experience. The earliest Tibetan paintings were square in format, like Nepalese patas--the central deity surrounded by a border of smaller squares containing related divinities and saints. Aside from wall paintings, the characteristic Tibetan type of painting was the Thangka, a scroll painting on cotton cloth executed in watercolor or gouache, rectangular in shape, usually vertical in the composition, framed in narrow colored silk borders and mounted on brocade. Carved wooden rollers at both ends enable it to be hung or rolled up when not in use. A work was not complete until the picture was consecrated by a lama, who empowered it with sacred mantras as the temporary home of the deity it honored.[25]

Von Wiegand understood the many kinds of paintings that were made in Tibet, each type had a different purpose, such as the depiction of religious symbols; or didactic images to teach the lives of the Buddhas and the saints; or portraits of siddhis, arhats, kings, Dalai Lamas; and the mandalas.[26]

---

[24]Ibid., 38.

[25]Ibid., 39-40.

[26]Mandalas are meditational paintings consisting of geometric constructions, a square set within a large circle, containing a smaller circle, in the center of which was a deity. The mandalas define the order of the cosmos and opened a path to the center where the worshipper was united in meditation with the deity. Ibid., 40.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The highest category are visionary paintings, which were made either by the person who had a vision while in a trance, or a monk or saint who dictated a vision he experienced to the artist.[27]

Von Wiegand created yantras and mandalas. She sought to express the symbolic meanings of specific colors and forms imbuing each composition with meaning. Von Wiegand's purpose was much the same as she described for Tibetan art: "it is a magic instrument deliberately designed to destroy ignorance and transform consciousness, to bring one face to face with the reality underlying the world of appearances."[28]

Tantric Buddhism and The Goddess

When von Wiegand returned to her painting after Joseph Freeman's death, she created The Diamond Scepter No. II, #177, 1965[29] (Fig. 45), marking the beginning of her tantric series.[30] In 1962, Freeman, who had written many poems on Tibetan themes, wrote a poem for his close friend, Gorham

---

[27]These representations of actual visions have an imaginary intensity and rich coloring. They were never intended for the laity, but were created for the masters of meditation and were kept covered with a thin batik-dyed silk veil when not in use. Ibid., 41.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Charmion von Wiegand, Diamond Scepter, gouache on canvas, Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York.

[30]A larger work, The Diamond Sceptre, 1966-69 (fig.51), is a later version of the same composition.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Munson, titled "The Diamond Scepter":

> Our imagination is inspired by multifarious forms of appearance which have no nature of their own. The mind alone is the radiant jewel from which all things borrow their temporal reality...This jewel cannot be found anywhere except in the lotus of one's own heart...The idea of the jewel took the form of the Diamond Scepter.[31]

In accepting his death, von Wiegand turned to his own words for comfort and inspiration.

The Diamond Scepter relied on forms based in Tantric principles. According to tantric practice the equilateral triangle, used throughout Diamond Scepter, symbolized the three functions of the mind. Its three sides embodied "the power of will ('iccha-sakti'), the power of knowledge ('jnana-sakti'), and the power of action ('kriya-sakti')." The triangle, when its apex pointed down, symbolized the female principle (Sakti). The triangle pointing upwards was identified with the male principle (Purusha).[32] In Diamond Scepter, the triangle functions as the basic mystogram--a yoga device used to aid the individual to achieve identification with creative sources.[33] Ecstasy is reached when the adept succeeds in clearing his mind of object-thought by concentrating on the interiorized object

---

[31]"Diamond Scepter," Box 54, Folder 1, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

[32]Mookerjee, The Tantric Way, 55-56.

[33]H.P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. I, 17.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of his meditation, which is described as the chosen deity.[34]

A better understanding of von Wiegand's cosmological system is obtained after a close examination of The Ascent to Mt. Meru, 1962 (Fig. 46).[35] Mount Meru is the axial mountain of the archaic Buddhist and general Indian cosmology, wherein the earth is flat, floating on a cosmic ocean, with four continents radiating out from the cosmic mountain. The sun and moon are said to circle around it and to go behind it when they disappear from view. When we encounter Meru in a Buddhist text, we can think of it as corresponding to our sense of planetary axis in our modern cosmology.[36] Dominating the center of the universe is the mythical Mount Meru around which is the earth, or Jambu-dvipa, the island continent with seven concentric circles symbolically representing cosmic fields, spheres and atmospheric zones. Bordering the outermost circle is the cosmic sphere separating the visible world from the non-visible, and finally, beyond it, the region of non-universe space, or aloka. Von Wiegand described Mount Meru in The Ascent to Mount Meru, with ascending color bands culminating in a large circle in the upper half of the canvas. Color

---

[34]Agehananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition (London: Rider, 1934), 296-97.

[35]Charmion von Wiegand, The Ascent to Mt. Meru, gouache on paper, 1962, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

[36]The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Liberation Through Understanding in the Between, trans. Robert A.F. Thurman (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), 266.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

square bands radiate out from the blue central square. The surrounding blue space corresponds to the non-universe. Von Wiegand identified Mount Meru with the center of the inner body through which runs as axis a subtle spinal tube. The implication is that the Possible Universe each man knows is a flat "circle" radiating from his own axial center.[37] Von Wiegand often returned to the theme of Mount Meru, such as her work Magic Meru completed in 1967.

Von Wiegand also employed colors specified for tantric art--those used to describe a trance vision--emerald ('prana'), red like the evening sun ('apana'), milky white like the 'khatura' flower ('vyana'), and yellow-orange of fire and lightning ('udana')."[38] Von Wiegand wrote: "I have freely used the Tibetan color gamut based on chords of three colors used without fusion or gradation but in strongest oppositions. I find this system not opposed to Mondrian's color principles but an extension of his ideas. In the Tibetan color, the major chord--red, blue and yellow plays a dominant role, but minor chords are also present and used with greatest subtlety."[39]

---

[37]Philip Rawson, The Art of Tantra (London, New York, 1973), 139

[38]Mookerjee, Tantra Art, 19.

[39]Art, Design, and the Modern Corporation: The Collection of the Container Corporation of America, A Gift to the National Museum of American Art (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 130.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Chakras of 1958-68 (Fig. 47)[40] became von Wiegand's tantric touch stone. Although it was begun in 1958, she repainted this work many times as her knowledge of Tibetan tantric art deepened. Since the yoga practice with its attendant configurations, postures, and gestures (the "asanas" and the "mudras") has as its ultimate aim the uniting of body with spirit, the process is subsumed into various stages of pre-enlightenment ranging from activation of "lower' physical powers in the body to "upper" spiritual ones. A lecture by the Prof. Ernest Wood on "The Practice of Patanjali's Eighth Steps of Yoga," was von Wiegand's first introduction to Chakras.[41] She began Yoga practice shortly after hearing his lecture in 1952 and continued it throughout the 1970s.

Metaphorically, the Tantric believer refers to the supreme force in the body, or "Kundalini-Sakti," as passing upward through the spinal column from the base of the spine to the cerebrum by way of six centers (or chakras) which are:

> So many spheres or planes, described in Tantra as different-colored lotuses with varying number of petals. In the ordinary worldly person these centers are closed, and the lotuses droop down

---

[40]Charmion von Wiegand, Chakras, oil on canvas, 64 x 28 inches, 1958-68, Estate of the Artist, New York.

A similar work to Chakras, 1958-68 is Chakras, gouache on paperboard, 18 x 18 inches, 1959, Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb Incorporated, New York.

[41]Charmion von Wiegand, Europe, to Joseph Freeman, New York, 3 June 1952, JF Papers, Hoover Institute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> like buds. As the Kundalini rises...and touches the centers, these buds turn upward as fully opened flowers and the aspirant obtains spiritual experience. The goal in spiritual practice is to make the Kundalini ascend from the centers which are lower [to]...the sixth center or plane, which is the 'opening' for pure and perfect experience...Finally the Kundalini rises to the lotus at the cerebrum and becomes untied with Siva, or the Absolute, and the aspirant realizes, in a transcendental experience, his union with Siva-Sakti.[42]

Von Wiegand illustrated, in a geometric format, the annihilation of consciousness from lower centers, encased in red, to higher, less intense hue of milky white. At the top most region of the composition is an area where multiple squares of whitened color represent the "millions of lightning flashes" of Kundalini-Sakti when achieving union with Siva.

The Goddess:

In the mid to late 1960s von Wiegand described her cosmology in the form of the goddess. Only the female deity provided meaningful comfort after the loss of husband and father. Tantrism emphasizes the woman and female worship. Tantric specialist Ajit Mookerjee described:

> Tantrism is a system of the rediscovery of the mystery of woman. Apart from certain historical factors which may have influenced tantra to adopt practices associated with female worship, the chief reason for giving high status to woman and elevating her to the level of a cosmic force is that the female principle is

---

[42]Quoted from swami Mikilananda, Hinduism, Its Meaning for the Liberation of the Spirit (London, 1959), 151-152, by Mookerjee, Tantra Art (Paris, Basel, 1966), 33.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

> considered to be essentially the kinetic aspect of consciousness. In tantric rituals every woman is seen as a counterpart of the feminine principle and becomes a reincarnation of cosmic energy, symbolizing the ultimate essence of reality.[43]

Each painting, depicted in long, vertical, symmetrical panels, used clear and brilliant colors of the Tibetan palette.[44] Von Wiegand did not try to be illustrational in her Goddess forms; instead she built upon her geometric vocabulary.

In 1963, Von Wiegand completed To the Winter Goddess (Fig. 48), using circles, triangles, and rectangles to suggest a human configuration. This was the beginning of her "Goddess" series. In the composition, the top triangle corresponds in placement to the head, soul or spirit of the figure. Using the flat circle behind the head, von Wiegand suggested a spiritual aura, originating in Renaissance images, as well as Tibetan mandalas.

In 1966, von Wiegand created To the Goddess #231 using the same basic triangular and circular forms with a few differences in color and shape. The choice of three triangles at the top of the composition of the Goddess image referred to the spiritual symbolism of the trinity von Wiegand adapted from the tantrics and from H.P. Blavatsky's

---

[43]Ajit Mookerjee, The Tantric Way (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 16.

[44]Rubinstein believed that these goddess images foreshadowed the feminist involvement with female deities in the 1970s. Rubinstein, 298.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

writing,[45] and the I Ching.[46] In tantric art the symbol of three or the three jewels is the Buddhist metaphor of the Holy Triad (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) in which every professing Buddhist takes the daily "refuge." Dharma signifies the Word of Buddha or the Law. Sangha, originally signifying Buddha's order of monks, is generally interpreted by Tibetans as meaning the Congregation of Lamas or the Buddhist Church.[47] In her work, von Wiegand consistently incorporated geometric triangles in patterns of three.

The spiritual vertical format or hierarchy, an important characteristic of the "goddess" series, appears in other works, such as Invocation to the Winter Goddess, 1965-66 (, The Shrine of Mirror like Wisdom, 1964 (Fig. 49), the Adi-Buddha, 1967-68,[48] and Offering to the Adi-Buddha Amoghasiddha, 1966-67 (Fig. 50). The later three images refer to Buddha. The first, The Shrine of Mirror like Wisdom, placed the image of Buddha in the center of the work as a mediational deity whereas the other two merely mentioned Buddha in their titles. All these works embody the different aspects of Buddha. For example in Offering to

---

[45]Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, vol. 1, 142; vol. 2, 158.

[46]I Ching, 10.

[47]"Symbols of Tibetan Art," Catalog of Newark Museum Tibetan Collection, vol.1 (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum, 1983), 67.

[48]Madame Blavatsky defined the "Adi-Buddha" as "first or primeval wisdom" and as "absolute consciousness." H.P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol. 1, 54 and 635.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Adi-Buddha Amoghasiddha,[49] which consisted of a few triangles and circles, von Wiegand focused the viewer's eye on the large circular mandala located in the upper half of the composition. The title "Amoghasiddha" referred to one of the five structural elements of the human personality and the five Buddhas of the Diamond Vehicle, known as the "Infallible Realization." In each mandala form that von Wiegand executed the circle symbolized the nuclear motif of the self, a vehicle for centering awareness, disciplining concentration, and arousing a state conducive to mystic exaltation. Each of the five component parts of the mandala--the four sides and the center--are psychologically significant. They relate to the five structural elements of the human personality described by Tantrists as the five Buddhas.[50] Von Wiegand had read in Tucci: "Pure consciousness assumes five faces of different colors from which derive the five directions which correspond to the five "families" of the Buddhist Schools. White Sadyojata to the West, Yellow Vamedeva to the North, Black Aghora to the South, Red Tatpurusa to the East, all group around the

---

[49]Charmion von Wiegand, Offering to the Adi Buddha Amoghasiddha, oil on canvas, 50 x 27 inches, 1966-67, James and Mari Michener, The Archer M. Huntington Gallery, The University of Texas at Austin.

[50]The five Buddhas of the Diamond Vehicle are Vairochana, The Brilliant One; Akshobhya, The Unshakable; Ratnasambhava, The Matrix of the Jewel; Amitabha, The Infinite Light; and Amoghasiddha, The Infallible Realization. Mookerjee, The Tantric Way, 64.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

central face which is that of the Green Isana."[51]

Further clues to the meanings behind von Wiegand's tantric images are found in her writing about a painting created for an advertising campaign in 1966. Von Wiegand was invited by the Container Corporation to participate in an advertising campaign entitled, "Great Ideas."[52] Walter Paepcke wanted the Great Ideas campaign "to stimulate thinking and discussion about the ideas at the root of what the philosophers called the good life; ideas that are infinitely more important to the preservation of society and liberties than the pursuit of material gain."[53] Von Wiegand was given a quotation from a classic text and commissioned to create an art work that visually expressed the "great

---

[51]Tucci, The Theory and Practice of the Mandala; With Special References to the Modern Psychology of the Subconscious, trans. Alan Houghton Broderick (London, 1961), 51. At von Wiegand's death, a copy of this book by Tucci was listed among her possessions. "Inventory of von Wiegand's Books, 1983," Estate of the Artist, New York.

[52]The campaign originated in Walter Paepcke's (Art Director for the Container Corporation) participation in a Great Books Club. Designed for Chicago's top business leaders, the club adapted the principles of the humanities curriculum from Professor Mortimer J. Adler's course of classic works of philosophy and literature which was taught at the University of Chicago. Neil Harris, "Designs and Demand: Art and the Modern Corporation," Art, Design, and the Modern Corporation: The Collection of Container Corporation of America, A Gift to the National Museum of American Art (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian, 1985), 8-23.

[53]Ibid., 130.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

idea."[54] She decided to illustrate the popular dictum of Carl Schurz (1829-1906), the civil service reformer:[55] "nothing that is wrong in principle can be right in practice." Von Wiegand conveyed her intentions:[56]

> My composition is based on the offering of the Mandala (Magic Circle) as is used in India, Nepal and Tibet. In Buddhist Tibet, a miniature effigy of the universe made of dough, its continents, planets, people and animals, is offered to the Buddhas and the community of the blessed. Again the gift may be in the form of the mandala, an abstract diagram decorated with symbolic patterns in many colors.[57]

It was not von Wiegand's aim to make a copy of an Oriental picture. What interested her was the play of "opposition between western geometric structure and eastern color gamut."[58] In composing this work she juxtaposed the circle against the square. In places she turns the square on its axis and created diamond and triangular shapes. "Aside from

---

[54]The quotations covered three categories of thought--moral, political, and philosophical. Most were by Western writers, but in 1957 a second set of quotations, "Great Ideas of Eastern Man," was selected with the encouragement of Pepcke's wife, Elizabeth. Ibid.

[55]In the Election of 1872, Grant's lackluster record aroused such dissatisfaction that the Republican Party split over his renomination. Reformers under Carl Schurz broke away to form the Liberal Republican Party with Horace Greeley of New York as their standard bearer.

[56]Charmion von Wiegand, Nothing That is Wrong in Principle Can Be Right in Practice, oil on canvas, 1966, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.. For a color reproduction of this work consult: Art, Design, and the Modern Corporation, 130, #149.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the intrinsic beauty of shape," von Wiegand wrote, "triangles seem to have a more or less universal symbolism of aspiration." She believed the Egyptian pyramids and Tibetan dough cakes--despite size, angles, and material--have a certain inner relationship. "The only reminiscence of any object in my composition is the two white triangles against the large circle, and their shape belongs to the "sublime triangle" of the pentagon."[59] The pentagon is a common tantric form-- two triangles penetrate each other in the form of a five-pointed star or a pentagon, each of its five points represent the five elements--earth (kshiti), water (ap), energy (tejas), air (marut), and space (vyoman). The union of two triangles symbolizes the union of Siva-Sakti or the female and male principles, manifesting the creation of the universe. When the two triangles are separated and form an hour-glass pattern or the shape of a "damaru"--the drum of Bhairava, considered the destructive aspect of Siva--they represent dissolution. Time and space cease to exist.[60]

Tibetan Symbols:

Other Tibetan symbols, besides Buddhas, mandalas, triangles, and pentagons also appear in von Wiegand's work. Von Wiegand adapted as her new vocabulary the wheel, the

---

[59]Ibid.

[60]Mookerjee, The Tantric Way, 55-56.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

lotus, the chorten, three jewels, sun-moon emblem, the whirling emblem, and yin and yang. The symbol of the Wheel or the Wheel of the Law (T. korlo and cokhor; S. cakra and dharmacakra) was chosen by early Indian Buddhists to represent Sakyamuni's First Sermon, in the Deer Park at Sarnath. The act of preaching is called "turning the wheel of the law" (S. dharmacakra), incorporating an ancient Indian emblem for the world-ruler (S. cakravartin; "he who sets the world in motion"). In early Buddhist art, the wheel, one of several symbols signifying the great events of Sakyamuni's life (the historic Buddha), is shown as six-spoked, often on an empty throne and surrounded by worshipping gods, men, and animals.[61] As Buddhism developed and spread across Asia, the wheel came to symbolize the Buddhist doctrine. The Tibetan wheel of the law commonly has eight spokes or a multiple of eight and is set in a lotus base with a halo of flames to indicate its sacred character.[62] In The Wheel of the Law, #83, 1958[63] the

---

[61]The wheel, depicted in early Indian art surmounting a column, conveys a pre-Buddhist emblem with cosmological and imperial associations. The wheel as a radiating disk is also interrelated with the solar disk and its world-controlling revolutions. In Tibet the wheel is frequently encountered as an architectural ornament, as a separate emblem, and as part of various sets of ornaments. Eleanor Olsen, "Symbols in Tibetan Art," Catalogue of Newark Museum Tibetan Collection 3 (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum, 1983), 67.

[62]The whirling emblem is often set in the center. Although not shown with a column, the Tibetan wheel retains its significance as an emblem of sovereignty and is thus associated with the empowerment of important lamas such as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

central circle has been changed to a square using the magic square format. Eight spokes radiate out as bands of color emanating from the magic square, clearly linking it with the Tibetan wheel of the law. It is interesting to speculate that von Wiegand may have intended this to be a tribute to the Dalai Lama.

The Lotus

The Lotuses #169, 1962[64] (Fig. 51), The Lotuses, 1952,[65] Dream of the Blue Flower, 1951-52,[66] and Primordial Lotus, 1968[67] depict the water plant, the Lotus (T.pema; S.padma), a flower associated with divinity throughout the ancient world. The Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Persians all ascribed sacred qualities to the white or blue flower which grows undefiled out of the muddy water base. The early Buddhists adopted the lotus symbolism already

---

the Dalai Lama. Ibid.

[63]Charmion von Wiegand, The Wheel of the Law, #83, gouache and pencil on paper, 21 x 19 1/4 inches (framed), 1958, The Newark Museum, Newark, NJ.

[64]Charmion von Wiegand, The Lotuses #169, gouache with pencil on paper mounted on board, 1962, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

[65]Charmion von Wiegand, The Lotuses, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 inches, 1952, Private Collection.

[66]Charmion von Wiegand, Dream of the Blue Flower, oil on canvas, 1951-52, Estate of the Artist, New York.

[67]Charmion von Wiegand, Primordial Lotus, gouache on paper, 18 x 18 inches, 1968, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

existing in India, connecting the flower's purity and perfection with divine birth and the emancipation of Buddhahood. In Tibet, the lotus is commonly viewed in three ways: 1) as a naturalistic, growing plant 2) it is depicted in decorative schemes and in sets of emblems as a conventionalized radiating disk 3) petals of the flower are used to form supports for divine images and sacred emblems.[68] Von Wiegand chose the more abstract depiction of the Lotus by the Tibetans, the radiating disk. In The Lotuses #169, 1962, the central circular form--the lotus is surrounded by triangles representing the many lotus petals growing upward, a sign of higher consciousness. In Primordial Lotus von Wiegand placed red petals near the central circle. The format of the canvas is square, 18 x 18 inches. The forms and shapes are reminiscent of a Tibetan astrological diagram.

The Chorten

Perhaps the single most important symbol of Buddhism, the chorten (S. stupa and dhatu garbha) is analogous to the Christian cross. Like the cross, the chorten has specific associations with death and triumph over death. When adopted by Buddhism, the stupa came to symbolize the

---

[68]After second century A.D. the lotus throne for Buddha was a concrete symbol of the attainment of enlightenment. The Mahayanist doctrines of Buddhist paradises with their lotus pond settings (as in the Lotus Sutra) reinforced the lotus symbolism. Olsen, vol 1, 67.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

departed lord and the ultimate state of nirvana into which he had passed. The stupa always retains its essential form: a dome or bell-shaped base (S. anda; "egg"), surmounted by a vertical column or tower of stepped form (S. harmika; "sanctuary above earth beyond death and rebirth") and a crowning canopy, or umbrella, signifying royalty.

In Tibet the five basic components of the chorten came to be regarded as symbolic of the aspects of enlightenment in the same way the mandala does. For instance, the five elements and the five mystic Buddhas are represented by the five basic components: the base, earth; the dome, water; the thirteen tapering steps, fire; the moon and sun finial, air; the surmounting flame, ether. The thirteen tapering steps also symbolize the thirteen grounds of enlightenment.[69] Untitled, #199, 1963, now in the Seattle Art Museum[70] (Fig. 52), illustrates many of the characteristics of the chorten. On the left of the painting is the round circle of the moon, on the right the orange circle of the sun. Located along the red base of the central triangle are the five mystic

---

[69]According to legend, Sakyamuni's remains were divided up and enshrined in thousands of tumulae or reliquary mounds. These stupa (mounds) or dhatu garbha (relic preservers) were an ancient funerary tradition for rulers and saints in India. By the third century B.C., Buddhist sites throughout India and adjacent areas had stupas as their main cult objects. The donation of stupas by both monks and laymen was an important element in Buddhist religious life. Ibid., 68.

[70]Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled, #199, gouache on paper, 1963, The Seattle Art Museum.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Buddhas. Above are three jeweled Buddhas crowned by red and orange flames of fire. All that is missing from von Wiegand's depiction are the thirteen tapering steps.

Reviews of the 1960

Von Wiegand struggled against many obstacles to receive the recognition she deserved as an important American artist. One of the criticisms of von Wiegand's work, which appeared in an exhibition review published in Art News in October of 1961, is a prime example:

> Charmion von Wiegand has written sympathetically of her recollections of Mondrian and with illumination of Vantongerloo, besides taking up art in important exhibitions of abstract art both in this country and abroad since her last one-man show in New York in 1956. She has performed usefully and intelligently in other ways, too. For this side of her identity, respect and admiration; but for the other, on view in this present exhibition of paintings and collages, one must report dismay. Her paintings turn their nice shiny countenances to the world, but their brightness is surface only. She shows little structural insight in her peculiar wrap-up of Oriental attachments and Mondrian. Her Neo-Plastic dress is worn like the livery of a servant who would normally be the gardener, but becomes the chauffeur when the guests are expected. Even the titles --for instance Magic Squares-- are particularized give-a-ways. Of course, there will be some, and some will be directors of museums, who will prefer these jolly oranges, greens, and baby blues, these tinker-toy bathroom floor abstractions, these shiny circles and triangles, to Mondrian. [71]

Critics often condemned von Wiegand's work for either adhering too closely to the tenets of Neo-plasticism, or for its vast departure from Neo-plasticism. The beautiful

---

[71]C.L. "Exhibition at Wise Gallery," Art News 60 (October 1961): 12.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

prismatic colors of her paintings--expanded to include circles, triangles, and pentagons, and general oriental flavor--were often dismissed for their lack of philosophical depth.

Irving Sandler, covering this same exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery, wrote expressed the opposite view of von Wiegand's work. He wrote in support of her painting:

> Under Mondrian's influence, von Wiegand began to paint in the Neo-Plastic manner, but since the late Forties, she has replaced this aesthetic with canons derived from Eastern art. Her prismatic hues and architectonic designs refer to the magic square, the color wheel, pagoda schemes and Oriental symbolic precepts...In giving freer rein to her poetic temperament, she has refused to abandon a relentless concern with the two-dimensionality of the picture plane, the heritage of her earlier Neo-Plasticism. This tension provides the subtle drama in her paintings, dating from 1951 to the present.[72]

Meantime, the nation's paper of record placed the student above the mentor. Von Wiegand had arrived as a major American Artist. Stuart Preston in the New York Times praised von Wiegand's work to the skies: "On the whole her designs are more diversified and less implacable than Mondrian's. But her real contribution lies in the use of color, the cheerfulness of which constantly breaks into the austerity of her rectangular schemes."[73] A critic from the New York Journal American described von Wiegand's oils on

---

[72]Irving Sandler, "In the Art Galleries," New York Post, 8 October 1961, 15.

[73]Stuart Preston, "Paintings by Charmion von Wiegand Shown," New York Times, 29 September 1961, 59.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

view at Howard Wise: "Von Wiegand gives flat circles and rectangles a third dimension--emotion."[74]

Art critic Kenneth Sawyer, the first to fully understand von Wiegand's direction after she abandoned a strict Neoplastic palette wrote:

> A Geometrist in the classic sense, she extends, rather than emulates, the late Piet Mondrian. For those who thought that the inorganic tradition had few surprises left, her oils and collages came as something of a shock. The meticulously balanced squares and rectangles were curiously transmuted by a mysticism--a mysticism too often overlooked in Mondrian's work--that rendered them immediate and lasting emotional experiences.[75]

Von Wiegand finally had critics who understood her view. Philosophically rooted in Mondrian's New York period, von Wiegand--like Mondrian--applied the same principle that the painting must come first and the theory after. Von Wiegand did not consider herself to have deviated from Mondrian's basic denominators: flatness of the plane and geometric purity. She conceived her work as vehicles of a "new vision of reality."[76] Her inclusion of hermetic symbolism merely revealed expanded interest in what had at one time certainly influenced Mondrian. The harmonic colors, circles, and

---

[74]"Von Wiegand Oils on View," New York Journal America, (6 September 1961): 17.

[75]Kenneth Sawyer, "Painting and Sculpture: the New York Season," Craft Horizon 22 (May 1962): 52.

[76]Mondrian used phrases such as "clear vision of reality" or "new reality" to indicate the cosmological intention behind each of his paintings. Piet Mondrian, "Toward the True Vision of Reality," 10-15 and "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life in Plastic Art, 43.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

triangles introduced the feminine. "There was no fineness, she observed, "none of the feminine in his construction."[77]

1970s

Von Wiegand's commitment to Buddhism only deepened in her later years, although her painting virtually came to a stand still. In the late seventies, she traveled several times to India to visit the Dalai Lama in exile. By this time von Wiegand had studied and collected Tibetan art for nearly two decades and had painted in a strongly Buddhist style for twenty years. In the early 1970s she turned a large portion of her creative energy to editing a friend's manuscript as she had done for husband, Joseph Freeman, and for the artist, Piet Mondrian. She focused on her companion, Khyongla Rato's life as a Tibetan Abbott.[78]

---

[77]Von Wiegand, Interview by Paul Cummings, 104.

[78] He recorded his years in Tibet, before the Chinese invasion, and his escape from the Chinese soldiers to freedom in India. Von Wiegand struggled to translate the work. She wrote to her friend, Mark Tobey:

> My friend did not return until the first of November, me in bed, and ever since I [have] work[ed] on his book several hours a day. Its [sic] an extraordinary document of the lost monastic culture seen from the inside. The difficulty is to make it in human terms so the western mind can identify. As I am supposed merely to edit bad English, it leads to confrontations. But after all didn't I struggle with Joe's dialectics in his biography and with the theories of Neo-Plasticism in Mondrian's didactic Dutch English, so the Dharma of the Yellow Sect with its logic and theory of opposites is a challenge I enjoy. And what reward? Neither fame nor fortune, but if the mind attains lucidity and the heart can ignite it, the answer lies there.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand found that her years of hard work finally paid off. Her successful retrospectives in Rome and Venice at the Gallerie Fiamma Vigo in 1973, and in London at Annely Juda Fine Art in 1974 brought her international acclaim. One of the most important exhibitions of von Wiegand's work, held at the Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, in October of 1975, displayed paintings along with her gouaches and collages.[79] Sonia Delaunay, a long time friend of von Wiegand's, was quoted in the catalog to the show:

> ....von Wiegand is one of very few artists, who understands color theories and can utilize them to perfection. Her accomplishment in this area is enormous and should not be overlooked. Her work will be a discovery for young scholars and artists, who seek to learn the sensuous power of colors and their immutable language in pure abstract terms... [80]

Furthermore, the University of Texas at Austin (1969) and Birmingham Art Museum in Birmingham, Alabama (1970) held retrospectives. In 1975 von Wiegand was one of three women geometric abstractionists to be included in an exhibition at

---

Charmion von Wiegand, New York, to Mark Tobey, Switzerland, 22 May, 1971, Mark Tobey Papers, American Archives of Art, Smithsonian Institute, New York, NY.

The book was published in 1977 shortly before von Wiegand's long illness and death. Joseph Campbell supplied the Foreword. Khyongla Rato, My Life and Lives, Khyongla Rato, The Story of a Tibetan Incarnation introduction by Joseph Campbell (Chelsea, MI; Book Crafters, 1977).

[79]"Charmion von Wiegand: The Paradox of Transformation," Solo Exhibition Andre Zarre Gallery, 20 East 69th Street, New York, October 3 - 31, 1975.

[80]Sonia Delaunay interviewed by Andre Zarre, Paris-June 10, 1975, as quoted in "Andre Zarre Press Release" New York, NY, October 3 to 31, 1975, Andre Zarre Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, New York.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts: "Three American Purists: Mason, Miles, von Wiegand."[81] Von Wiegand was honored in 1977 as one of five American women included in "Paris-New York," the opening exhibition of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne in Paris.[82] Of all her accomplishments at the end of her life, von Wiegand found the retrospective held by the Bass Museum of Art of Miami Beach in 1982 the most satisfying.[83] The exhibition titled "Charmion von Wiegand: Her Art and Life" focused not only on her paintings and collages but also on the influences on her work. Included in this exhibition was the art of a few of her mentors: Mark Tobey, Kurt Schwitters, and Piet Mondrian.

Von Wiegand received further national acclaim when the painter Ce Roser interviewed the artist at her home and studio and explored von Wiegand's paintings and collages for a Public Broadcasting System documentary. This documentary also included many previously unrecorded anecdotes of art-historical interest involving Piet Mondrian, Kurt Schwitters, Hart Crane, Max Eastman, Mark Tobey, Hans

---

[81]May Brawley Hill, "Three American Purists: Mason, Miles and von Wiegand," Three American Purists: Mason/Miles/Von Wiegand (Springfield, MA: Museum of Fine Arts, 1975).

[82]Paris-New York (Paris, France: Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977), 42-44.

[83]Nancy Joslin Troy, Charmion von Wiegand, Her Art and Life (Miami Beach: The Bass Museum of Art, 1982).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Richter, Theodore Dreiser, and others. Von Wiegand spoke about the feminist movement, Tibetan art, modern poetry, and painting.[84]

1983

Until her death in June 1983, Von Wiegand lived in an apartment in New York filled with her own works and those of her artist friends. The centerpiece of her home was a Buddhist shrine containing her collection of important oriental artifacts:

> A large elaborately carved Tibetan altar occupied one wall of her modest apartment; a beautiful austere black and white painting by Georges Vantongerloo hung on the opposite wall. At the center of the altar, fragile as a summer flower, was a small Mondrian watercolor of a single chrysanthemum entirely at home in its place amidst the exotic spirals, carved clouds, and smiling

---

[84]Ce Roser also assisted in organizing the largest major museum show in New York to focus entirely on the work of women. Roser was part of a determined body known as Women in the Arts, a national organization whose 400 members include writers, dancers and film makers whose mission was to bring about "a world in which men and women artists can function as equals." Pat Passlof said, "We're trying to alter the structure of museums." This was the very first time that artists joined museum officials in selecting a show. The group hoped not only to change views toward women artists, but toward artists in general. The final choice from a list of 500-odd, was made by three WIA artists--Passlof and the painters Sylvia Sleigh and Ce Roser; plus Laura Adler, NYCC coordinator of exhibitions, and two critics, Linda Nochlin, then an art historian at Vassar, and Elizabeth Baker, managing editor of Art News. The work of Charmion von Wiegand was granted a prominent place in the exhibition as a first generation woman abstractionist, thanks to the assistance of Ce Roser.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

bodhisattvas."[85]

Here in her apartment she actively worked at her painting and writing until cancer crippled her mind and body. During her final months she was cared for by her long time companion Khyongla Rato and other friends from the Tibet Center in New York. Von Wiegand died Thursday, June 8, 1983 in St. Vincent's Hospital. She was 85 years old.[86]

Von Wiegand's interfaith funeral, a combination of Tibetan and Western ritual, was held Monday, June 11 at 8:00 PM at the Andrett Funeral Home, 353 Second Avenue. A few family and friends attended the service. Von Wiegand's body was clothed in white; surrounding her were the many Tibetan mandalas and paintings which had given her such inspiration and strength in life.[87]

Conclusion

Von Wiegand sought to find a pictorial language which could encompass her idealistic vision of life and be aesthetically convincing. She identified with the modernist cause. Grounded in the most important intellectual and artistic issues of her day, von Wiegand's art is an

---

[85]A full description of the Tibetan altar is found in Larsen, "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones," 29.

[86]Eleanor Blau, "Charmion von Wiegand, Artist," New York Times, 11 June 1983, 53.

[87]Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

idiosyncratic fusion of diverse sources, which she adapted to the needs of her personal vision as it changed over time. Returning to one of her most exemplary works, which was briefly discussed, can reveal how this integration and adaptation occurred; Nothing that is Wrong in Principle can be Right in Practice, 1966, (Fig. 53) demonstrates how Von Wiegand's thematic and stylistic concerns coalesce in a single painting.

On a purely formal level, the radical simplicity of this composition, limited to three distinct forms--circle, triangle and square, which are suspended on a brilliant blue field--is indebted to European modernism; the vivid symbolic colors of Kandinsky and the geometric precision of a Vantongerloo or a Mondrian come to mind. Inspired by passages from The Secret Doctrine as previously discussed, the painting presents a geometric interpretation of nature as found in both Blavatsky and Tibetan literature. Its geometric proportions attest to nature's laws of harmonic growth. The pentagon construction of the triangles implies theosophy's and Tibetan tantric's dualistic cosmogony--the earthly and eternal aspects of life. As the mandala form emits its vital rays, prismatic colors emanate from the center of the circle, it makes visible the Hermetic bond between the celestial and terrestrial realms.

The painting is constructed from the discrete, barely visible brushstrokes characteristic of so much of von

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Wiegand's mature oeuvre. The slick, smooth surface refers to modern physics' concept of nature as a continual field of energy which is radiated in different concentrations as matter and space. The treatment of the surface of the canvas emphasizes the vibration of the complementary colors, revealing on another level theosophy's notion of a vibrating cosmos activated by waves of consciousness.

The enormous size of the forms, their flat frontal arrangement, and bright vivid colors were designed to maximize the impact of the surrounding space and reinforce the sense of its charged potency. With the forms centered on a blue canvas and not attached to any side, the space presses outward in all directions into infinity, invoking discussions of the fourth dimension characteristic of von Wiegand's milieu.

Although the painting corresponds to passages in theosophical and Tibetan literature and demonstrates the artist's penchant for visualizing text, it is not "literary" in any way. Because it denies a fixed meaning, the forms and their associative values are completely intelligible within the pictorial context. The shapes are large and close to the surface, giving the composition the impact of sudden realization, and yet the thematic content invites prolonged meditation. As a conflation of multiple influences, the painting is distinctively von Wiegand's in the way the content has been located in a symmetrical

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

geometric format.

As an heir to the Romantic tradition, von Wiegand accepted the gnostic function of art while she wrestled with the possibilities of abstraction. Although she was a pioneering member of America's geometric painters, von Wiegand still had one foot in the nineteenth century. Relying on form as a vessel or carrier of content, she was, like many artists in this tradition, an iconographer. She clung to the symbolic image as a way to insure that her art, though abstract and highly personal, still had the power to communicate. The iconographic content of her work was derived from Eastern sources.

Although von Wiegand's oeuvre for the most part showed a remarkable inventiveness and quality, there were also uneven moments. Because an effort has not previously been made to distinguish her most serious works from those which are less significant, they have been grouped together without any distinctions of quality. In addition, historians and critics labeled von Wiegand a neo-plastic painter, and the work that has been highlighted in the past most closely emulates her mentor, Mondrian. Little attention has been directed to her mature works of the 1950s and 1960s, when she achieved her unique style and vision. This naturally tends to diminish the artist's real achievements.

The wideranging conceptual concerns that are expressed

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

in Von Wiegand's art--theosophy, neo-plasticism, Buddhism, tantricism, psychic phenomenon, her contemporaries' pictorial inventions, and Freud--place her art squarely in the context of contemporary intellectual life. The concurrence of interest among her generation of abstract painters was less a matter of mutual influence than it was a common experience in the social and intellectual milieu. As Nothing That is Wrong in Principle Can Be Right in Practice demonstrates, von Wiegand's pictures invoke the myths characteristic of much of American art while providing an important precedent for the next generation of vanguard Americans. Like other modernists with whom von Wiegand's art shares so much, she feared that unless her abstractions were grounded in significant ideas transcending form and materials, art itself would suffer a loss of meaning.

Von Wiegand understood that however lofty her intentions, her paintings had to stand on their own--as paintings. Her best do. Using Nothing That is Wrong in Principle Can Be Right in Practice as a yard stick, the success of von Wiegand's art can be measured in several ways--by its range of values and their distillation into potent visual form; by the evocative force of its imagery and its power to fire the imagination; by the way it imbues the world with meaning and at the same time suggests ultimate value; by the dramatic presence of its pictorial space and its ability to open up the mind's eye; and by

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

making the pictures rich in association. In addition, there are those numerous and elusive subtleties--the irradiations and modulations of color, the density of light, the saturation of hue, the tension of line and contrasts of value, size, and proportion which make a painting come alive.

Though von Wiegand's art is experimental and assimilative--absorbing from her artistic and intellectual environment those ideas which could broaden her own range of thought--it has an implicit coherence and a distinctive identity. Dense with metaphor, it addresses experience on many levels and through new avenues of expression. It has been said that in this way modern art embodies an ethical content, by suggesting that artistic integrity requires a permanent concern with self-development. Von Wiegand's art evolved through time to accommodate her rapidly changing world and her altering global perspective. Her mature personal vision continues to challenge the values of Western society.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



1.Marion Greenwood, Portrait of Charmion von Wiegand, 1944

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



2. Charmion von Wiegand, Untitled (Volga), 1929

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



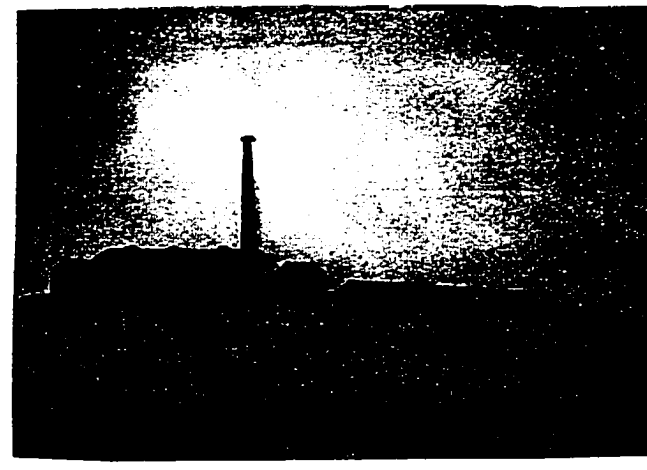
3. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Volga), c. 1929

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



4. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Black Sea), 1929

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



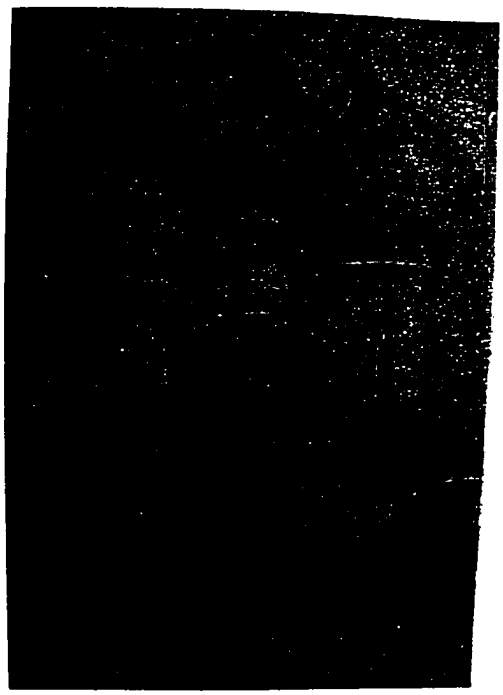
5. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Factory), c. 1929

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



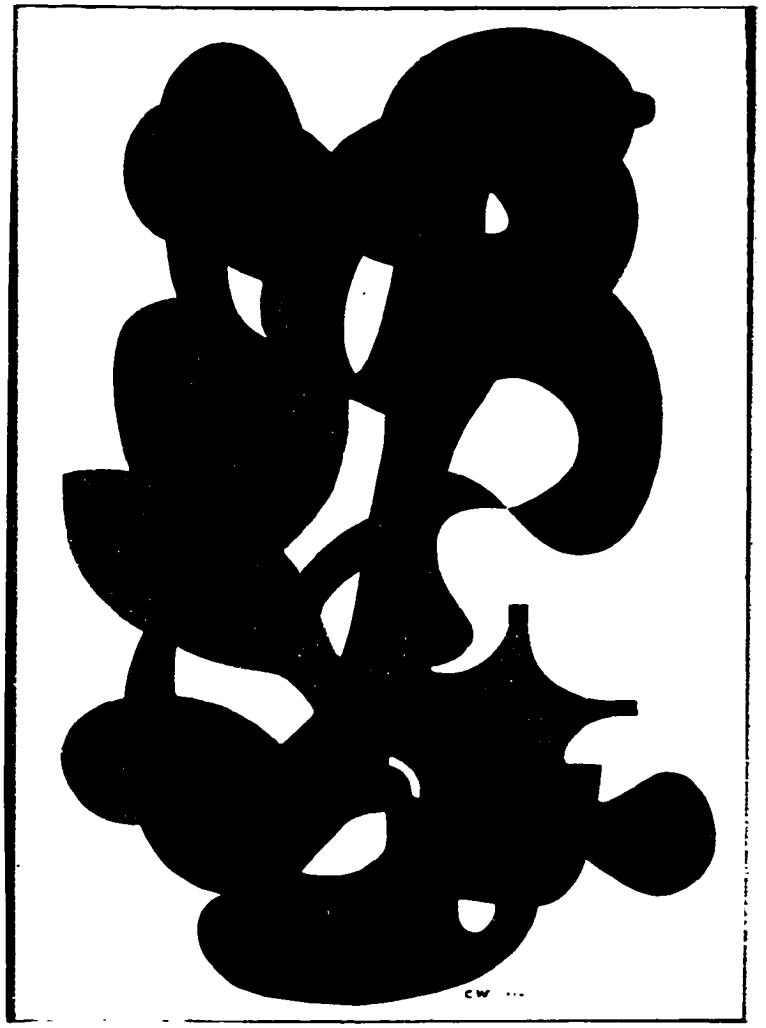
6. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Church), c. 1929

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



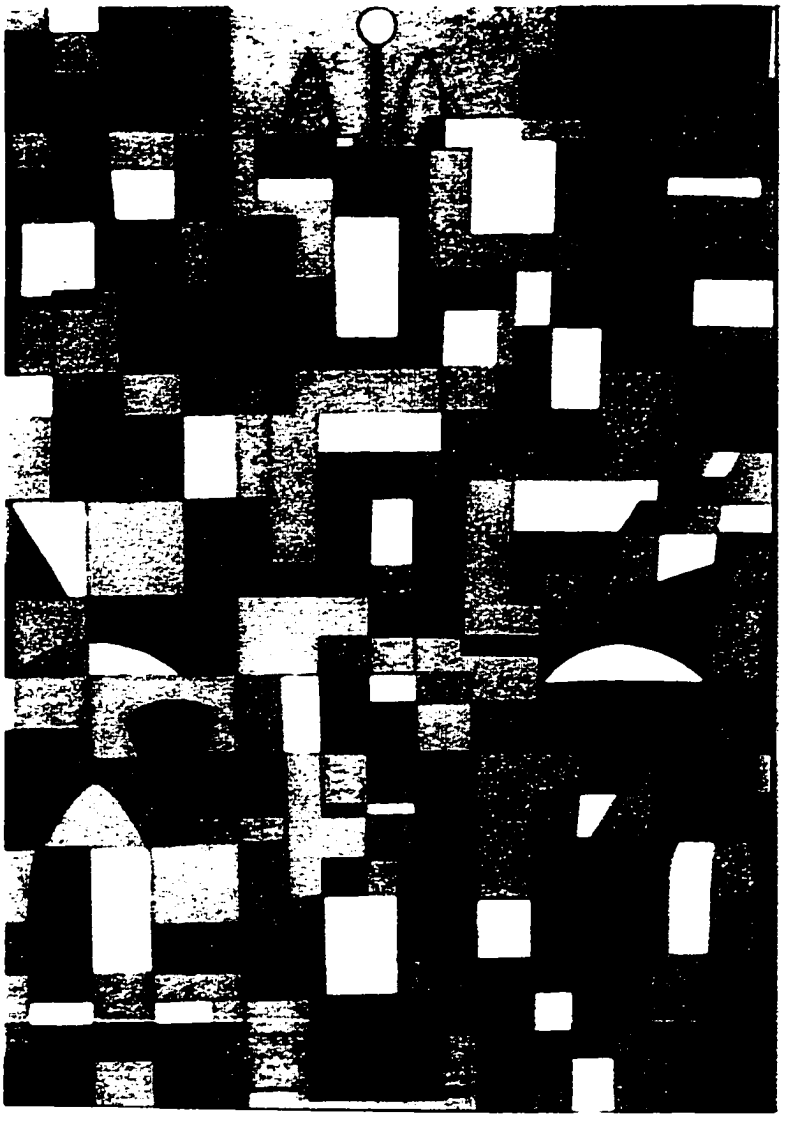
7. Von Wiegand, Untitled (Church), c. 1929

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



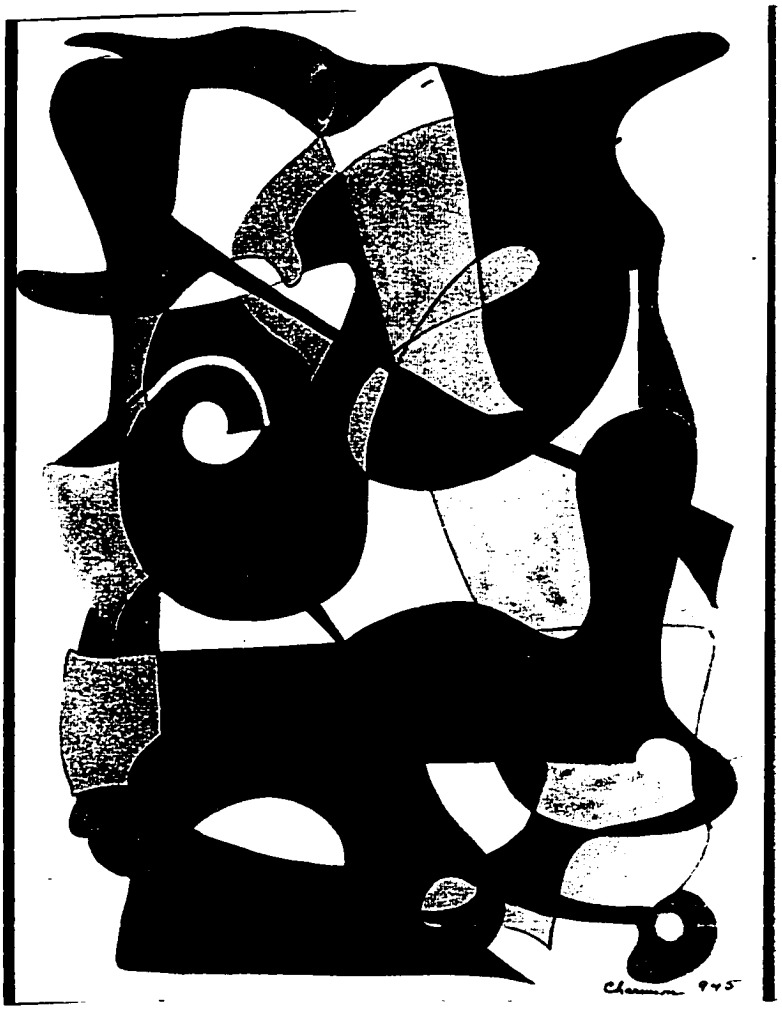
8. Von Wiegand, Ominous Form, 1946

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



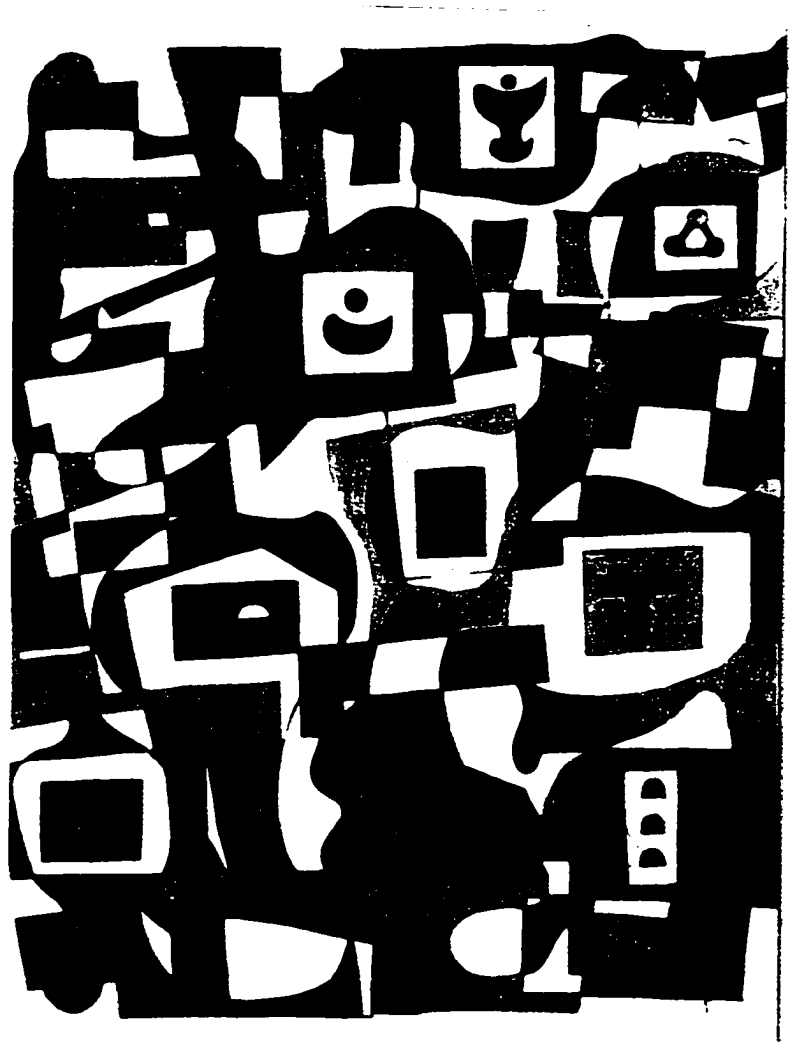
9. Von Wiegand, City Lights, 1947

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



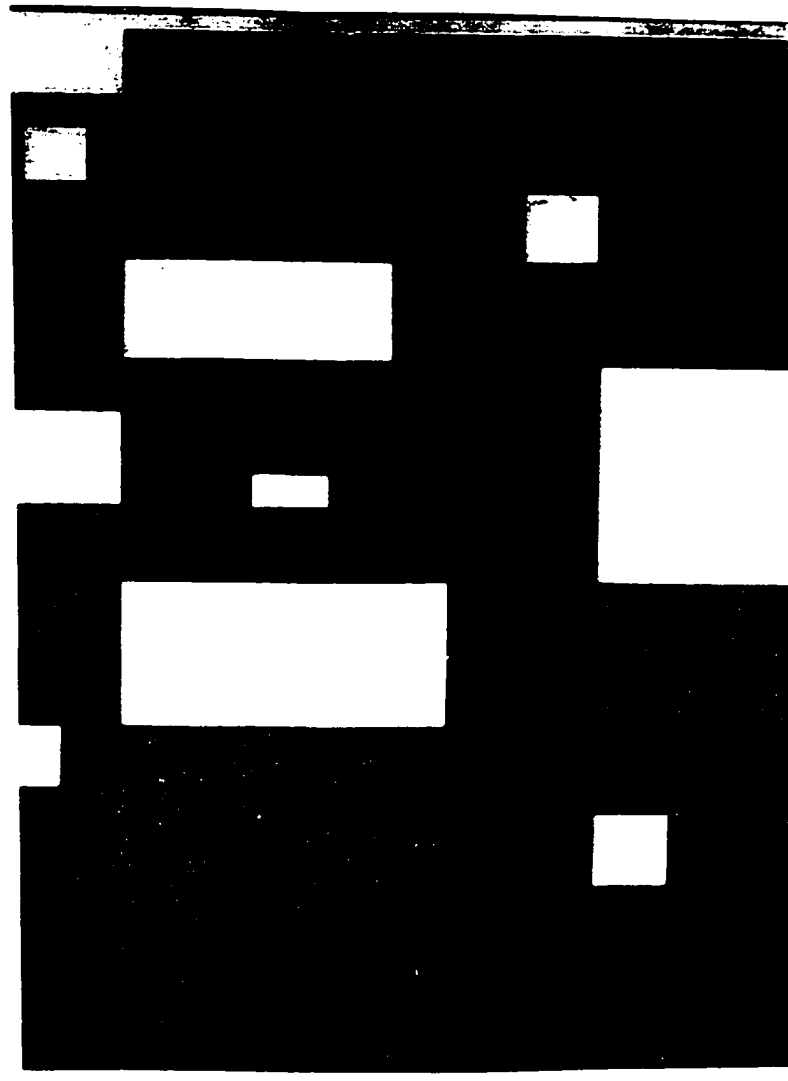
10.Von Wiegand, Untitled, 1946

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



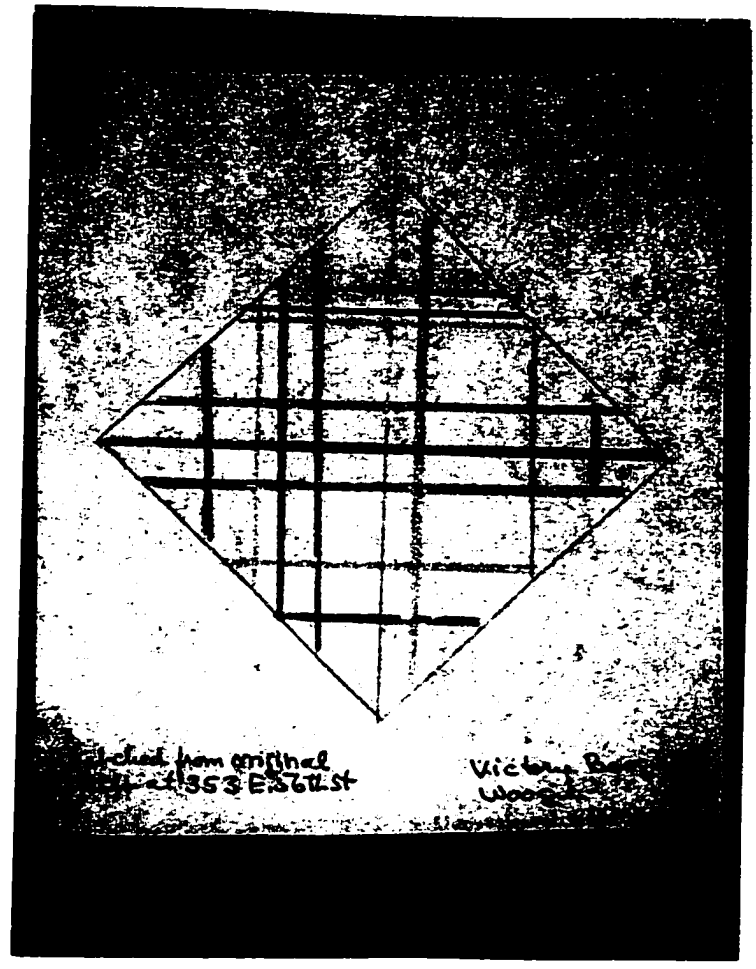
11. Von Wiegand, Individual Worlds, 1947

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



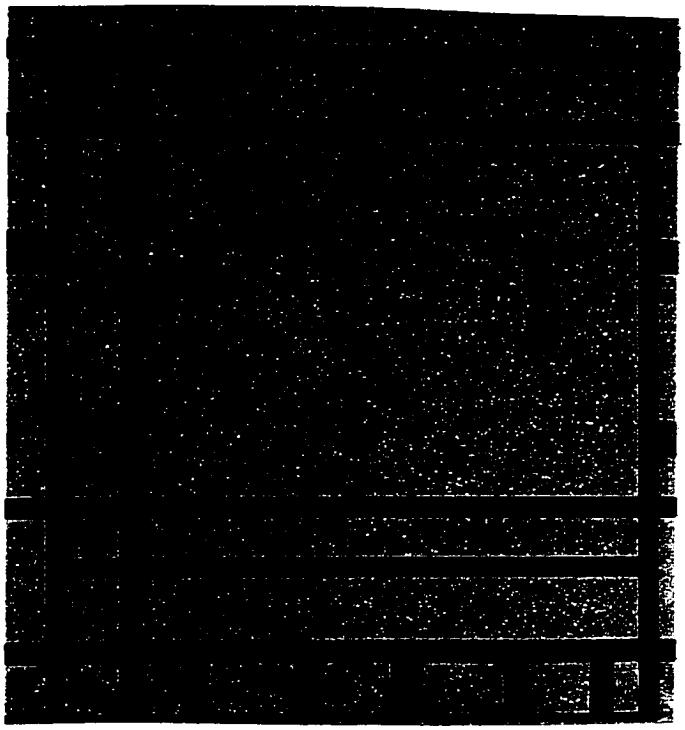
12. Von Wiegand, The Image of Fire in Heaven, 1955

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



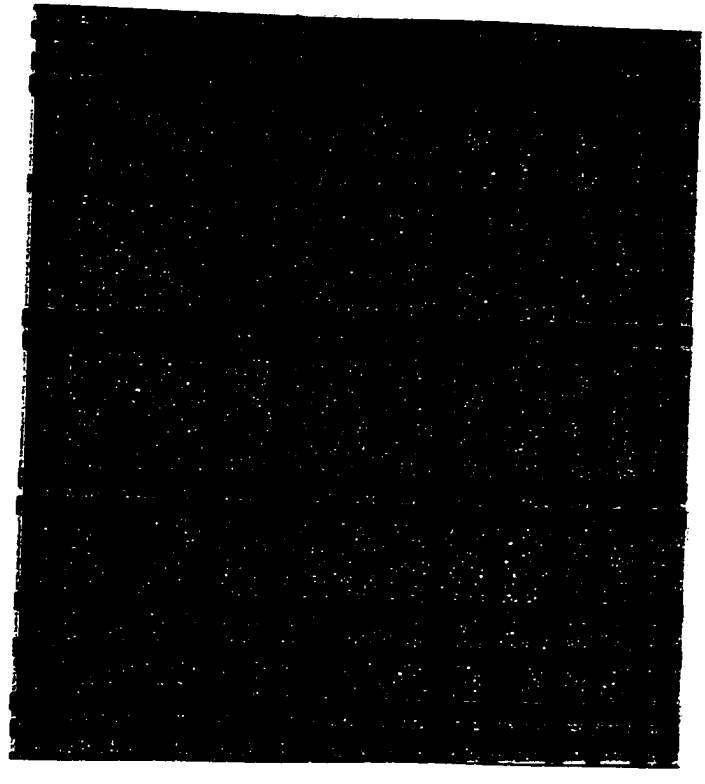
13. Von Wiegand, Sketch of Victory Boogie Woogie, 1942

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



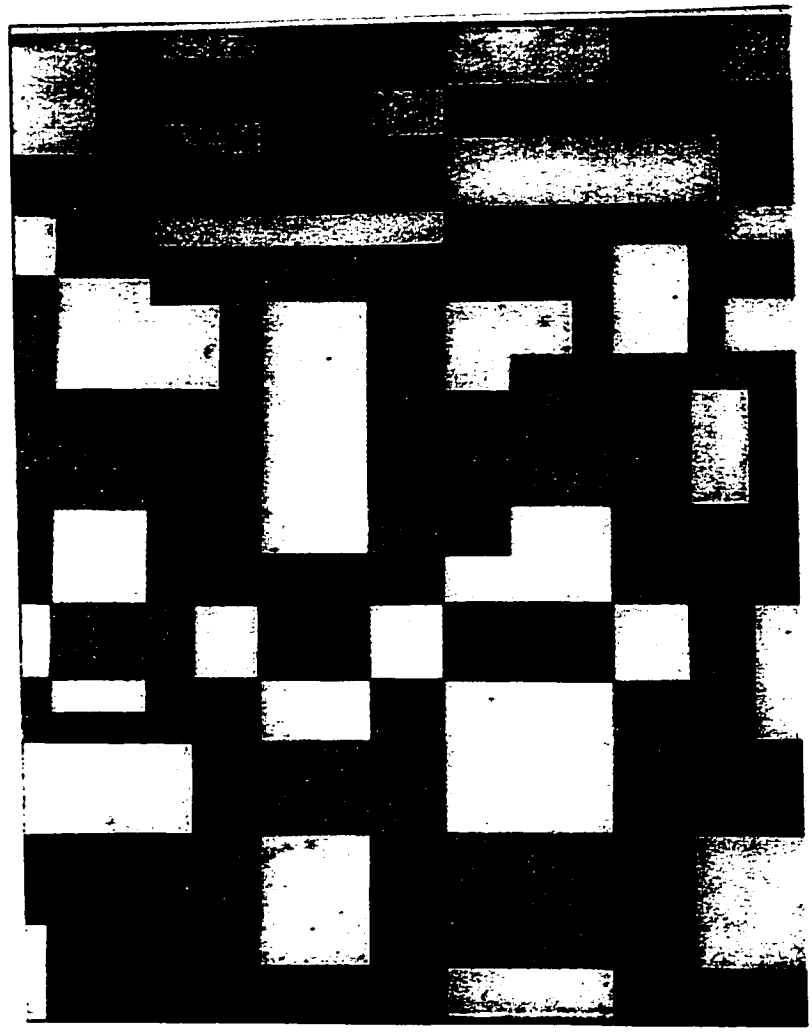
14. Piet Mondrian, New York, 1941-42

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



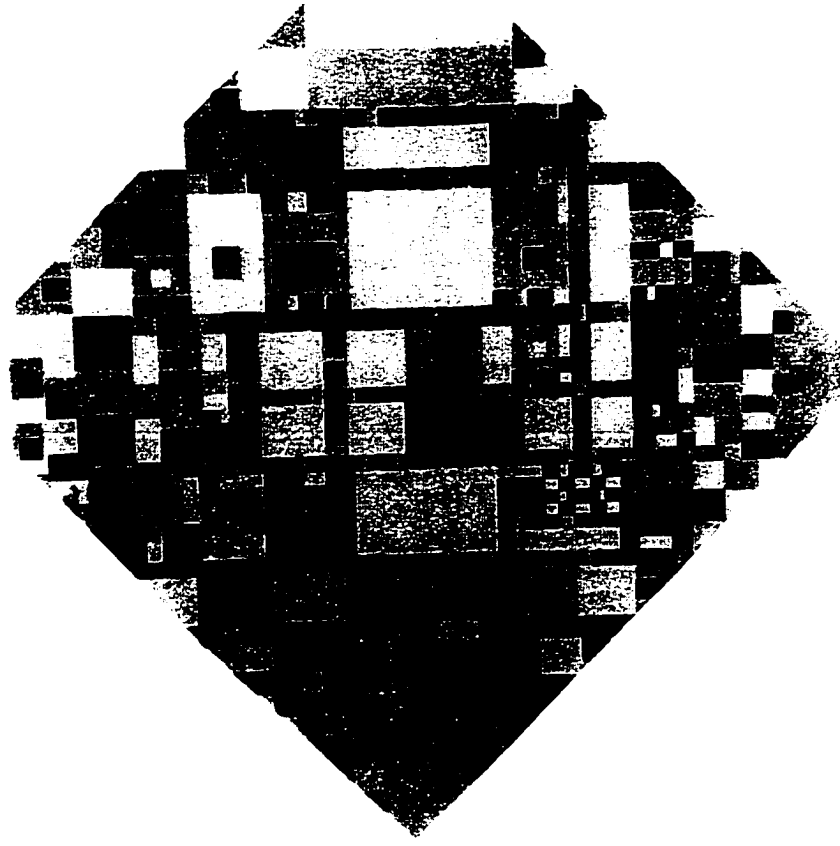
15. Mondrian, New York City I, 1941-42

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



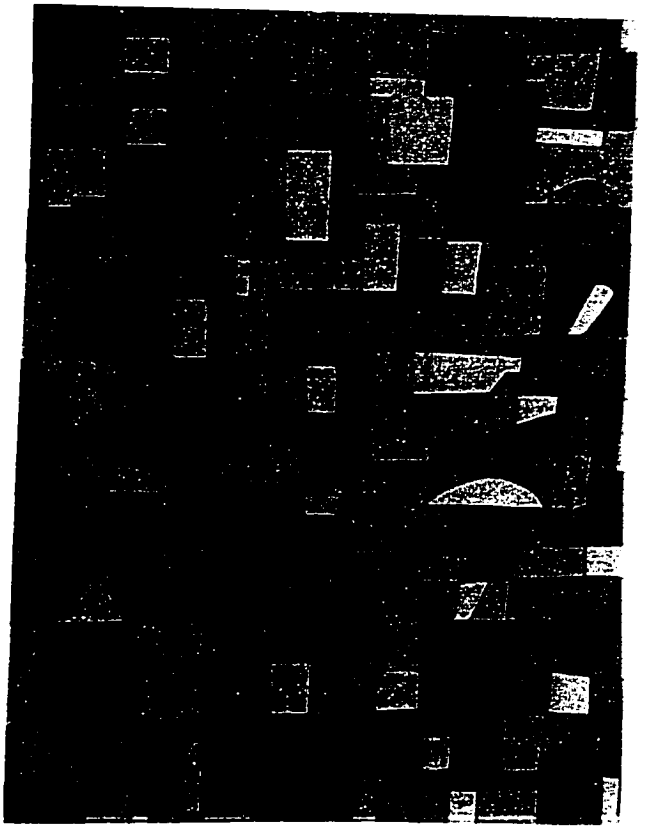
16. Von Wiegand, Night Environment, New York City, 1947

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



17. Mondrian, Victory Boogie Woogie, 1943-44

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



18. Von Wiegand, Study for City Lights, 1947

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



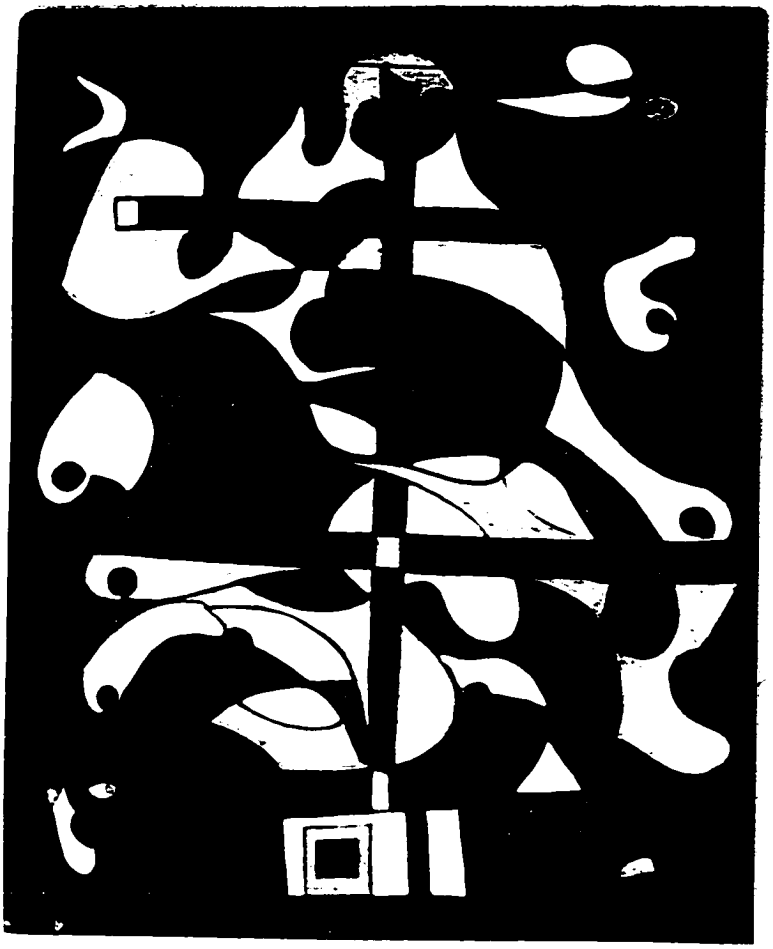
19. Charles Sheeler, Church Street El, 1920

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



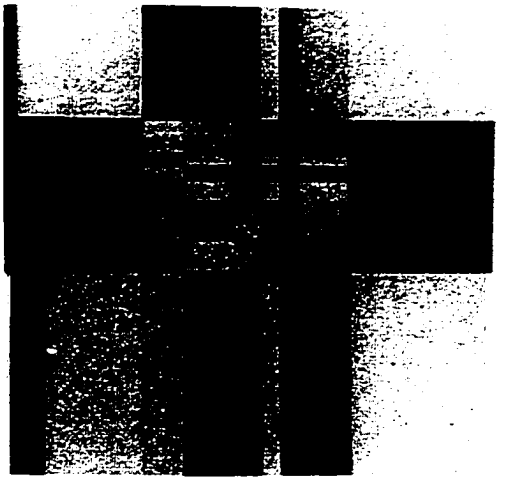
20. Von Wiegand, Untitled, 1945

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



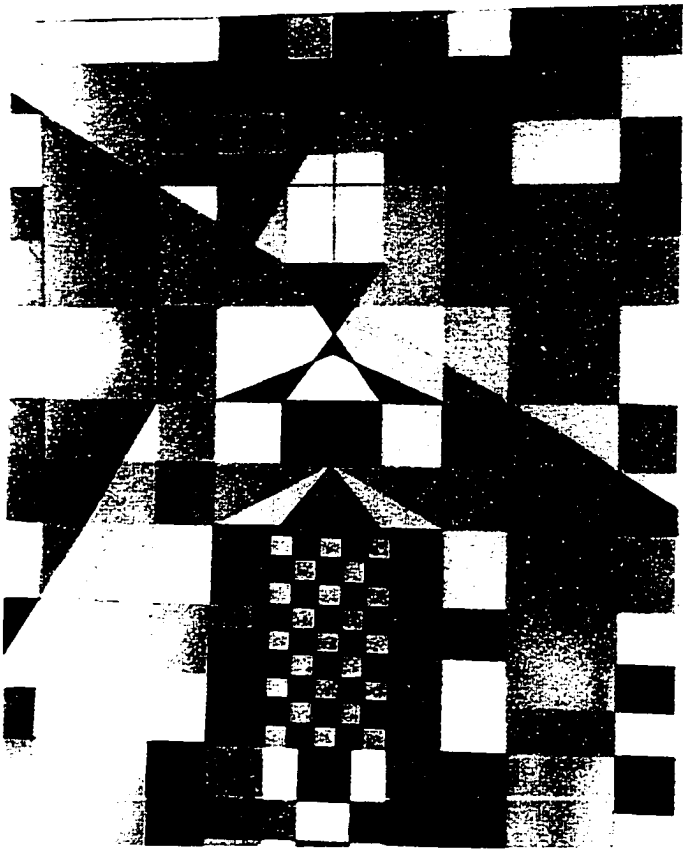
21. Von Wiegand, Untitled, 1945

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



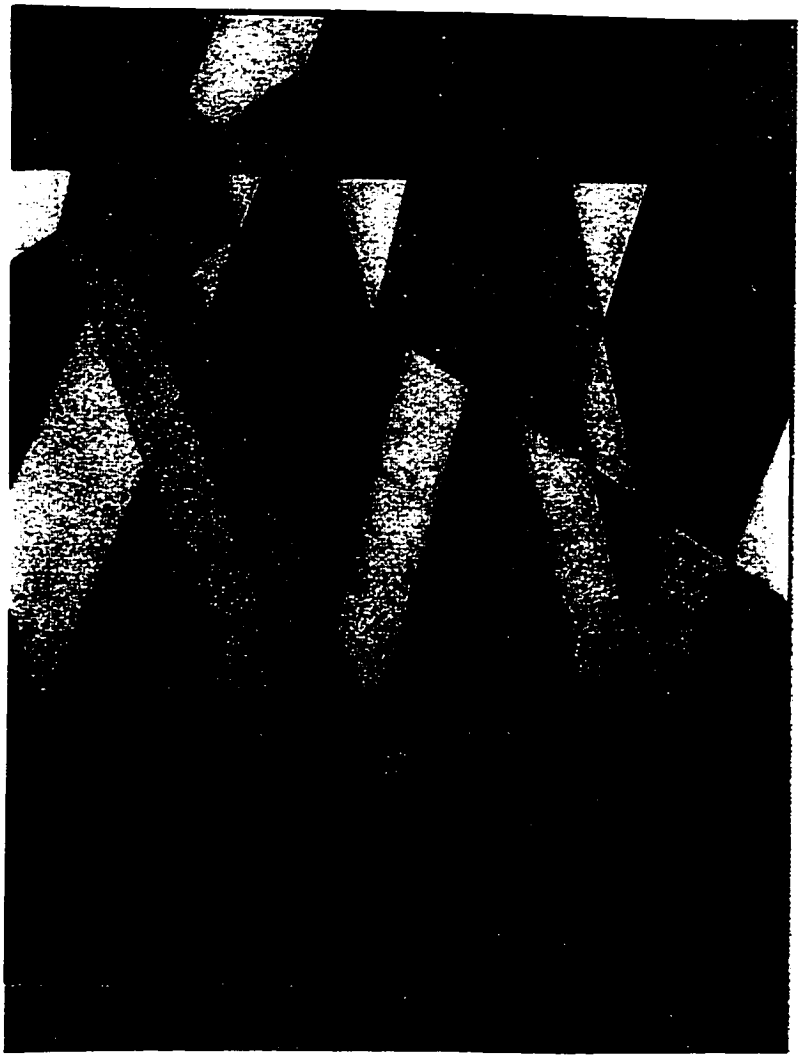
22. Von Wiegand, Night Environment, 1946-49

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



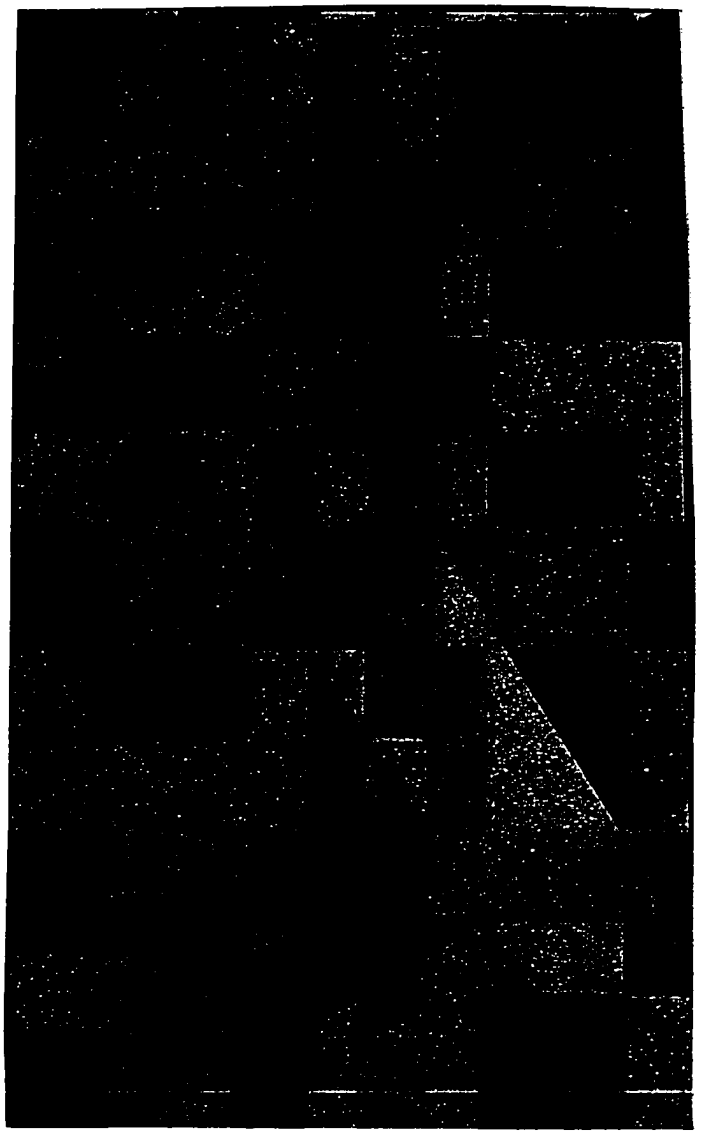
23. Von Wiegand, Tabernacle, 1950-52

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



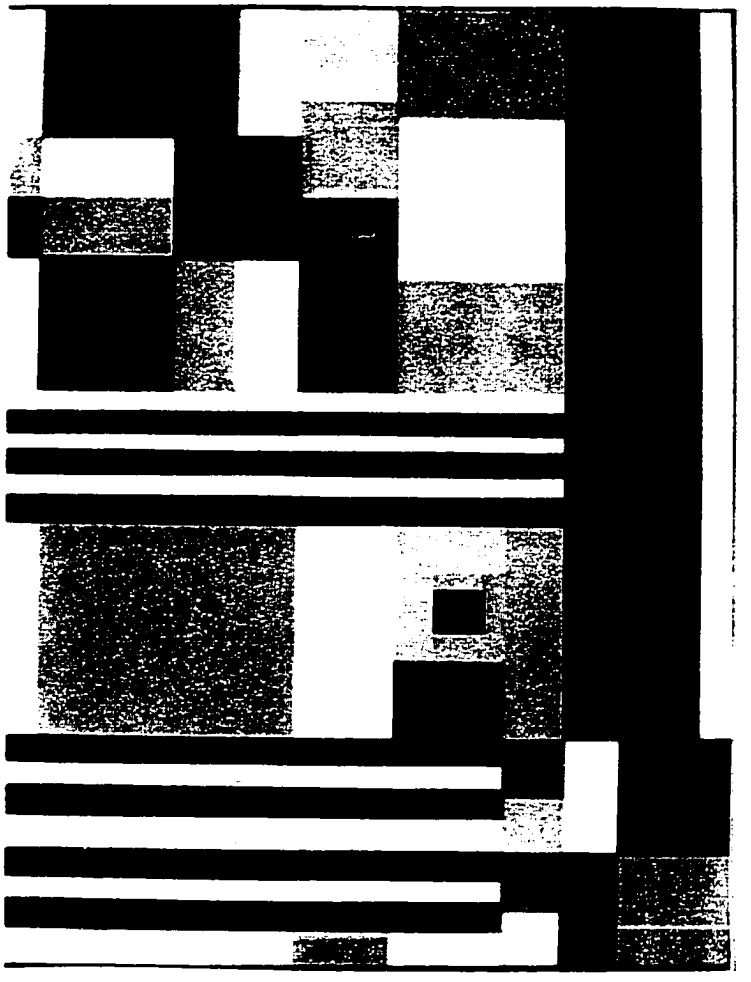
24. Von Wiegand, The Yellow Castle, 1951

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



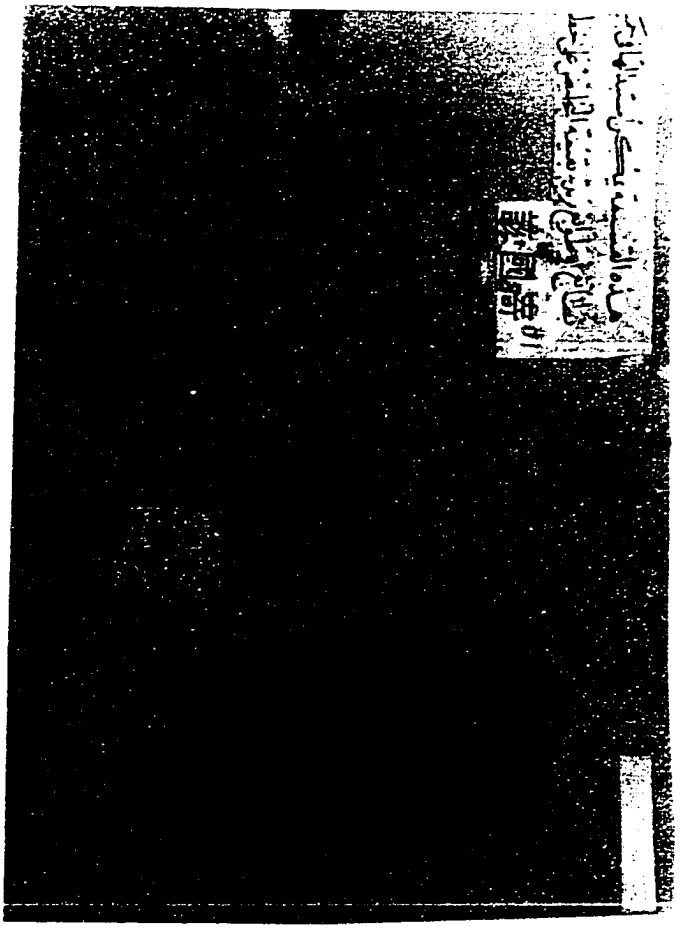
25. Von Wiegand, The Terrace of Jade, 1952

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



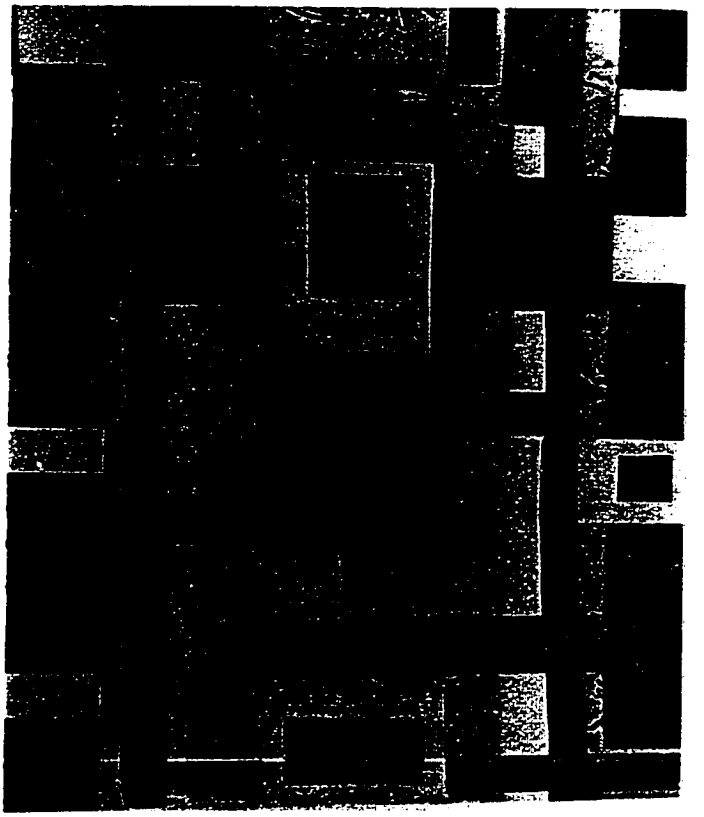
26. Von Wiegand, The Gods Are in the Valley, 1952

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



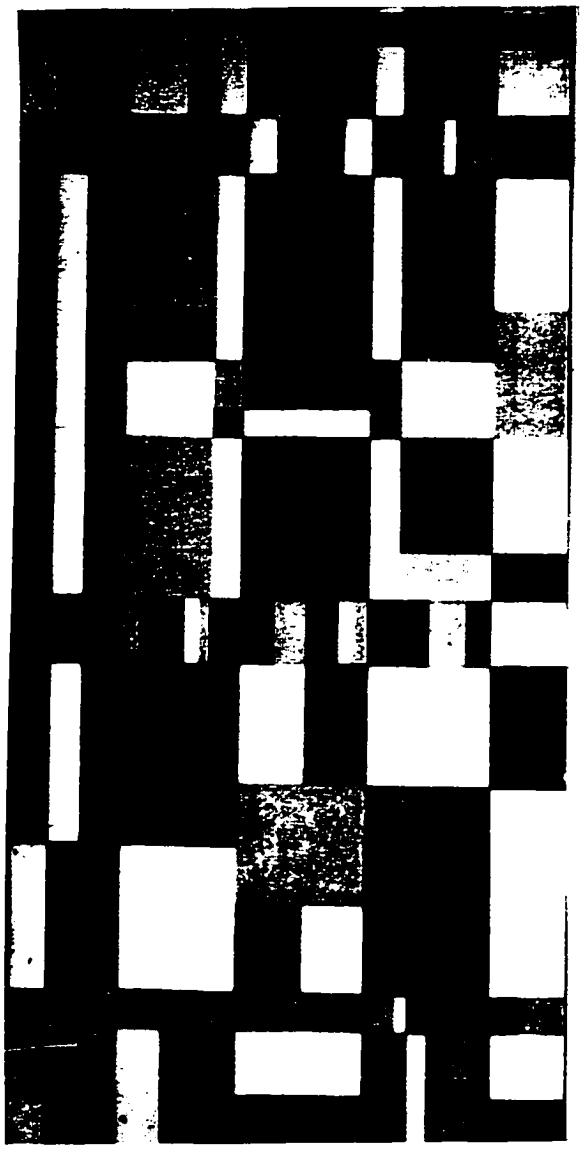
27. Von Wiegand, Cairo, 1956

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



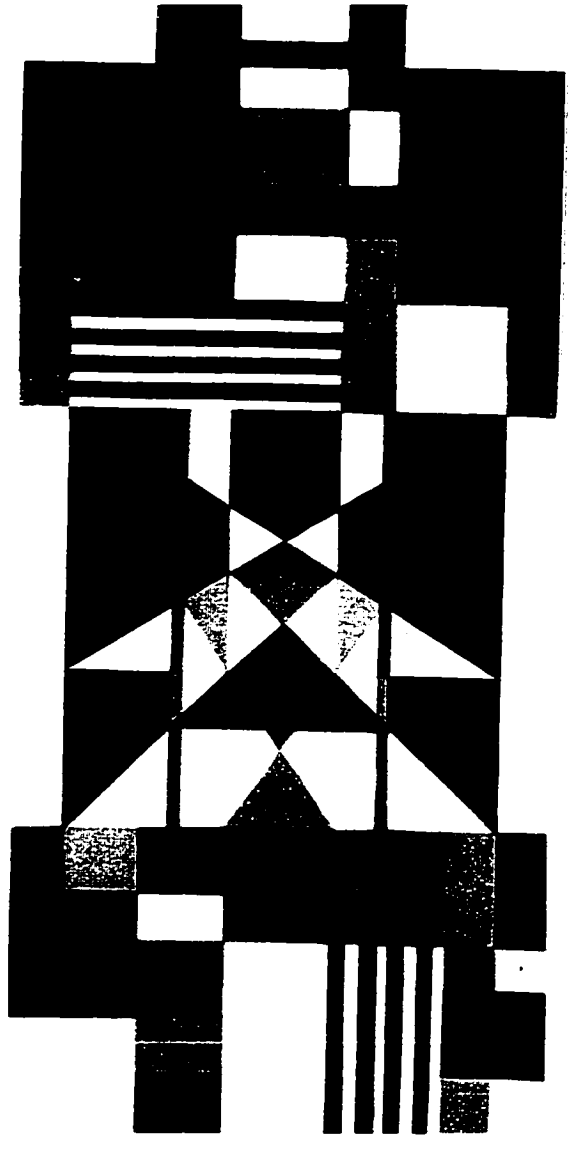
28. Von Wiegand, Iris Gate, 1956

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



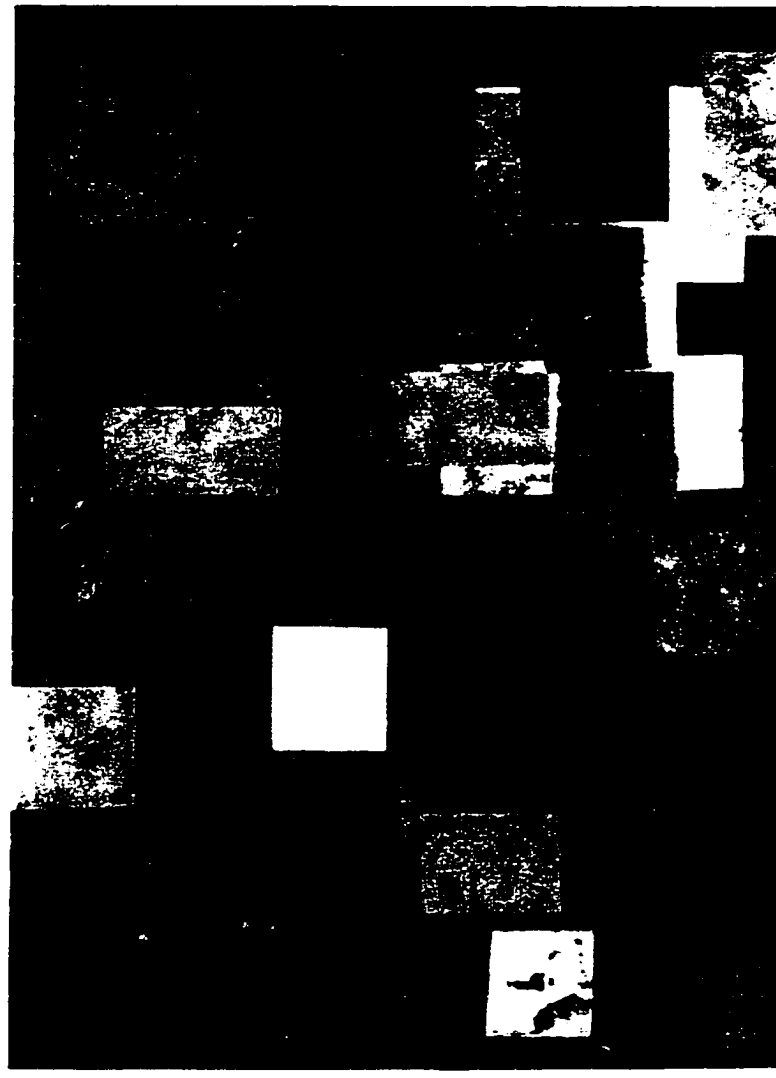
29. Von Wiegand, Ka Door, 1950

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



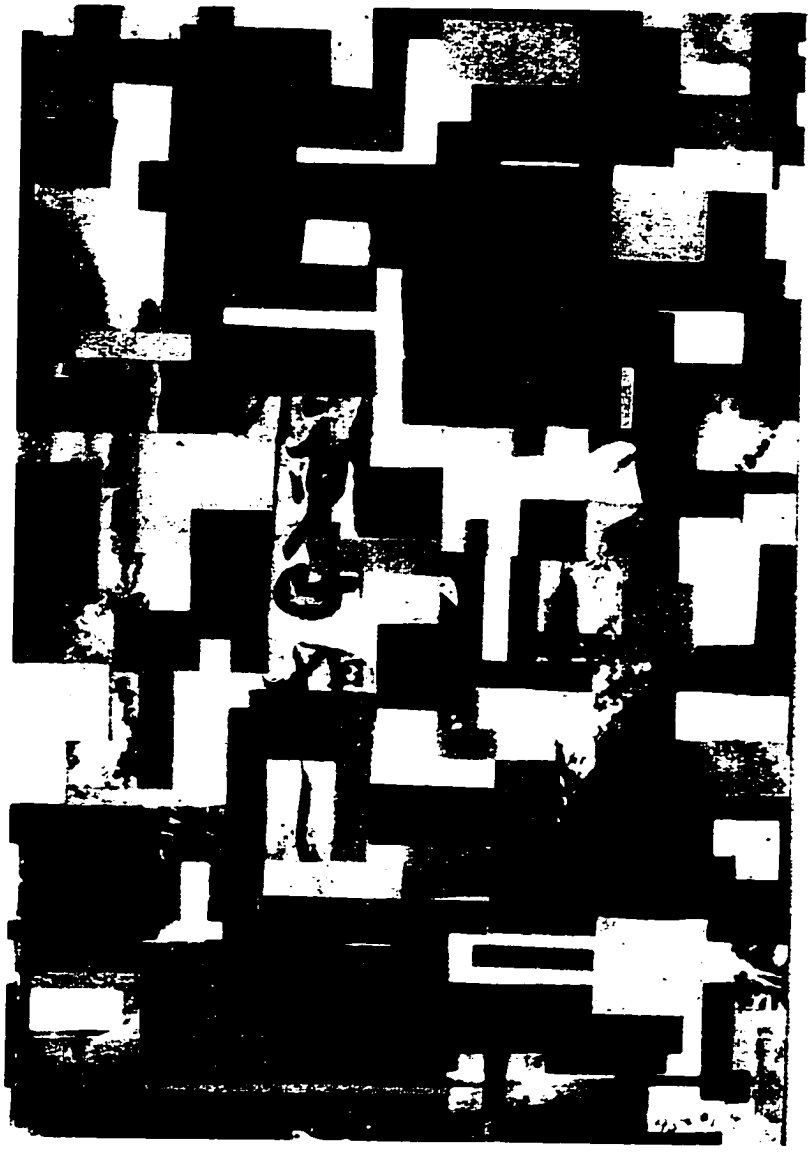
30. Von Wiegand, The Emerald Tablets, ca. 1952

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



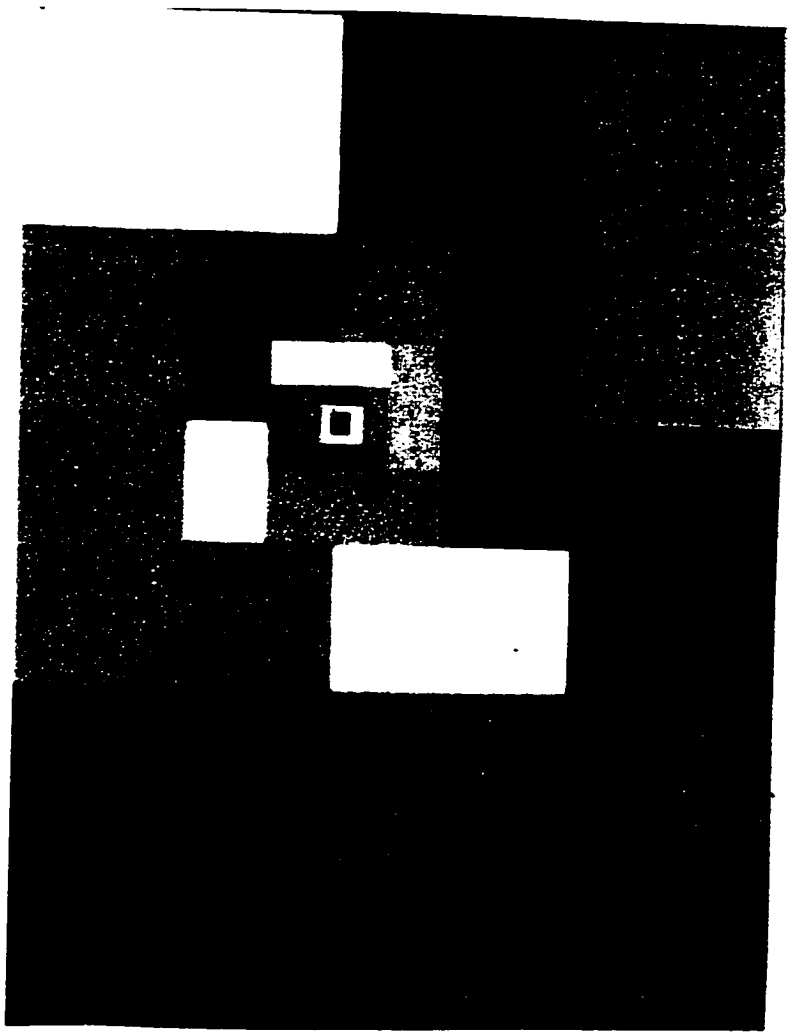
31. Von Wiegand, Finger of Buddha, #103, 1953

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



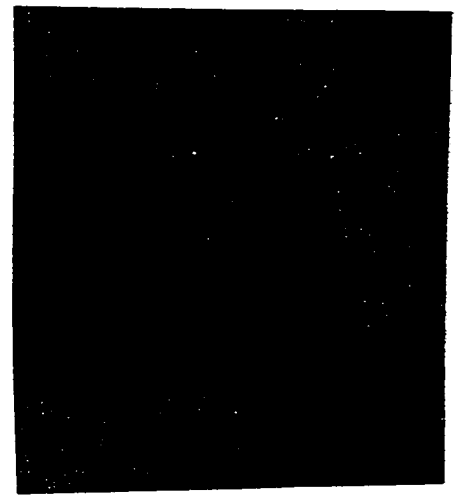
32. Von Wiegand, Chinese Labrynth, #14, 1954

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



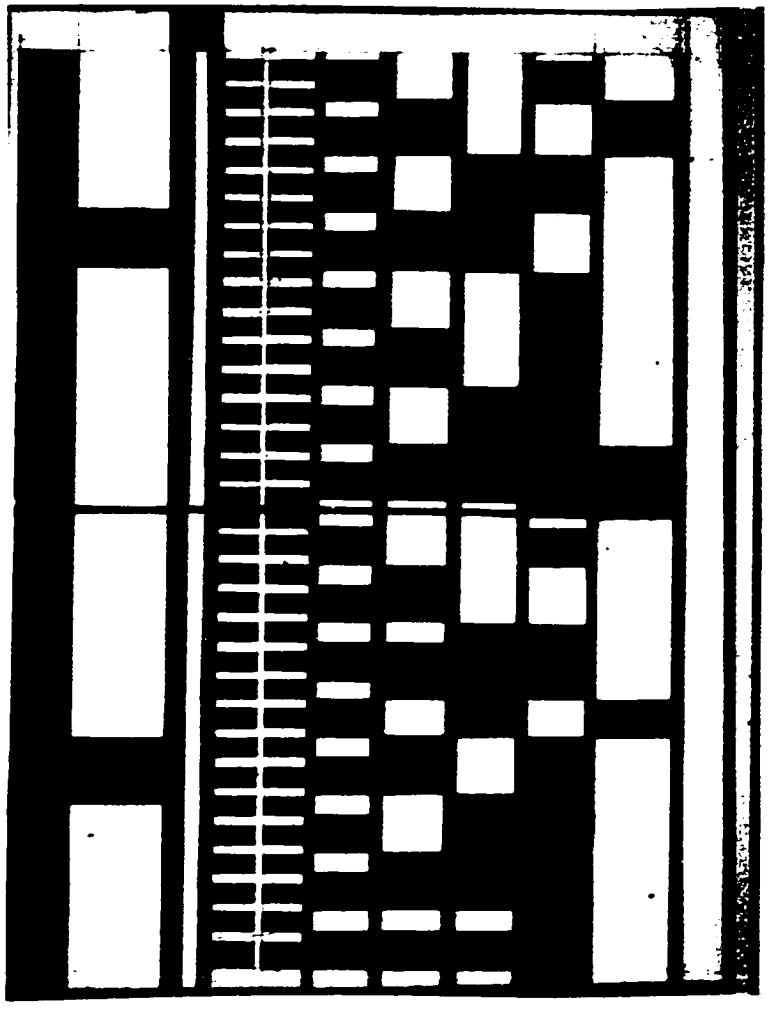
33. Von Wiegand, Sequence of Earlier Heaven, 1954

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



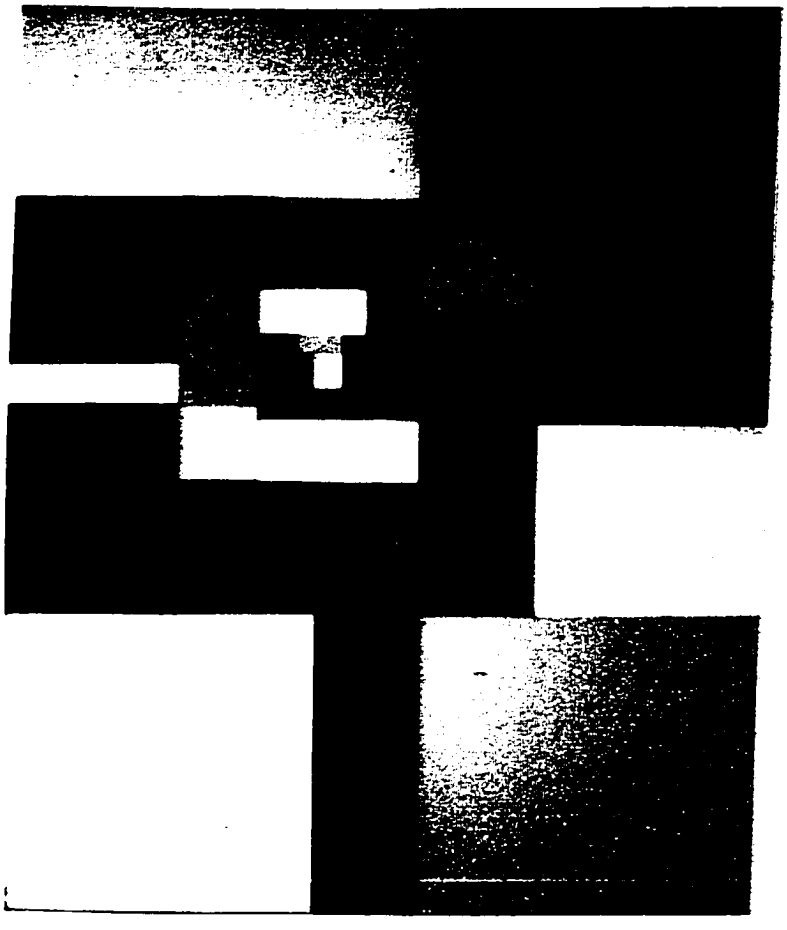
34. Von Wiegand, Eight Categories of Fate II, 1953-54

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



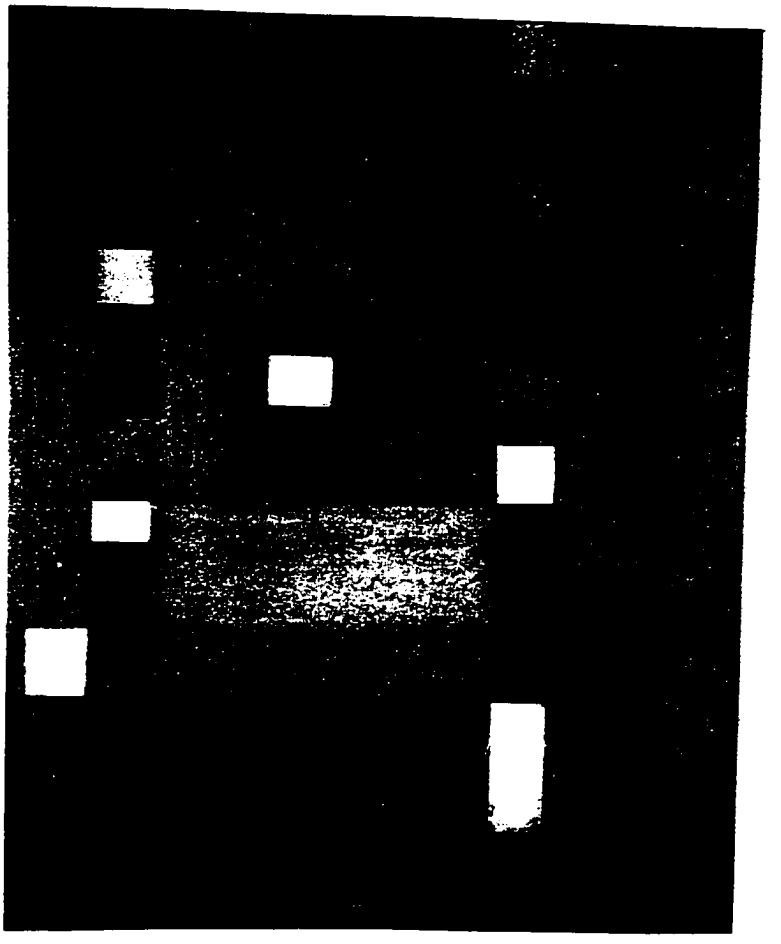
35. Von Wiegand, Study for Chinese Horoscope, #124, 1960

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



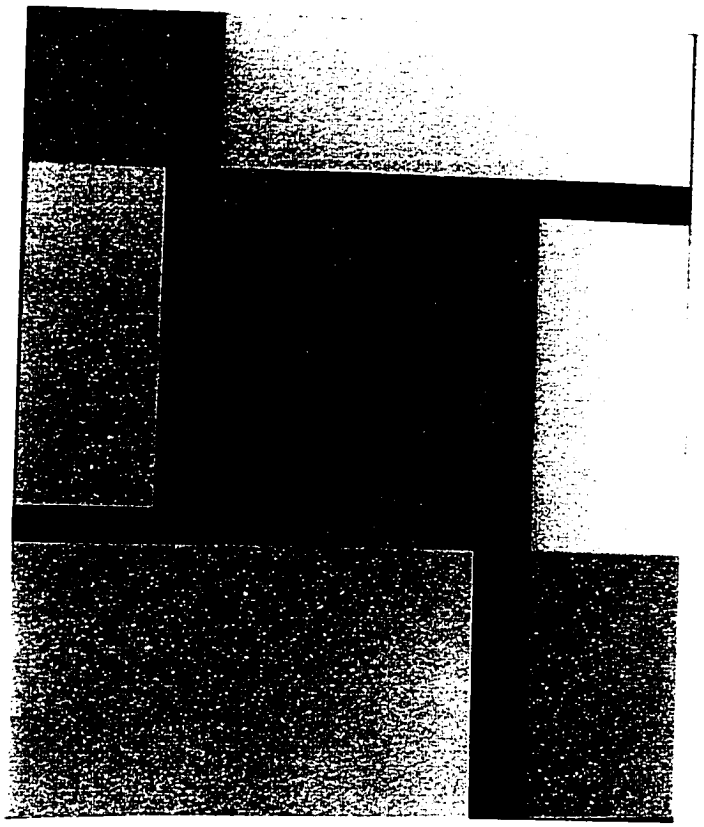
36. Von Wiegand, The Sign of Keeping Still, 1953

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



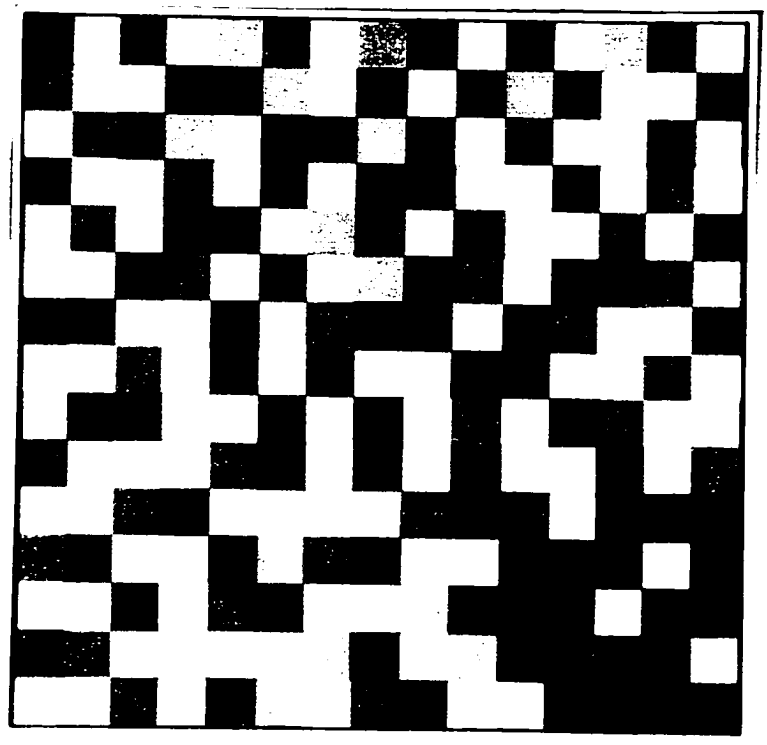
37. Von Wiegand, The Image of Abundance, 1956

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



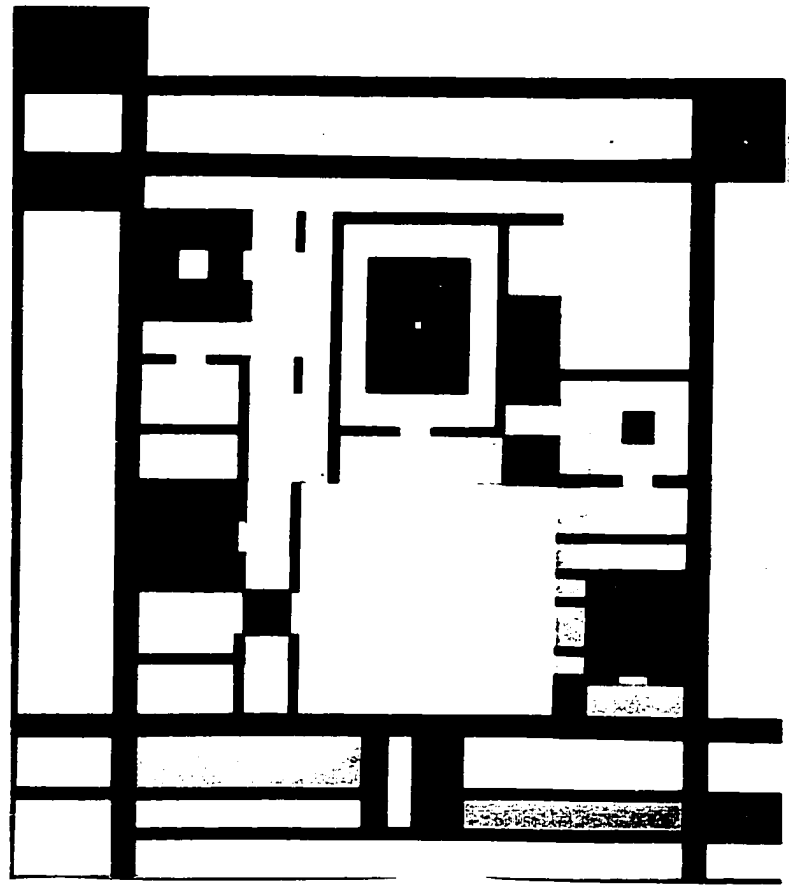
38. Von Wiegand, The Wheel of the Seasons, 1957

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



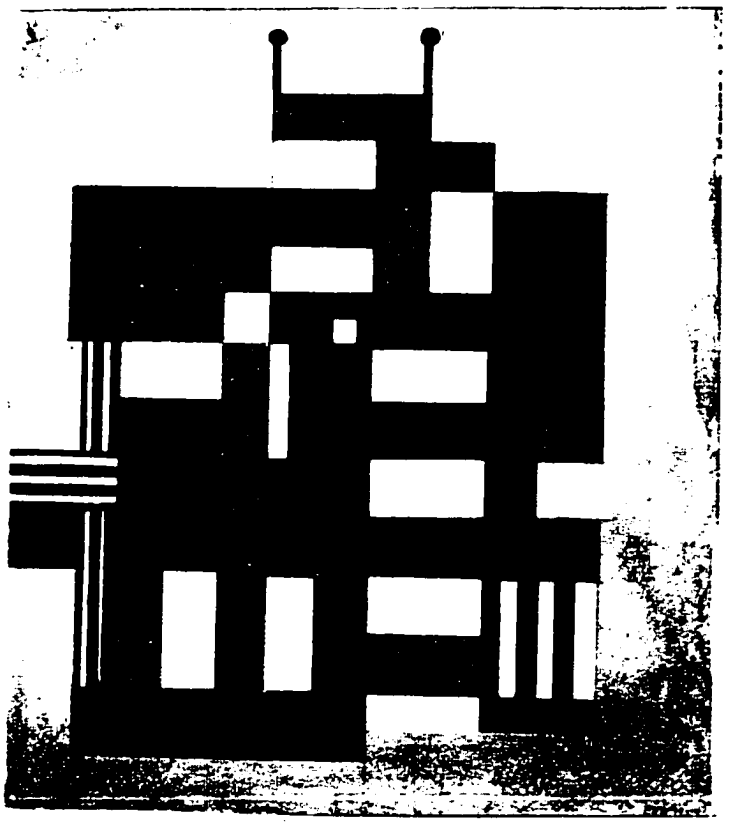
39. Von Wiegand, Expanding Magic Square, 1960

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



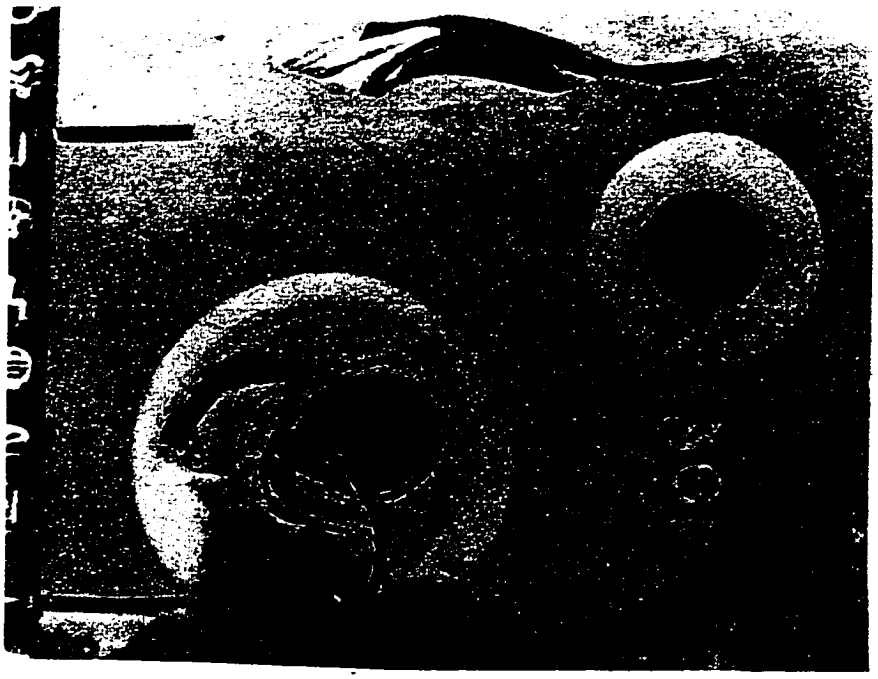
40. Von Wiegand, Sanctuary of the Four Directions, 1959

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



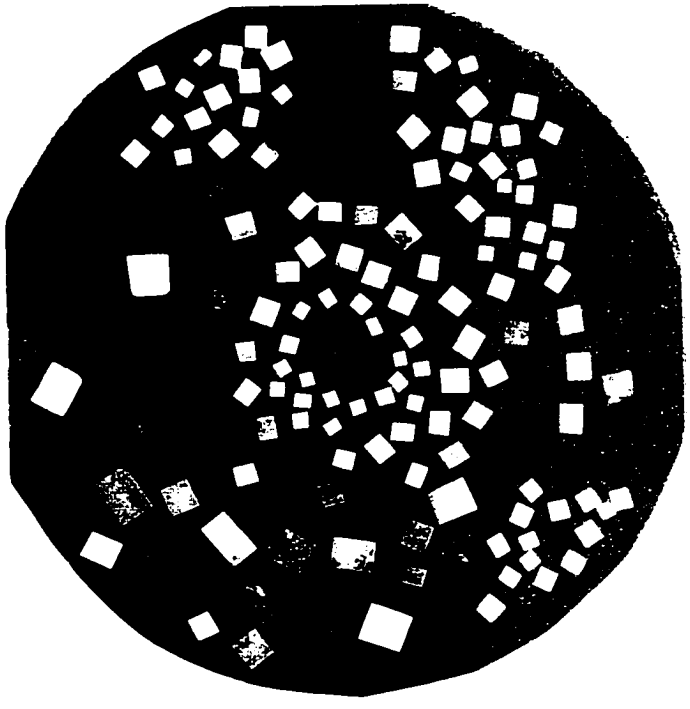
41. Von Wiegand, Precious Pagoda, #114, 1959

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



42. Von Wiegand, Birth of a Planet, #212

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



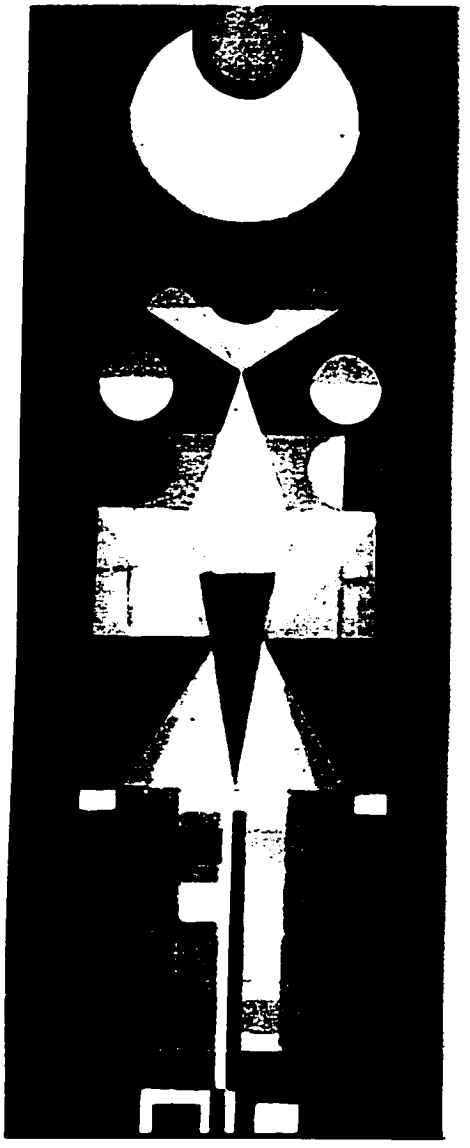
43. Von Wiegand, Nebulae,#184, 1955

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



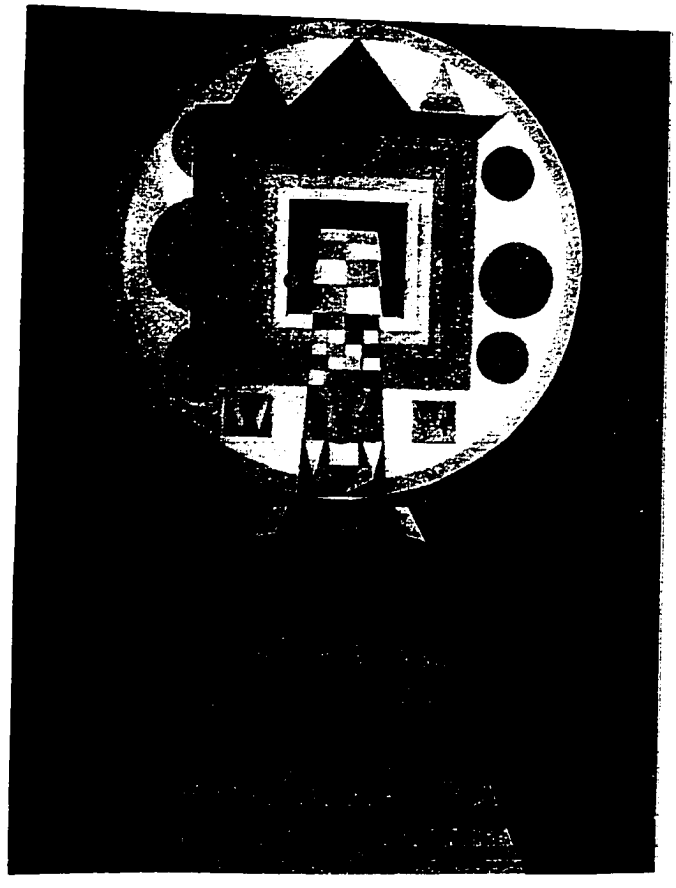
44. Von Wiegand, Mandala, 1957

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



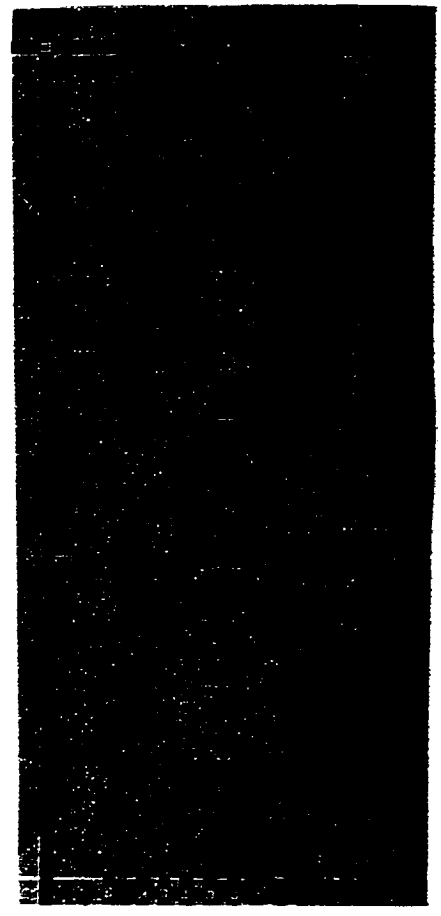
45. Von Wiegand, The Diamond Scepter No. II, #177, 1965

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



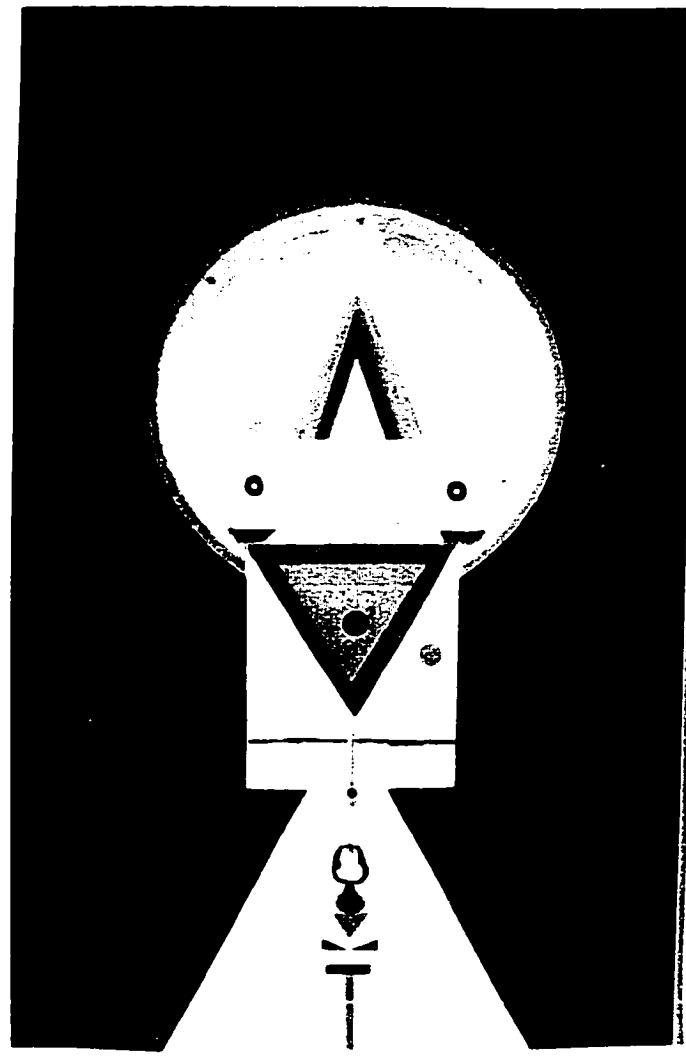
46. Von Wiegand, The Ascent to Mt. Meru, 1962

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



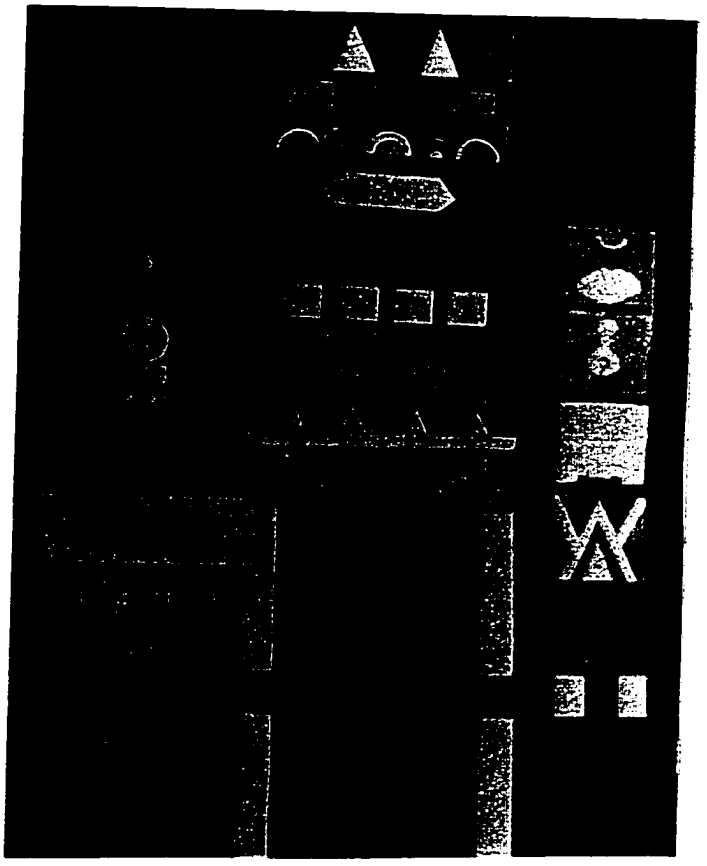
47. Von Wiegand, Chakras, 1958-68

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



48. Von Wiegand, To the Winter Goddess, 1969

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



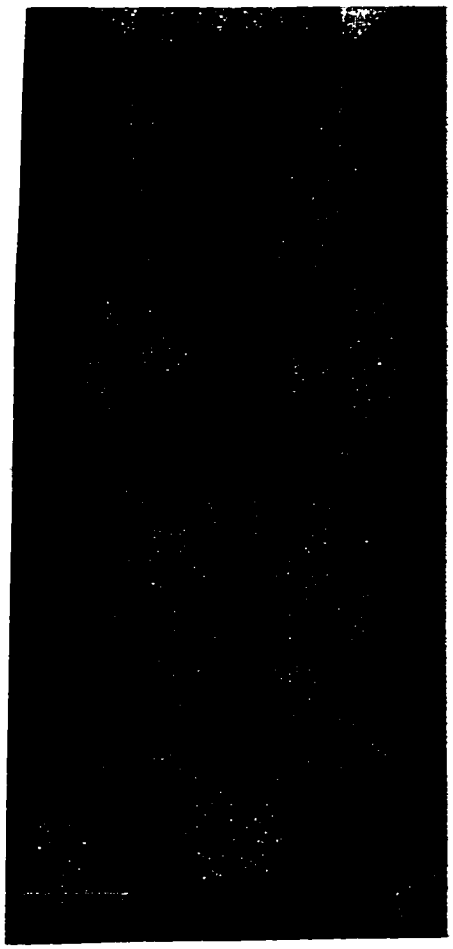
49. Von Wiegand, The Shrine of Mirror-Like Wisdom, 1964

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



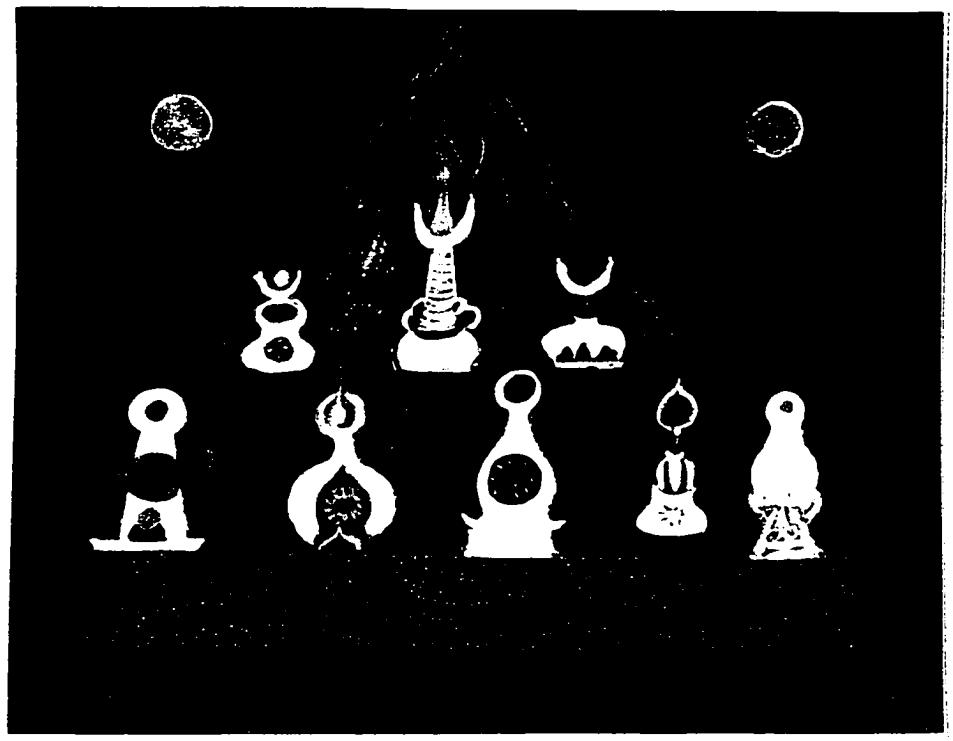
50. Von Wiegand, Offering to the Adi-Buddha Amoghasiddha, 1966-67

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



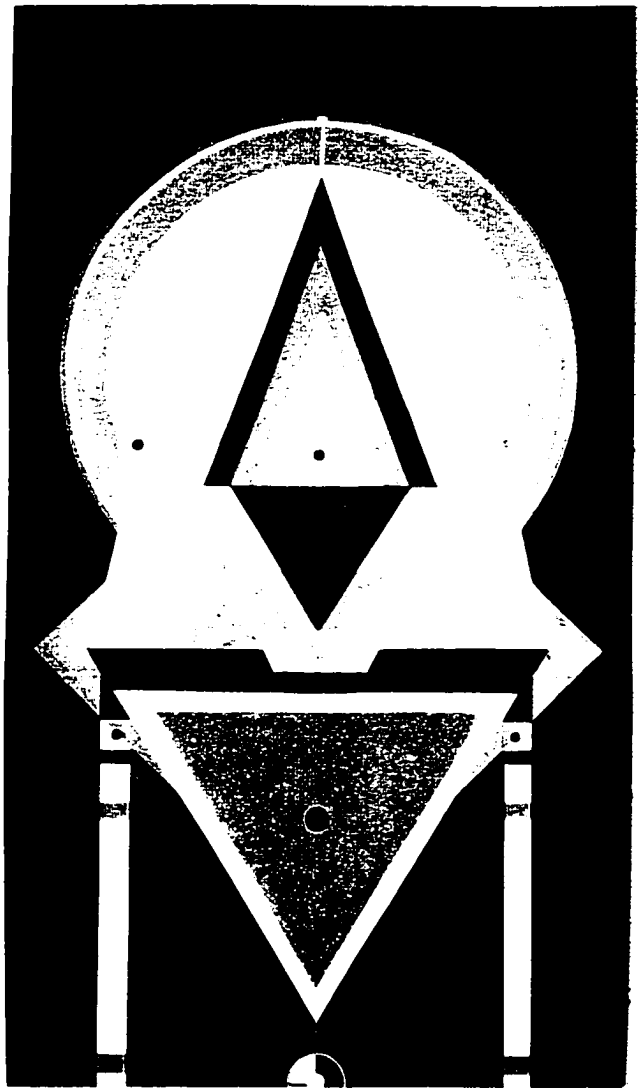
51. Von Wiegand, The Lotuses #169, 1962

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



52. Von Wiegand, Untitled, #199, 1963

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



53. Von Wiegand, Nothing That is Wrong in Principle Can Be Right in Practice, 1966

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY OF EXHIBITIONS

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHRONOLOGY OF EXHIBITIONS

Group

1945,"Art of This Century, The Women," Peggy Guggenheim, New York.

1947,"American Abstract Artists Exhibition," Riverside Museum, New York.

1948, "American Abstract Artists 1948 Exhibition," Chinese Gallery Limited, New York, May 29 - June 18.

1949, "American Abstract Artists 1949 Exhibition," Riverside Museum, New York, March 29 - April 30.

1950,"American Abstract Artists Exhibition," New School for Social Research, New York, March 15 - March 31, 1950 Paris, Copenhagen, Amsterdam.

American Abstract Artists Second 1950 Exhibition, The Pinacotheca--Rose Fried Gallery, New York, October 10 - 28.

Realites Nouvelles Numbro 4, Realites Nouvelles, Paris, France.

1951, American Abstract Artists 1951 Exhibition with Danish and British Artists", American--British Art Center, New York, March 12 - April 1.

"Realites Nouvelles Numbero 5 Juin 1951," Realites Nouvelles, Paris, France, June.

"Realities Nouvelles 6'eme Salon," Palais des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Avenue du President Wilson, Paris, France, June 8 - July 16.

1952, "American Watercolors, Drawings, and Prints," Metropolitan Museum of Art,New York, New York.

"American Abstract Artists 1952 Exhibition," New Gallery, New York, February 24 - March 13.

"Realites Nouvelles Numero 6, Realites Nouvelles, Paris, France, July.

1953, "The Classic Tradition in Contemporary Art," Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"American Abstract Artists 1953 Exhibition", Artists Equity Association, New York, January 26 - February 14.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"American Abstract Artists Spring 1953 Exhibition," Hacker Gallery, New York, May 19 - June 30.

1954,"The Women","Peggy Guggenhiem's Art of this Century", New York.

"Eighteenth Annual, American Abstract Artists 1954 Exhibition," Riverside Museum, New York, March 7 - 28.

1955, "American Abstract Artists Exhibtion," Japan.

"Whitney Annual," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

"Realites Nouvelles Numero 9," Realities Nouvelles, Paris, France, July.

1956, "American Abstract Artists 1956 Exhibition with Painters Eleven of Canada," Riverside Museum, New York, April 8 - May 20.

1957,"Whitney Annual," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.

"The Sphere of Mondrian," Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas.

"Pure Abstract Painting Exhibition," Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

"American Abstract Artists 1957 Exhibition," The Contemporaries, New York, April 22 - May 11.

"Collage," Rose Fried Gallery, New York, NY.

1959, "American Abstract Artists Annual," Betty Parsons Gallery, New York.

"American Abstract Artists 1959 Exhibition," Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, June 1 - 13.

1960, "Konkrete Kunst: 50 Years of Development," Kungstgesellschaft, Zurich, Switzerland.

Stuttman Gallery, New York.

"Construction and Geometry in Painting--from Malevich to Tomorrow," Galerie Chalette, New York, New York, Circulated throughout the United States.

1961,"American Abstract Artists 1961 Exhibition, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, April 3 - 21.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1962, "The Art of Assemblage," Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York.

"Geometrical Abstraction in America," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.

"Today's American Wall Coverings, Resources Council, New York.

"Women Artists in America Today," Loan Exhibition sponsored by The Mount Holyoke Friends of Art and the 125th Anniversary Special Events Committee, South Hadley, Massachusetts, April 10 - April 30.

1963, "Recent Acquisitions," Whitney Museum of Art, New York, New York.

"Art and Writing," Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Holland, Staatliche Kinsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany.

"28th Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary Painting," Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

"The Classic Spirit in 20th Century Art," Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, NY.

1964,"Whitney Annual: Annual Exhibtiion of Contemporary American Painting," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

"American Abstract Artists Annual Exhibition," Loeb Center, New York University," New York, NY.

"Mondrian, de Stijl and Their Impacts," Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York, NY.

"Women Artists of America 1707-1964," The Newark Museum, Newark, NJ.

"Second Annual Summer Show," The Art Dealers Association of America, Park Barnet Galleries, New York, NY.

"American Abstract Artists 1964 Exhibition," Loeb Student Center, New York University, New York, NY, January 8 - 23.

1965, "American Abstract Artists Annual Exhibition," Riverside Museum, March 14 - April, New York, NY.

"Summer Extension--Group Exhibition," Rose Fried

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gallery Summer Extension, The Barn, Old Chatham, New York, July - August.

1966, "American Abstract Artists, 1936-1966," American Abstract Artists, New York, NY.

1967, "American Abstract Artists Annual Exhibition," New York, NY.

"Invitational Exhibition," Container Corporation of America, Chicago, Illinois.

"Weatherspoon Annual Exhibition: Art on Paper, Invitational," University of North Carolina, Weatherspoon Gallery, Greensboro, NC.

1968, "American Abstract Artists Annual Exhibition," New York, NY.

"10th Anniversary Exhibition, New York University Collection," New York University, New York, NY.

"Ornamentale Tendenzen in der Zeitgenoissischen Malerie," Berlin Zehlendorf, Leverkusen, Scholass Wolfsburg,Germany.

"Plus by Minus-Today's Half Century," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, March 3 - April 14.

"The Square in Painting," American Federation of the Arts, Traveling exhibition.

"Sixth Biennale; National Religious Art Exhibition," The Galleries Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI.

"Recent Acquisitions," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

1969, "Recent Acquisitions," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

1970, "150 Paintings from the New York University Collection," Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY.

"American Abstract Artists 1970 Exhibition," Loeb Student center, New York University, New York, NY, February 2 - April 16.

1971, "100 Abstract Paintings," Denise Rene Gallery, New York, NY.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"A New Consciousness: The Ciba-Geigy Collection," Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York, February 6 - March 7.

1972, "American Abstract Artists Annual Exhibition," Loeb Center, New York University, New York, NY.

"The Non-Objective World, 1939-1955," Annely Juda Fine Art, London, England, Galerie Liatowitsch, Basel, Gallerie Milano, Milan.

"Women," N.C. Museum of Art, Winston-Salem, N.C..

"American Abstract Artits 1972 Exhibition" Fairleigh Dickinson University Library Gallery, Madison, NJ, February.

"American Abstract Artists Thirty-Sixth Annviersary Exhibition," Loeb Student Center, New York University, New York, NY, October 31 - November 22.

1973, "The Non-Objective World, 1914-1955," ("Die Gegenstandslose Welt, 1914-1955"), Annely Juda Fine Art, London, England, July 5 - September 22, 1973, University of Texas Art Museum, Austin, October 4 -December 15.

"Post Mondrian Abstraction in America," Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois, March 31 - May 13.

"Women Choose Women", Organized by Women in the Arts, presented by the New York Cultural Center, New York, NY, January 12 - February 18.

"Visual R & D: A Corporation Collections," University Art Museum, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, June 10 - August 12.

1974, "De Stijl, Cercle et Carre," Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne, Germany.

"Works by Women from the CIBA-GEIGY Collection," CIBA-GEIGY Corporation, Kresge Art Center Gallery, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, March 2-24, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, April 7-28.

1975, Group, "Three American Purists: Mason/Miles/von Wiegand," Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts.

"Quilts-Paintings," Summit Art Center, Summit, N.J.,April.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"American Abstract Art," Whitney Muesum of American Art, New York, NY, July - October.

1976, "Works on Paper from the Ciba-Geigy Collection," Witchita Falls Museum and Art Center, Witchita Falls, Texas, September 30 - November 7, Neuberger Museum, College At Purchase, State University of New York, Purchase, NY, November 21 - January 2, 1977.

1977, "Paris-New York," Musee National d'art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

Group Exhibition, Sid Deutsch, New York, NY, May 14 - June 4.

1978, "Geometric Abstraction and Related Works," The Newark Museum, Newark, NJ.

1979, "The Language of Abstraction: American Abstract Artists Annual Exhibtion," Marilyn Pearl Gallery and Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, NY.

"Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America," Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

"American Abstract Artists: The Language of Abstraction," Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, NY, June 19 - August 3.

1979-81, "Constructivism and the Geometric Tradition: Selections from the McCrory Coropration Collection," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas, TX; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, William Rockhill Nelson Gallery and Atkins Musuem of Fine Arts, Kansas City, MO; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Milwaukee Art Center, Milwaukee, WI, 1979-81.

1980, "Candidates for Art Awards," American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Broadway and 156th Street, New York, NY, March.

1982, "Abstraction in Action," City Gallery of the Division of Cultural Affairs, New York, NY.

1985, "The Severe and the Romantic Geometric Humanism in American Painting, the 1950s and the 1980s," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY, 1985.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Art, Design and the Modern Corporation," National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1985.

1985-1986, "Contrasts of Form: Geometric Abstract Art 1910-1980," Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

1989, "Abstractions: Past and Present," Andre Zarre Gallery, July 8 - August 4.

"Abstraction Geometry--Painting: Selected Geometric Abstract Painting in America Since 1945," Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

1991, "Post-War Geometric Concepts," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York.

1992, "Circle and Square," Manley-Riback Inc., New York, NY.

"Between Mondrian and Minimalism: Neo-Plasticism in America," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

"Sonia Delaunay and Charmion von Wiegand, Works on Paper," Marilyn Pearl, New York, NY.

Individual

1947,"Charmion von Wiegand," Pincotheca (Rose Fried Gallery), New York, New York, April 21 - May 10.

1948,"Charmion von Wiegand," Pincotheca (Rose Fried Gallery), New York, NY.

1952, "Charmion von Wiegand," Saidenberg Gallery, New York, New York, April 22 - May 24.

1954, "Charmion von Wiegand," Zoe Dusanne Gallery, Seattle, Washington.

1955, "Charmion von Wiegand," Zoe Dusanne Gallery, Seattle, Washington.

1956, "Charmion von Wiegand," John Heller Gallery, 63 East 57th Street, New York, New York, January 2 - 21.

"Charmion von Wiegand," Rose Fried Gallery, New York, December 12 - 31.

1958, "Charmion von Wiegand," Zoe Dusanne Gallery, Seattle, Washington.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1959, "Charmion von Wiegand," Gallerie La Citadella d'Arte Internazionale e d'Avanguardia, Ascona, Switzerland.

1961, "Charmion von Wiegand: Ten Year Retrospective," Howard Wise Gallery, New York, NY, September 26 - October 21.

1963, "Charmion von Wiegand", "Nine Artists Through Three Decades," Howard Wise Gallery, New York, NY.

1964, "Charmion von Wiegand Paintings, Drawings and Collages," Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, April 6 - May 2.

"Charmion von Wiegand: Gouache and Collage," James Goodman Gallery, Buffalo, New York, Feb 16 - 29.

1965, "Charmion von Wiegand," "Three One Man Shows," Howard Wise Gallery, New York, NY, April 27 - May 15.

1969, "Charmion von Wiegand: Oils, Gouaches, Collages," Gallery 17, University of Texas Art Museum, Austin, Texas, September 21 - October 22.

1970, "Charmion von Wiegand," Birmingham Art Museum, Birmingham, Alabama.

1972, "Charmion von Wiegand", Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama.

1973,"Charmion von Wiegand," Galleria Faimma Vigo, Rome, Italy.

"Charmion von Wiegand," Galleria Faimma Vigo, Campo S. Stefano, Venice, Italy.

1974, "Charmion von Wiegand," Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York, NY.

"Charmion von Wiegand Retrospective," Annely Juda Fine Art, London, England, May 29 - June 29.

"Charmion von Wiegand," Gallerie Flamma Virgo, Rome and Venice.

1975, "Charmion von Wiegand," Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts.

"Charmion von Wiegand: Collages," Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York, NY, March 25 - May 3.

1975-76, "The Paradox of Transformation," Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, New York, October 3 - 31.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1977, "Charmion von Wiegand: Paintings and Work on Paper," Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, NY, March 1 - 26.

1978, "Charmion von Weigand: Thirty Years of Collage," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY, October 31 - November 25.

1981, "Charmion von Wiegand and Her Circle," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY, March 5 - April 4.

1982, "Charmion von Wiegand, Her Art and Life," Bass Museum, Miami, Flordia.

1985, "Charmion von Wiegand Retrospective Exhibition, 1945-1965," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, New York, May 1 - June 1.

1987, "Charmion von Wiegand," Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, NY.

1989 "Charmion von Wiegand Collages and Gouaches" Andre Zarre Gallery, 379 West Broadway, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10012, April 10 - May 4.

1990, "Charmion von Wiegand: Paintings Drawings Collages," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, 420 West Broadway, New York, NY, February 9 - March 14.

"Charmion von Wiegand", Peri-Renat Gallery, Southampton, NY.

1993,"Charmion von Wiegand: In Search of the Spiritual," Joseloff Gallery, Hartford Art School/University of Hartford, West Hartford, Connecticut, November 18, - January 15, 1994.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books:

Aaron, Daniel. Writers on the Left. New York: Avon Press, 1969.

Albright-Knox ArtGallery. Abstraction Geometry--Painting: Selected Geometric Abstract Painting in America Since 1945. With essay by Michael Auping. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989.

Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Plus by Minus. Buffalo, NY: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1968.

Alloway, Lawrence. Adolph Gottlieb a Retrospective. New York: Arts Publisher Inc., 1981.

American Abstract Artists. American Abstract Artists 1936-1966. With Introduction by Ruth Gurin. New York, NY: The Ram Press, 1966, distributed by Wittenborn and Company, New York, NY, 1966.

Apter, Eleanor S. Notable American Women, The Modern Period. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Arnold, Sir Edward. The Light of Asia. Philadelphia, PA: David McKay, 1932.

Ashton, Dore. The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning. New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1972.

Baigell, Matthew. American Scene: American Painting of the 1930s. New York: Praeger, 1974.

Bennett, Maria. Unfractioned Idiom: Hart Crane and Modernism. New York, NY, 1987.

Beyeler Galerie Basel. Piet Mondrian. Basel, Switzerland: Bayeler, n.d.

Bharati, Agehananda. The Tantric Tradition. London: Rider, 1962.

Blavatsky, H.P. Isis Unveiled. 3 volumes. London, England: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1910.

_____. The Secret Doctrine. 3 volumes. London, England: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1897.

Bloom, Harold. Modern critical Views; Hart Crane. New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bloom, James D. Left Letters: The Culture Wars of Mike Gold and Joseph Freeman. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Bohan, Ruth. The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982.

Brown, Susan Jenkins. Robber Rocks: Letters and Memories of Hart Crane, 1923-1932. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968.

Budge, Sir Wallis. Egyptian Religion. New York, NY: Bell Publishing Co., 1900.

Cantor, Milton. Max Eastman. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970.

Chang, Chen-Chi. The Practice of Zen. New York, NY: Harper, 1959.

Cheney, Sheldon. A Primer of Modern Art. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924.

Christy, Arthur. The Orient in American Transcendentalism. New York, NY: Octagon, 1932.

Clark, R.T. Rundle. Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt. London, England: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

Collection of the Societe Anonyme. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University, 1950.

Crane, Hart. Letters of Hart Crane and Family. ed. Thomas S. W. Lewis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.

Dagyab, Loden Sherab. Tibetan Religious Art. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1977.

Dechanet, J. M., O.S.B. Christian Yoga. New York, NY: Harper, 1960.

Desmond, Robert W. Crisis and Conflict: World News Reporting Between Two Wars 1920-1940. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1982.

Diehl, Gaston. Pascin. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1968.

Doty, Robert. Adolph Gottlieb. New York, NY: Admiral Press, 1968.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Draper, Theodore. American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period. New York: Viking Press, 1960.

Dreier, Katherine. Burliuk. New York: The Societe Anonyme, Inc., 1944.

Dreiser, Theodore. A Gallery of Women. New York: Horace Liveright, 1929.

Dreiser, Vera. My Uncle Theodore. New York: Nash Publishing, 1976.

Eastman, Max. Love and Revolution: My Journey Through an Epoch. New York: Random House, 1964.

Ellis, Havelock. The Dance of Life. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923.

Ellwood, Robert. Alternative Altars. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

_____. Mysticism and Religion. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

_____. Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Freeman, Joseph. An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics. New York: International Press, Inc., 1936.

_____. Proletarian Literature for the United States. New York: International Publishers, Inc., 1935.

Freudenheim, Tom. Pascin. Berkeley, CA: University Art Museum, University of California, 1966.

Friedman, B. H. School of New York Some Younger Artists. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1959.

Gilbert, James Burkhart. Writers and Partisans: A History of Literary Radicalism in America. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968.

Gordon, Antoinette. The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism. New York, NY: Hacker Art Books, 1988.

The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant Garde, 1915-1932. New York: The Guggenheim Museum, 1992.

Gruen, John. The Party's Over Now: Reminiscences of the Fifties. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1967.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hale, Nathan G. Freud and the American: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876-1917. New York: Oxford University Presss, 1971.

Henderson, Linda Dalrymple. The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Hess, Thomas B. Barnett Newman. New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1971.

Hill, May Brawley. Women: A Historical Survey of Works by Women Artists. Winston-Salem: Salem Fine Arts Center, Raleigh, N. Carolina Museum of Art, 1972.

Hoffman, Frederick J. The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947.

Hohenberg, John. Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1964.

Horton, Philip. Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet. New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1976.

Howe and Coser. The American Communist Party 1919-57. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1957.

I Ching. Translated by Richard Wilhelm, rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Inada, Kenneth K. and Noland P. Jacobson, eds. Buddhism and American Thinkers. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1972.

Innes, Christopher. Edward Gordon Craig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Jaffe, Irma. Joseph Stella. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1988.

Janis, Harriet and Blesh, Rudi. Collage Personalities--Concepts-Techniques. Philadelphia, PA: Chilton Co., 1962.

John Heller Gallery. Paintings, Drawings, and Collage. New York, NY: John Heller Gallery, 1950.

Juda, Annely. Charmion von Wiegand Retrospective. London, England: Annely Juda Fine Arts, 1974.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. Twenty Five Years Annely Juda Fine Art/Juda Rowen Gallery Masterpieces of the Avantgarde: Three Decades of Contemporary Art, The Sixties, The Seventies, The Eighties. London, England: Annely Juda Fine Arts, 1985.

Kerouac, Jack. The Dharama Bums. New York, NY: New American Library, 1958.

Klehr. The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Years. New York: Basic, 1984.

Lauf, Datlef Ingo. Secret Revelation of Tibetan Thangkas. Freiburg im Breisgau: Aurum-Verlag, 1976.

Lawson, John Howard. The Theory and Technique of Playwriting. New York: Putnam, 1936.

Layman, Emma. Buddhism in America. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1976.

Leadbeater, C.W. Man Visible and Invisible. Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925.

Lee, Dorothy. Freedom and Culture. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1959.

Levin, Gail, and Marianne Lorenz. Theme and Improvisation: Kandinsky and the American Avant-Garde, 1912-1930. Boston: Little Brown, 1992.

Lingeman, Richard. Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey, 1908-1945. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1990.

Lippard, Lucy. Ad Reinhardt. New York, NY: Harry H. Abrams, Inc., 1981.

Lokesh, Chandra. Buddhist Iconography of Tibet. Kyoto, Japan: Rinsen, 1986.

Long, Rose-Carol Washton. German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire ot the Rise of National Socialism. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985. Los Angeles: County Museum of Art; New York: Abbeville Press, 1985.

MacAgy, Douglas. Plus by Minus: Today's Half-Century. New York, NY: Albright Knox Art Gallery, 1968.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Meade, Mason. Madame Blavatsky: The Woman Behind the Myth. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980.

Merton, Thomas. Zen and the Birds of Appetite. New York, NY: New Directions, 1968.

Mookerjee, Ajit. Tantric Art. Paris, New Delhi, New York, Paris, Basel: Kumar Gallery, 1966.

Moore, James. Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth, A Biography. Rockport, MA: Element, 1991.

Morreale, Don. Buddhist America. Sante Fe, NM: John Mier Publications, 1988.

Murphet, Howard. Yankee Beacon of Buddhist Light. Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1988.

National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian. Art, Design, and the Modern Corporation. Washington DC: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian, 1985.

Nelson, Raymond. Kenneth Patchen and American Mysticism. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Newark Museum. Catalogue of the Newark Museum Tibetan Collection. vol 1-3, 2nd ed. Newark, NJ: The Museum, 1983.

Niklilananda, Swami. Hinduism Its Meaning for the Liberation of the Spirit. London, England: Allen and Unwin, 1959.

Ouspensky, P.D. Tertium Organum, the Third Canon of Thought: A Key to the Enigmas of the World. Translated by Claude Bragdon and Nicholas Bessaraboff. New York: Knopf, 1922.

Overy, Paul. De Stijl. London, England: Studio Vista Limited, 1969.

Paris-New York. Paris, France: Musee National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977.

The Paris-New York Axis: Geometric Abstract Painting in the 1930s. Geometric Abstraction 1926-1942. Dallas, TX: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1972.

Parkinson, Thomas Francis. Hart Crane and Yvor Winters: Their Literary Correpsondence. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Paul, Sherman. Hart's Bridge. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972.

Pells, Richard H. Radical Visions and American Dreams. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1973.

Perrett, Geoffrey. America in the 1920s. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, Touchstone Book, 1982.

Platt, Susan Noyes. Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism. UMI Research Press Studies in the Fine Arts: Criticism. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985.

Rawson, Philip. Sacred Tibet. London, England: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Reifstahl, Rudolf Meyer. Persian and Indian Textiles, From the Late 16th Century to the Early 19th Century. New York: E. Weyhe, 1923.

Rhis, Marylin. Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet. San Francisco, CA: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and Tibet House, New York in association with H.N. Abrams, New York, 1991.

Richard Adler Gallery. Cercle et Carre: Thoughts for the 1930s: Paintings Sculpture Architecture Theater: An Exhibition, Richard Adler Gallery. New York, NY: Richard Adler Gallery, 1990.

Richard York Gallery. Joseph Stella: The Tropics. New York, NY: Richard York Gallery, 1988.

Rickey, George. Constructivism: Origins and Evolution. New York, NY: George Brazilles, Inc., 1967.

Robbins, Thomas. Cults Converts and Charisma: The Sociology of New Religious Movements. London, England: Sage, 1988.

Rosenberg, Harold. Art on the Edge. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1983.

Rosenstone, Robert. Mirror in the Shrine. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Russell, John. Mark Tobey. London: Hanover Gallery, 1968.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sandler, Irving. The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

Schmied, Wieland. Tobey. Translated by Margaret L. Kaplan. New York: Harry H. Abrams, Inc., 1966.

Seitz, William. The Art of Assemblage. New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1961.

Seitz, William. Mark Tobey. New York, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962.

Seuphor, Michel. Abstract Painting, 50 Years of Accomplishment, from Kandinsky to the Present. New York, NY: Dell Publishing Co., 1964.

_____. Cercle et Carre. Paris, France: P. Belfond, 1971.

Shaw, Leroy R. The Playwright and Historical Change: Dramatic Strategies in Brecht, Hauptmann, Kaiser and Wedekind. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970.

Skrine, Peter. Hauptmann, Wedekind and Schnitzler. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1989.

The Solomon Guggenheim Museum. Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibit 1892-1944. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, 1971.

Suzuki, D.T. Zen Buddhism. New York, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1956.

_____. The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind. London, England: Rider, 1958.

Suzuki, Shunryu. Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind. New York, NY: Weatherhill, 1970.

Tamney, Joseph. American Society in the Buddhist Mirror. New York, NY: Garland, 1992.

Taylor, Brandon. "Modernism, Post-Modernism, Realism." Winchester, England: Winchester School of Art Press, 1987.

Taylor, Joshua C. "Tribute to Mark Tobey." In Tribute to Mark Tobey. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Texas University, Austin Art Museum. Charmion Von Wiegand. Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1969.

Thistlewood, David. Herbert Read: Formlessness and Form: An Introduction ot His Aeshtetics. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Troy, Nancy. Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America. New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1979.

Tworkov, Helen. Zen in America. San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1989.

Unterecker, John Eugene. Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane. New York, NY: Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 1969.

Wadley, Nicholas. Kurt Schwitters in Exile: The Late Work 1937-1948. London, England: Marlborough Fine Art, published by the Hillingdon Press, 1981.

Waldman, Diane. Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object. New York, NY: Harry. H. Abrams, 1992.

Watkins, T.H. The Great Depression: America in the 1930s. Boston: Little Brown, 1993.

Watts, Alan. The Spirit of Jen: A Way of Life, Work and Art in the Far East. New York, NY: Grove, 1958.

_____. The Way of Zen. New York, NY: Mentor, 1959.

Weber, Max. The Sociology of Religion. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963.

Wedekind, Frank. The Lulu Plays and Other Sex Tragedies: Earth Spirit, Pandora's Box, Death and Devil, Castle Wetterstein. Translated by Stephen Spender. London: John Calder, 1977.

_____. The Religion of India. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1967.

Wescher, Herta. Collage. Translated by Robert E. Wolf. New York, NY: Harry H. Abrams, Inc., 1969.

Whiting, Cecile. Antifascism in American Art. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Women in the Arts (Organization). Women Chose Women. New York: New York Cultural Center, 1973.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Articles:

A(dlow), D(orothy). "About Art and Artists: Effort to Use Figure in Emotional Terms Made--Humor in Sculpture." New York Times, 5 January 1956.

Adlow, Dorothy. "Art for the Space Age." Christian Science Monitor. 7 April 1962.

"American Academy Announces Awards for Arts." New York Times. 15 March 1980.

Andre, Michael. "Andre Zarre Gallery New York Exhibit." Art News 74 (December 1975): 120.

"Andre Zarre Gallery, New York: Exhibit." Art News 76 (May 1977): 136.

Barrett, William. "Introduction: Zen for the West." D.T. Suzuki. New York, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1956, vii-xx.

Bell, Jane. "Charmion von Wiegand: Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York: Exhibit." Arts Magazine 49 (June 1975): 27-28.

Benz, Ernst. "Buddhism in the Western World." in Heinrich Dumoulin, ed., Buddhism in the Modern World. New York, NY; Collier Books, 1976, 305-322.

Berman, A. "Decade of Progress, but Could a Female Chardin Make a Living?" Art News 79 (October 1980): 76.

Birmelin, Blair T. "Reviews." Art in America 73 (October 1985): 154.

Blau, Eleanor. "Charmion von Wiegand, Artist." New York Times, 11 June 1983, 21(A).

B(renning), M(argaret). "Charmion von Wiegand." Art Digest 22 (January 1, 1948): 20-21.

Burnham, J. "Mondrian American Circle." Arts 48 (September 1973: 36-39.

Burrows, Carlyle. "Artists Revise their Styles." New York Herald Tribune, 1 October 1961.

"Charmion von Wiegand." New York Times, 10 May 1985, 26(C).

"Charmion von Wiegand (Andre Zarre)." Art News 76 (May 1977): 136.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Charmion von Wiegand: Exhibition of Oils at Saidenberg Gallery." Art Digest 26 (May 15, 1952): 16.

C. L. "Exhibition at Wise Gallery." Art News 60 (October 1961): 12.

Cassou, Jean. "Charmion Wiegand [Pincotheca; to May 10]." Art News 46 (May 1947): 46.

Devree, Howard. "Abstract and Exotic: Annual by Americans." New York Times, 7 June 1959.

"Exhibition of Oils at Saidenberg Gallery." Art Digest 26 (May 15, 1952): 16.

F. P. "Exhibition of Oils at Saidenberg Gallery." Art News 51 (May 1952): 45.

_____. "Exhibition of Paintings at Heller Gallery." Art News 54 (January 1956): 55.

_____. "Exhibition at Wise Gallery." Art News 60 (October 1961): 12.

Frank, Peter. "Charmion von Wiegand at Zarre." Art in America. 64 (March 1976): 110.

Freeman, Joseph. "Mask, Image and Truth." [publication?] 2, no. 8 (1935): 3.

_____. "The Wilsonian Era in American Literature." Modern Quarterly. IV (June-September 1927): 130-36.

Fromm, Erich. "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism." in Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism. D.T. Suzuki, Erich Fromm, and Richar de Martino eds. New York, NY: Harper Colophon, 1960.

Gerdts, William H. Women Artists of America, 1707-1964. Newark: The Newark Museum, 1965.

Gindertail, R. "Les Realities Nouvelles." Art d'Aujourd'hui 10-11 (Mai-Juin 1950): 42-43.

Glander-Bandyk, Janice. "Group Show: Sid Deutsch Gallery, New York." Arts 52 (September 1977): 32.

Glueck, Grace. "Charmion von Wiegand." New York Times, 10 May 1985.

_____. "Pinks and Pastels and Parabolas." New York Times, 10 December 1972, 7 (D).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Group Show: Sid Deutsch Gallery, New York." Arts 52 (September 1977): 32.

Hoctin, Luce. "Le dixieme Salon des Realities Nouvelles." Arts 525, no. 7 (July 1955): 20-26.

"Joseph Freeman, Author, 67, Dies: Wrote 'Never Call Retreat." New York Times, 11 August 1965, 35, col. 1.

Karl Von Wiegand Dies at 86; Hearst Foreign Correspondent." New York Times, 8 June 1961.

Kingsley, April. "On Art." Soho News Weekly, 17 March 1977.

Kohen, Helen L. "Von Wiegand's works Emerge from Shadows in the Bass Show." Miami Herald, 21 February 1982, 14.

Kramer, Hilton. "Art." New York Times, Friday, March 11, 1977 3(C).

_____. "A Fresh Look at Early American Modernists." The New York Times. April 27, 1975: D 31.

Krane, Susan. "Charmion von Wiegand: The Wheel of the Seasons." Albright-Knox Art Gallery/The Painting and Sculpture collection: Acquisitions since 1972. New York, NY: Hudson Hills Press in association with Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1987, 356-357.

Larsen, Susan. "Charmion von Wiegand." Charmion von Wiegand: In Search of the Spiritual. West Hartford, CT: Joseloff Gallery, 1993, 9-11.

_____. "Charmion von Wiegand: Walking on a Road with Milestones." Arts Magazine, vol. 60, November 1985, 29-31.

Lemur, Rikki. "Bass Art Exhibit Brings Another Woman to the Front." The Independent International, Florida International University (March 10, 1982): 5.

Michael, Andre. "Reviews and Previews--Andre Zarre Gallery New York Exhibit." Art News 74 (December 1975): 120.

"Neue Abstraction." Kunstwerk 12 (April 1965): 64.

"Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York: Exhibit." Arts, 49 (June 1975) 27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

"Notes for an Interview, ca. 1941." The New Art--The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian. Boston, MA: Harry Holtzman and Merth James, G.K. Hall and Co., 1986.

"Obituary." Art in America 71 (September 1983): 216.

"Obituary." New York Times (June 11, 1983), 23 (D).

McWilliams, Martha. "Charmion von Wiegand 1899-1983." National Museum of Women in the Arts. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1987, 86-87.

Monroe, Gerald M. "Art Front." Archives of American Art Journal 13 (1973): 13-19.

"The Press: Larger than Life: Obituary of Karl H. von Wiegand." Time (June 16, 1961): 37-39.

Preston, Stuart. "Art: 2 Shows at Whitney: Recent Acquisitions and a Small Group of Contemporary U.S. Prints on View." New York Times. (May 29, 1963):32.

_____. "Paintings by Charmion von Wiegand Shown." New York Times. (September 29, 1961).

P(orter), F(airfield). "Charmion von Wiegand (Saidenberg; to May 24)." Art News 51 (May 1952): 45.

_____. "Reviews and Previews--Exhibition of Paintings at Heller Gallery." Art News 54 (January 1956): 55.

"Profile." Art Now Gallery Guide. (March 1977): 3.

Ratcliff, Carter. "American Abstract Art: Whitney Museum, New York: Exhibit." Art International 19 (October 1975): 56-57.

Rathbone, Eliza. "Mark Rothko: The Brown and Gray Paintings." The Subjects of the Artist. E. A. Cormean Jr., Rathbone, and T.B. Kess eds. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1978.

Raynor, Vivien. "Pure in Art." Arts 36 (November 1961): 40.

_____. "Art People." New York Times (10 November 1978).

Rembert, Virginia. "Charmion von Wiegand's Way Beyond Mondrian." Woman's Art Journal (Fall 1983/Winter 1984): 30-34.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Rubinstein, Charlotte Streefer. "Charmion Von Wiegand." American Women Artists. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall and Co., 1982, 296-298.

Rosenberg, Harold. "Mondrian Meaning in Abstract Art." Art on the Edge. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Roser, Ce. "In Memorium." Women Artists News. (Summer 1983).

Russell, John. "Charmion von Wiegand." New York Times. (April 12, 1975): 37.

Sandler, Irving. "In the Art Galleries." New York Post 8 October 1961.

Sawyer, Kenneth. "Painting and Sculpture: The New York Season." Craft Horizon 22 (May 1962): 52.

Sawyer, R. "Exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery." Craft Horizon 22 (May 1962): 53.

Schwab, Cindy. "Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York: Exhibit." Arts 53 (December 1978): 11.

Seuphor, Michel. "Exposition a Paris: Le Salon des Realities: Nouvelles." Art d'Aujourd'hui. 5, no.6 (September 1954): 28-29.

Thompson, Dorothy. "On Women Correspondents and Others." The Nation (6 January 1926) 42.

"Three American Purists: Mason, Miles, Von Wiegand." Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Exhibit. Connoisseur 189 (January, 1975): 237.

Tillim, Sidney. "What Happened to Geometry? An Inquiry into Geometrical Painting in America." Arts Magazine (January 1959): 38-44.

Troy, Nancy Joslin. "Charmion Von Wiegand." In Charmion Von Wiegand, Her Art and Life. Miami Beach: The Bass Museum of Art, 1982.

"Unpublished letter from Mondrian to Charmion von Wiegand." Piet Mondrian, modified version of November 1964-Jan 1965 catalogue, Galerie Beyler Basel n.d..

"Von Wiegand Oils on View." New York Journal America. (6 September 1961): 27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Von Wiegand, Charmion, "Adamantine Way: Exhibition of Tibetan Pictures and Sculptures at Asia House." Art News 68 (April 1969): 38-41.

_____. "American Artists' Congress." Art Front (February 1936): 8.

_____. "The Box of Pandora." Double Dealer IV, no. 22 (October 1922): 197-199.

_____. "Burgoyne Diller Paintings-Constructions 1934-1946." New York: The Pincotheca, 1946.

_____. "Can Art Sustain the Artists?" Nation (24 August 1940): 150-152.

_____. "Chirico and Picasso." New Masses 22 (12 January 1937): 6-7.

_____. "David Alfaro Siqueiros." New Masses 11 (1 May 1934): 18-21.

_____. "Emilia Viviani: A Romantic Drama in One Act." Poet Lore 36 (December 1925): 552-68.

_____. "Encounter with Mondrian." Arts Yearbook 3 (1960): 41-42.

_____. "Expressionism and Social Change." Art Front (November 1936): 10-12.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 18 (March 10, 1936): 26-27.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 18 (March 24, 1936): 25.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 22 (March 23, 1937): 30.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 22 (April 20, 1937): 38-39.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 23 (May 18, 1937): 32-34.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 23 (May 25, 1937): 34-35.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 23 (June 15, 1937): 29-30.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 23 (June 22, 1937): 33.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 23 (June 29, 1937): 27-29.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 24 (July 6, 1937): 30-31.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 24 (July 12, 1937): 23-24.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 24 (July 20, 1937): 28-30.

_____."The Fine Arts." New Masses 24 (July 27, 1937): 29-30.

_____. "First Soviet Typewriters Now Made in Leningrad," Moscow Daily Worker, 27 February 1932, 2.

_____. "Five on Revolutionary Art." Art Front (September - October 1936): 10-11.

_____. "Five Year Plan's Designs for Summer Dresses." Moscow Daily Worker, 30 May 1932, 3.

_____. "Flame and Mist, A Contrast." Double Dealer IV, no. 37-39 (August-September 1924): 193-194.

_____. "Flights." The Lyric West: A Magazine of Verse 3, no. 7 (November 1923): 13.

_____. "George Vantongerloo." Arts 34 (September 1960): 40-45.

_____. "Handbook of Mexican Painting." New Masses 26 (1938): 24-25.

_____. "Ishigaki's Two Traditions." New Masses 19 (April 28, 1936): 28.

_____. "Jasmine and the Poet: A Play in One Act." Poet Lore 37 (September 1926): 418-31.

_____. "John Graham," New York: Pincotheca, 1946.

_____. "Kurt Schwitters." Kurt Schwitters. Ed. by Michael Haines. New York, NY: The Pincotheca, 1948, 28-32.

_____. "Kuznetsk." Moscow Daily Worker, 8 June 1932, 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. "Mastering the Factory in Kuznetsk," Moscow Daily News (1 June 1932) 3.

_____. "Meaning of Mondrian." The Journal of Aesthetics 2, no. 8 (Fall 1943): 62-70.

_____. "Mondrian: A Memoir of his New York Period." In The Arts Annual 4, 57-65, New York, NY: American Abstract Artists, 1961.

_____. "Mural Painting in America." Yale Review 23 (June, 1934): 788-99.

_____. "Oil Fields of Grozny," Moscow Daily Worker, 8 March 1932, 2.

_____. "The Oriental Tradition and Abstract Art." Land, Paul, ed. The World of Abstract Art. New York: George Wittenbourn, Inc., 1957.

_____. "Picasso's Guernica." Direction, 2, no. 4 (1939), 12-14.

_____. "Picasso's Last Period." Direction 3, no. 6 (Summer, 1940): 38-41.

_____. "Portrait." Buccaneer 1, no. 4 (December, 1924): 30.

_____. "Portrait of an Artist: Portrait of Mexico, by Diego Rivera and Bertram D. Wolfe, Covici-Friede." New Masses 23 (April 27, 1937): 24-26.

_____."Prehistoric Rock Pictures." Art Front (June/July, 1937): 10, 11, 18.

_____. "The Russian Arts." Runes, Dagobert D., and Harry G. Schrickel, eds. Encyclopedia of the Arts. New York: Philosophical Library, 1946.

_____."Sex, Puritanism in Russia." The Nation 31, no. 33 (July 16, 1930): 62-64.

_____."Sights and Sounds: Rock Pictures from the Dawn of History." New Masses 23 (June 3, 1937): 27.

_____."Sights and Sounds: The Artists' Congress Opens a National Exhibition." New Masses 23 (May 4, 1937): 35.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

_____. "Soviet Industry Finds New Use For Cinema." Moscow Daily Worker, 10 July 1932, 2.

_____. "Spring Night." Casements 2, no. 1 (November 1923): 10.

_____. "The Surrealists." Art Front. (January 1937): 12-14.

_____. "Toys that Reflect Epoch for Soviet Children: Industrial Playthings Dominate; Develop Collective Spirit." Moscow Daily News, 6 April 1932, 5.

_____. "Twelve Thousand Young Communists of Kuznetsky are Mastering Technique." Moscow Daily Worker, 15 June 1932, 2.

_____. "Unpublished manuscript." Piet Mondrian. modified version of November 1964-Jan 1965 catalogue, Basel, Switzerland: Galerie Beyler, 1965.

_____. "Vision of Mark Tobey." Arts 33 (September 1959): 34-41.

_____. "The White Plane." New York, NY: The Pincotheca Gallery, 1947. Mimeographed.

Unpublished Sources:

Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, "Press Release: Charmion von Wiegand: Her Art and Life, February 6th Through March 28, 1982" ??

"Charmion von Wiegand, Thirty Years of Collage, October 31-November 25, 1978." Press Release Marilyn Pearl Gallery, October 5, 1978.

The Circle of Charmion Von Wiegand. Ce Roser, narrator and producer, Fay Lanser, co-producer. First telecast, New York, WNET Channel 13, November 5, 1978, at 12:00 noon.

Cummings, Paul. Unpublished transcript of an interview with Charmion Von Wiegand, October 9, 1968. Manuscript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Feinberg, Anne. "Interview with Anne Feinberg, June, 1994, New York, NY," Collection of the Author.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Hillman, Kay. "Interview with Kay Hillman, July, 1994; September, 1994." New York, NY, Collection of the Author.

Koo, Ksien Liang. "Charmion von Wiegand's Works: 1952-1955." Mimeographed brochure, John Heller Gallery, New York, n.d.

MacPhail, M. "A Biographical Perss Release of Karl von Wiegand of Hearst Press, 15 October 1942." Tms [photocopy]. Time Life Library and Arcive, Time Life Building, New York, NY.

Roser, Ce. "Interview with Ce Roser, February 6, 1994, New York, NY." Collection of the Author.

Roser, Ce. "Talk on Charmion von Wiegand for the American Abstract Artists Association, New York, NY, April 17, 1994." transcribed tape, Collection of Author.

Rowell, Margit. "Interview with Charmion Von Wiegand, June 20, 1971." Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibit 1892-1944. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1971.

Spina, Tony. "Interview with Tony Spina," June 22, 1994, New York, NY, 1994, Collection of the Author.

"Von Wiegand Letters." Kay Hillman Papers. American Archives of Art, New York, NY, Reel #1999.

"Von Wiegand Letters," Mark Tobey Papers. American Archives of Art, Reels 3200, 3201, 3203, 3204, 3205, and 3210.

"Von Wiegand Papers." Collection of Anne Feinberg, New York, NY.

"Von Wiegand Papers." Collection of Marilyn Pearl, New York, NY.

"Von Wiegand Papers." Collection of Elaine Wrong, New York, NY.

Wrong, Elaine. "Interview with Elaine Wrong." Friday, May 20, 1994, June 21, 1994, New York, NY, 1994, Collection of the Author.

Dissertations:

Larsen, Susan Carol. "The American Abstract Artists Group: A History and Evaluation of its Impact on American Art." Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1975.

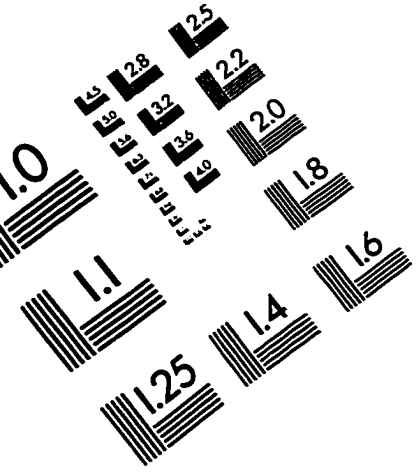
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

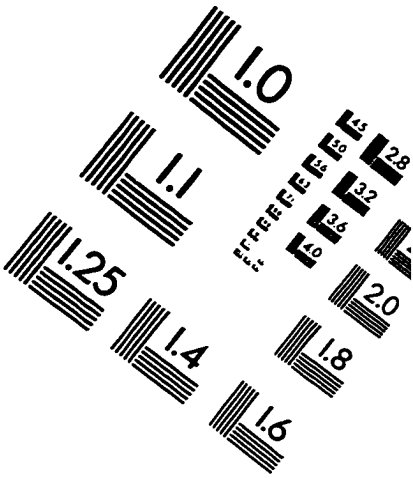
McConnell, Gary Robert. "Joseph Freeman: A Personal Odyssey from Romance to Revolution (Proletarian Fiction. Social Realism. Marxist Critic. Jewish-American. Russian-American Writer.)" Ph.D. diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1986.

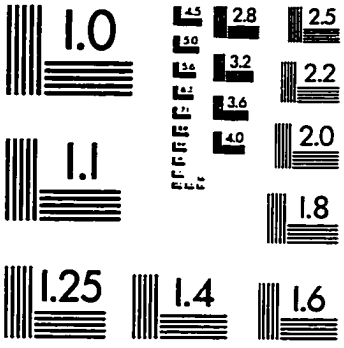
Rembert, Virginia Pitts. "Mondrian, America, and American Painting." Ph.D. diss., Columbia Univeristy, 1970.

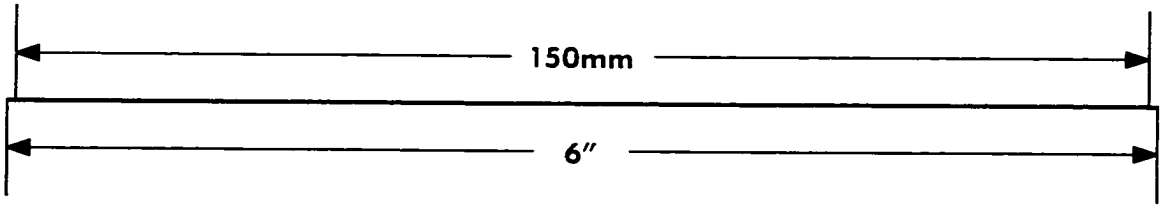
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

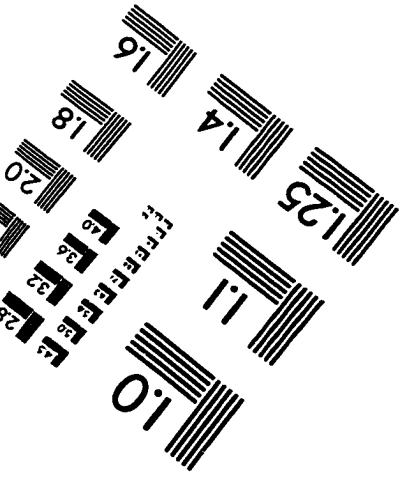
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

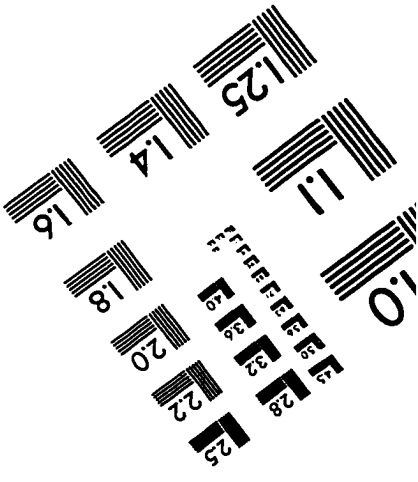












APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.