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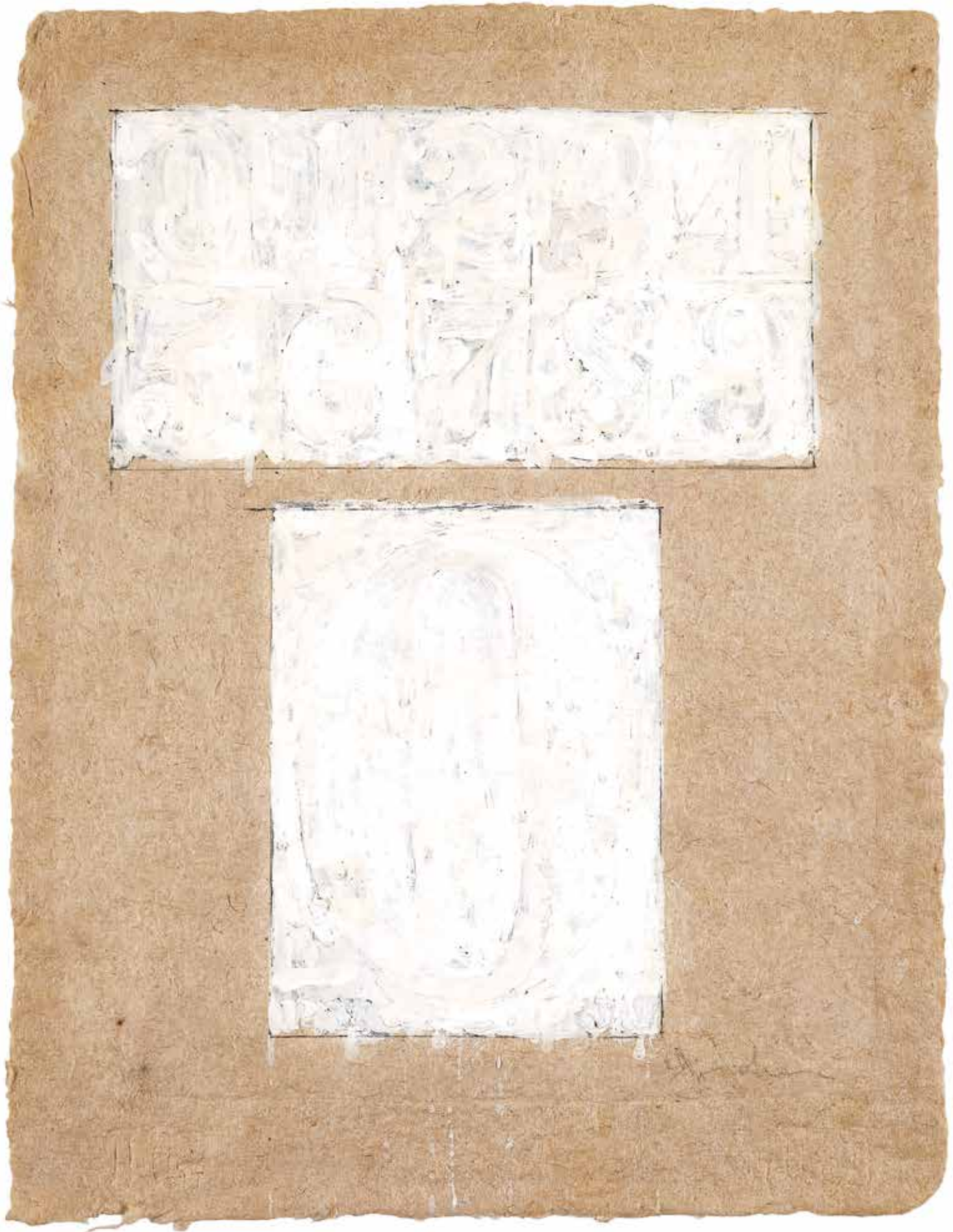
JASPER JOHNS **DRAWING OVER**

essay by

Pepe Karmel

November 6 – December 18, 2010

LEO CASTELLI



left:
Fig.1
Jasper Johns
0 – 9, c.1962
Oil, encaustic and
graphite
over lithograph
20¹/₂ x 15³/₄ inches
Collection of
Michael Goldberg

CANCELLATION / CREATION

Jasper Johns: Drawings over Prints

Pepe Karmel

At first glance, the picture [Fig. 1] looks like a timeworn abstraction by Kazimir Malevich or El Lissitzky. A narrow horizontal rectangle floats atop a thicker vertical rectangle, both of them covered with thick, palpable strokes of white paint, glowing against the mottled brownish paper of the support. We seem, here, to be in the realm of high modernism, a land of geometric forms and ideal essences. But the two rectangles are too perfectly vertical and horizontal, and too perfectly balanced. Malevich or Lissitzky would have tilted them slightly or slid them sideways, to suggest dynamism instead of stasis, the Suprematist dream of flight. What's more, on closer inspection, they're not completely abstract. Under the uneven white paint, you can make out numbers. In the horizontal rectangle, the numerals 0 through 4, followed by 5 through 9. In the vertical rectangle, a large 0. Recognition dawns slowly. We are looking at a picture by Jasper Johns—specifically a lithograph from the portfolio *0-9* [Fig. 36]. But someone has drawn and painted over the printed composition, cancelling and transforming its original imagery. That someone is Jasper Johns.

0-9 belongs, in fact, to an important body of pictures by Johns in which he has taken his prints (typically themselves the product of a long process of working and reworking) and drawn and painted on top of them to produce new works. Johns has produced such drawings and paintings over prints throughout his long career, from the early 1960s to the present, and their character has evolved as his work in general has evolved. The drawings over numbers, such as *0-9*, are characterized by three key qualities: iconicity, facticity, and negation. Each of these deserves careful examination.

Robert Rosenblum may have been the first scholar to point out the iconic character of Johns' early imagery. As he wrote in 1963, Johns' "flags and targets, numbers and letters...heroically attempt to find again those qualities of ritualistic beauty, symbolism and discipline once provided to artist and public by standardized classical and Christian iconography."¹ The simplicity and frontality of the icon return again in Johns' flags, targets, and number paintings; and the latently religious character of Johns' work is underscored in his 1962 drawing, where the over-painting of the printed numbers reduces the composition as a whole to a large white cross.²

In Johns' 0-9 drawing—as in his painted flags, targets, and numbers—the iconic sensation of presence is conveyed by the handling of the paint, applied in discrete strokes of melted wax and other media that constantly remind viewers of the artist's long, patient labor in physically creating the image. Johns' image may be absent, but his hand is everywhere felt.

The matter-of-factness of Johns' early work, its demand for steady, undramatic attentiveness, has been interpreted in several ways. On one hand, the idea of the painted surface as a uniform field of quasi-identical strokes goes back to Impressionism. Accordingly, Kirk Varnedoe linked Johns' approach to the Impressionist project of re-awakening our sensitivity to the primal sensation of vision, before it is overlaid by the meanings and uses we superimpose on the things we see.

On the other hand, Johns' surfaces have also been interpreted as results of system and process rather than personal expression. The desire for the process of creation and revision to remain visible in the finished work was already part of the ethos of Abstract Expressionism. There, however, the visible history of the work served as evidence of the individual sensibility behind its creation. In contrast, Johns treated process as something curiously impersonal. An often-quoted passage from his sketchbook of the early 1960s reads:

Take an object
Do something to it
Do something else to it³

What is striking in this statement is the absence of an original expressive intention shaping the artist's successive choices. Johns makes it sound as if he is randomly choosing tools from a toolbox, experimenting with one after another to find out what it will do.

The sense that each new stage in Johns' work on an image is a fresh departure, rather than a continuation of what has come before, is particularly evident in his prints and drawings.

This brings us to the tangled question of chronology. The 0-9 drawing with which we began is contemporary with Johns' work on the underlying series of prints. Often, however, the drawings over prints are done long after the prints, and the prints themselves are done long after the paintings they recapitulate. His first *Flag* [Fig. 17] was painted in 1954-55. He made prints based on this image at several later dates, beginning in 1960 and continuing periodically over several decades. In 1994, he returned to a 1972 print of this image [Fig. 25] as the starting point for a new series of drawings [Figs. 26, 27, 28]. As Nan Rosenthal has noted, "The great majority of Johns' drawings are the opposite of preparatory. Rather, they are based on paintings and sculptures that he has already made." Drawing is, in effect, a method of "rereading" his own work.⁴

Or you might say that a composition by Johns is like a musical score. The notes are fixed, but there are endless different ways of performing it, explored in successive paintings, prints, and drawings.

If Johns were a musician, however, everything he played would be in a minor key, and he would make constant use of diminished chords, the sequences of minor thirds that leave listeners floating, unsure what key they are hearing. In his early work, he chose deliberately impersonal motifs that did not suggest any

particular experience or emotion. He replicated the colors of his motifs, or used the ready-made palette of the primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. Strongly colored paintings were followed by monochrome versions of the same compositions. Desolate gray paintings were populated by cryptic phrases, pulled-down window shades, and canvases turned backwards so their faces could not be seen. Where earlier abstract painting had turned its back on reality in order to explore new worlds of form and color, Johns focused on the moment of negation, the insistence that there was nothing to see, nothing to say, nothing to be done.

Discussing the moment in the mid-1950s when he painted his breakthrough *Flag*, Johns presented it as a process not so much of discovery as of elimination: “When I could observe what other people did, I tried to remove that from my work. My work became a constant negation of impulses.”⁵

The deliberate suppression of personality in Johns’ work recalls the willed impersonality of an earlier master of modern art, Georges Braque. Braque, today,

Fig.2
Georges Braque
The Portugese Man,
1911–1912
Oil on canvas
46¹/₁₆ x 32¹/₈ inches
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Switzerland
© 2010 Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York/
ADAGP, Paris
photo:
Bridgeman-Giraudon/
Art Resource, NY

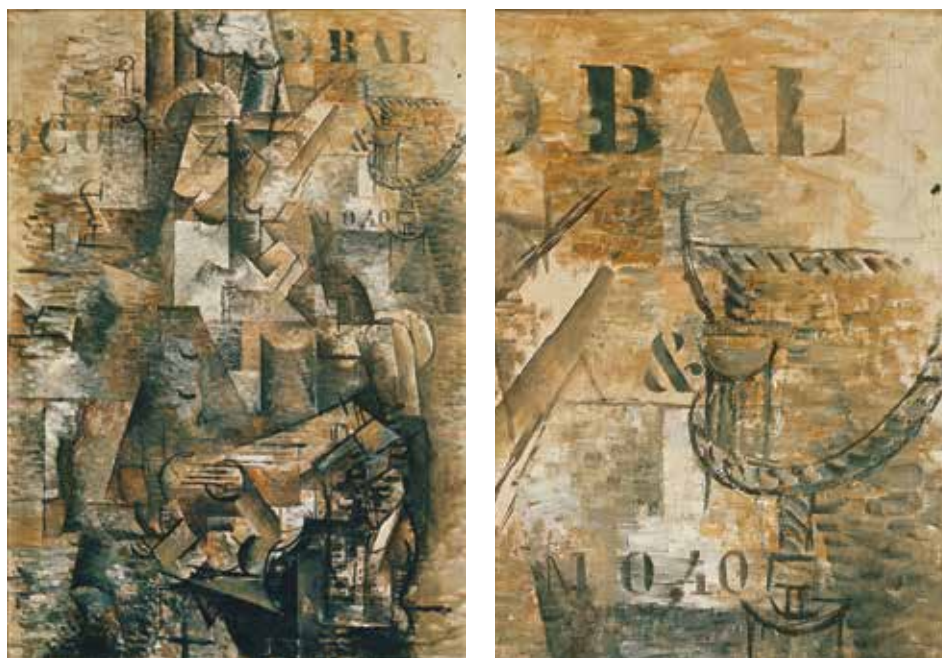


Fig.3 detail of Fig.2

is primarily remembered as the co-inventor, with Pablo Picasso, of Cubism. This alone would have made him an important figure in Johns’ artistic formation. As he commented in 1989: “Cubism is one of the two great ‘isms’ for people of my generation. The other is Surrealism, of course. Cubism and Surrealism were liberating...Not only did they free you, they made certain kinds of rules apparent.”⁶ More recently, Johns has noted that he remembers seeing a major Braque retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art before beginning his military service.⁷ This was the retrospective of 1949, organized by Henry R. Hope.

The most obvious sign of Johns’ interest in Braque’s work is his use of stenciled numerals. The link to Cubism was noted in 1962 by Clement Greenberg, who described Johns as working with “a repertory of man-made signs and images not too different from the one on which Picasso and Braque drew for the stenciled or affixed elements of their 1911-1913 Cubism.”⁸ The similarity becomes clear if we compare the stenciled letters and numbers in Braque’s *Le Portugais* of 1911-12 [Figs. 2, 3] with the drawing of the large “4”

in Johns' 0-9 portfolio of 1963 [Fig. 4]. The "4" is drawn with a bold columnar upright, contrasting with the narrow descender and crossbar, and elegantly softened by the curved feet of the serifs. The same dramatic contrast of thick and thin elements, and the same punctuation of curved serifs, appears in the stenciled letters and numbers of Braque's painting.

Johns' choice of stencils was the subject of a famous dialogue with Leo Steinberg, summarized in a 1962 essay:

I asked him about the type of numbers and letters he uses—coarse, standardized, unartistic—the type you associate with packing cases and grocery signs.

Q: You nearly always use this same type. Any particular reason?

A: That's how the stencils come.

Q: But if you preferred another typeface, would you think it improper to cut your own stencils?

A: Of course not.

Q: Then you really do like these best?

A: Yes...

Q: Do you use these letter types because you like them or because that's how the stencils come?

A: But that's what I like about them, that they come that way.

Here, Steinberg represents himself as a "slightly bewildered stooge," the better to set up the image of Johns as a natural-born Dadaist, someone who accepts and indeed endorses the graphic language of commerce precisely because that is what it is.⁹ From this perspective, Johns' stenciled lettering anticipates Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* of 1964, which more literally reproduce the appearance of packing cases and grocery signs.

In making this point, however, Steinberg has elided the artistic lineage of Johns' stencils, which look back to Braque via Charles Demuth's 1928 painting, *I Saw the Figure Five in Gold*. Johns' statement, "That's what I like about them, that they come that way," need not signify an uncritical acceptance of commercial culture, but rather a critical awareness of the intertwining of commercial and avant-garde imagery throughout the course of the twentieth century. Or, more specifically, an awareness of the way that avant-garde artists, launching themselves onto the ocean of abstract forms, still felt the need to anchor their work in the sea bed of shared experience. As Braque wrote in a set of notes published in 1917 (although not translated until 1958): "The painter who wished to make a circle would only draw a curve. Its appearance might satisfy him, but he would doubt it. The compass would give him certitude. The pasted papers [*papiers collés*] in my drawings also gave me a certitude."¹⁰ The stenciled letters in Johns' work provided him with a similar certitude, a fixed point from which to begin his own painterly exploration. They also provided a link to earlier avant-gardes, and to a graphic language that was more old-fashioned and (*pace* Steinberg) more elegant than the modernist typography that was taking over marketing and advertising in the late 1950s.

What Johns found in Braque was not merely a set of forms and motifs he could borrow and transform. He may also have discovered a kindred sensibility, an alternative mode of creativity that expressed itself through self-effacement rather than self-exposure. In 1948, the year before the MoMA retrospective, the émigré

art dealer Curt Valentin published the *Cahier de Georges Braque, 1917-1947*, a selection of the artist's aphorisms (both in French and in translation), accompanied by a portfolio of recent drawings. Some examples:

The personality of the artist is not made up of
the ensemble of his peculiarities.

The painter thinks in forms and colors, the
object is the poetics.

Limited means beget new forms, invite to
creation, make the style.

I don't do as I like, I do as I can.

Action is a succession of hopeless acts which
enable us to remain hopeful.

I like the rule that corrects the emotion.¹¹

Fig.4
Jasper Johns
detail of 4 from 0-9,
1963
Portfolio of 10
lithographs in
1 color each
20¹/₂ x 15³/₄ inches
Edition of 10, C/C
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions



Fig.5
Jasper Johns
Figure 4, 1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
12⁵/₈ x 10¹/₂ inches
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, Musée
National d'Art Moderne/
Centre de Création
Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman



Compare Johns speaking to David Sylvester in 1965: “I think that one wants from painting a sense of life...The final statement...has to be not a deliberate statement but a helpless statement. It has to be what you can't avoid saying, not what you set out to say.”¹² More generally, we find in Johns as in Braque a profound conviction that artistic creativity proceeds not from self-expression but from self-denial, that the original character of the work emerges insofar as the artist succeeds in repressing himself.

(Johns would have drawn a similar conclusion from Marcel Duchamp's 1957 lecture, “The Creative Act,” where the Dada master argued that the true “art coefficient” of a work lay in the inevitable gap between what the artist intended to do and what the work unintentionally expressed. Indeed, Johns might have taken as a personal motto a quotation from T.S. Eliot that Duchamp included in his lecture: “The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.”)¹³

Where Johns departs from the visual example of Braque's work is in his willingness, not merely to set the impersonal language of lettering into a painterly context, but to stage the contrast between these two forms of mark making as a battle within the individual numeral. As Robert Rosenblum writes, "Johns's calligraphy offers a diversity that endlessly enhances the simple numerical themes it describes...In 4 alone [Fig. 4], one can find the tidy hard-edged pattern of the digit; an impulsive linear scribble that alternates between the jagged and the fluent; soft and filmy overlays of luminous planes; and the unique whorled stamp of the artist's thumbprint."¹⁴ In 1971, Johns returned to the same printed numeral and radically transformed it [Fig. 5], using broad strokes of red and black paint to suppress the distinction between figure and ground. The column of black paint that rises through the broad upright of the "4" seems to belong to the same plane as the black field at left and right, divided by gashes of white and slashes of red.



It is tempting also to see Braque's influence in the target paintings that Johns began making in 1955 [Fig. 6]. Here the source would not be a detail from one of Braque's pictures, but rather another passage from his notebooks. Distinguishing between "visual" and "tactile" space, Braque argues that: "Visual space separates objects from one another " while "tactile space separates us from objects." By way of explanation, he notes that "The tourist *looks* at the site," while "the gunner *reaches* the target...the trajectory is the prolongation of his arm."¹⁵ The dartboard of Johns' *Target* is obviously different from the target of Braque's gunner (a highly charged comparison for a veteran of World War I). Nonetheless, the comparison reminds us that the target is not an arbitrarily chosen motif, but rather one that signifies the intimate link between sight and touch. The hand that launches the dart is guided by the same eye that extends the paintbrush; vision is not an end in itself but a means to establish physical contact. (This may serve as a parable either of painting or of human relationships.)

Fig.6
Jasper Johns
Target with Four Faces,
1955, Encaustic on
newspaper and cloth over
canvas surmounted by
four tinted-plaster faces in
wood box with hinged front
33⁵/₈ x 26 x 3 inches
The Museum of Modern
Art, New York
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Robert C. Scull

Fig.7
Jasper Johns
Perilous Night, 1982
Encaustic on canvas
with objects
67¹/₈ x 96¹/₈ x 6¹/₄ inches
National Gallery of Art,
Washington D.C.
Robert and Jane Meyerhoff
Collection

Braque's influence goes underground in the 1970s, but re-emerges in the 1980s in works such as *Perilous Night* [Figs. 7 and 60]. Here Johns quotes the imitation wood-graining that Braque introduced to Cubism, and also Braque's trademark motif of a schematic nail casting a schematic shadow [Figs. 8, 9], a bit of crude illusionism that seems particularly odd amid the shimmering planes of his 1910-11 work.¹⁶ In an influential 1958 essay, "The Pasted Paper Revolution," Clement Greenberg had puzzled over the presence of this "very graphic nail with a sharp cast shadow in a picture otherwise devoid of graphic definitions and cast shadows." It was, he decided, a necessary corrective. Braque's break-up of his motifs into "sequences of small facet-planes" had the effect of "tautening" the picture plan until it became almost absolutely flat. Flatness, for Greenberg, was a good thing. But there could be too much of a good thing: an absolutely flat composition ran the risk of deteriorating into mere "surface pattern." Greenberg concluded that Braque



Fig.8
Georges Braque
Violin and Pitcher, 1910
Oil on canvas
46¹/₁₆ x 28¹⁵/₁₆ inches
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Switzerland
© 2010 Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York/
ADAGP, Paris
photo: Bridgeman-Giraudon/
Art Resource, NY

Fig.9 detail of Fig.8

Fig.10
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 2008
Intaglio
28⁵/₈ x 21 inches
Edition of 45
Published by Jasper Johns

had inserted the nail and shadow with the goal of "interposing a more vivid illusion of depth between surface and Cubist space," thereby fending off the danger of excessive flatness.¹⁷

You might read the cast fragments of faces in Johns' *Target* [Fig. 6] as another device for achieving the same end. Against the insistent flatness of the target motif, the faces in their niches reintroduce a sensation of three-dimensional solidity and depth. The nail-and-shadow motif in his early 1980s paintings allows Johns to reintroduce a sensation of depth without having to resort to collage. He also makes use of it in a series of works from the late 1990s, where it is combined with a cartoon-like face whose features—eyes, mouth, and nostrils—have been redistributed to the margins of the image. This disturbing image is adapted from a drawing by a schizophrenic girl that Johns found in an essay by Bruno Bettelheim. In effect, the nail serves as a touchstone of reality at a moment when the viewer's grip



[Faint signature]

left:
 Fig.11
 Jasper Johns
Land's End,
 1979/1989
 Pastel over intaglio
 41 1/2 x 29 9/16 inches
 Collection of
 the artist

on reality seems to be dissolving. In a 2008 print from this series of images [Fig. 10], a wristwatch is suspended from the nail, introducing a new set of symbolic associations, to be discussed below. The central placement of the watch recalls the iconic frontality of Johns' earlier *Flags* and *Targets*, but the asymmetrical disposition of the facial features imbues the image with a new sense of the uncanny. Evidently, we have moved from the realm of the icon to the realm of allegory.

Where the goal of the icon is to create a sense of direct, unmediated presence, the goal of the allegory is to communicate meaning. Or so it would seem. In theory, the allegorical image is assembled from a pre-existing set of emblems.¹⁸ With a dictionary of emblems at hand, the viewer should be able to decipher each element of the image, and then to infer its overall meaning. What the allegorical image gains in meaning, however, it loses in presence. The viewer is in effect instructed to look through the image—to discount its illusion

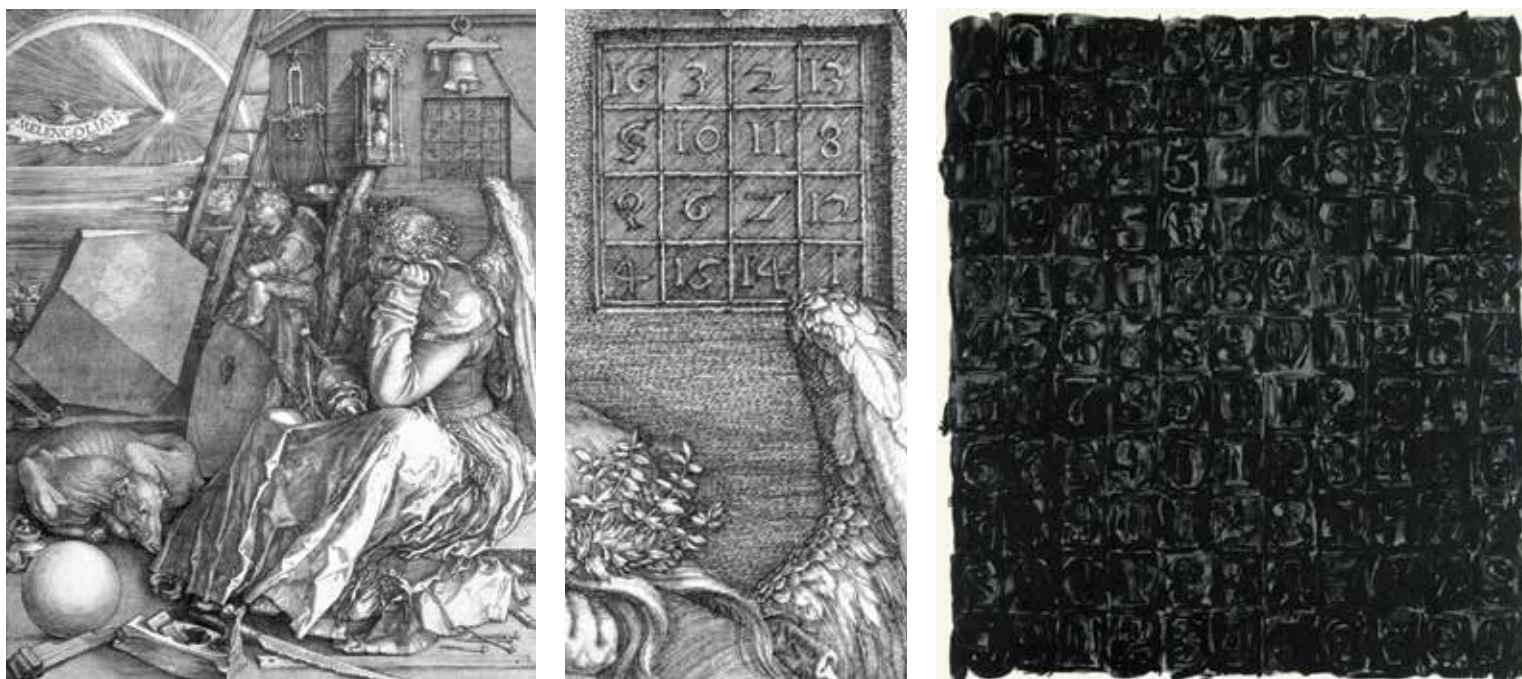


Fig.12
 Albrecht Dürer
Melancholia I, 1514
 9 5/16 x 7 3/8 inches
 photo: Bildarchiv
 Preussischer
 Kulturbesitz/
 Art Resource, NY

of reality, and to ignore its physical instantiation. Allegory is thus haunted by absence, by a sense of insufficiency. The image itself is never enough.

To this absence occasioned by displaced origins, we must add the sense of loss occasioned by the near-inevitable failure of communication. The necessary dictionary may be lost, or moldering on the shelves of a provincial library. The artist may have picked his emblems from different sources, without worrying about inconsistency. Or we may simply be unable to distinguish which elements of the picture are meant to signify and which are there for decorative or formal purposes, without signifying anything. Meaning leaks out of the emblems, and puddles in the nooks and crannies of the picture. Everything seems significant, but no precise meaning can be defined. In Dürer's *Melancholia I* [Fig. 12], the philosophizing angel is surrounded by emblems of truth (the sphere, the geometric solid), judgment (the scale), and mortality (the hourglass), but the armament of wisdom offers no consolation.

Fig.13
 detail of Fig.12

Fig.14
 Jasper Johns
Numbers, 1967
 Lithograph
 28 x 23 1/2 inches
 Edition of 35
 Published by
 Universal Limited Art
 Editions

If the image means anything, it is an allegory of the hopelessness of the quest for meaning.

Like Dürer's *Melancholia*, Johns' allegorical pictures are saturated with meaningfulness, but evade definable meaning. As Fred Orton notes, meaning in Johns' work is the result of metonymy not of metaphor; so that it is dependent on particular associations for its meanings. However, these associations are withheld from the viewer, rendering the allegories unreadable.¹⁹ Johns' 1979 lithograph *Land's End* [Fig. 44] is based on a painting of 1963 [Fig. 43] that is usually



interpreted as a reference to the death by drowning of the poet Hart Crane.²⁰ However, the imagery of *Land's End* is abstract enough that it could equally well be read as a gloss on *Melancholia I*. The semi-circle at upper right, ruled with a straight-edge, is an ideal form, like Dürer's geometric solids. Johns' downward arrow evokes Dürer's hourglass. In place of the rainbow in the background of *Melancholia*, Johns stencils the names of the primary colors. The hand reaching helplessly upwards, sometimes interpreted as the arm of the drowning poet, could be read as the arm of the melancholy angel, supporting his weary head. Once the search for meaning has begun, there is no certain stopping point.

Similarly, once we begin to read Johns' pictures as allegories, the self-sufficiency of even his iconic images is cast into doubt. In Dürer's *Melancholia*, there is a magic square hanging on the wall behind the angel to the right of the hourglass. The numbers in each column and row all add up to the same sum [Fig. 13]. The magic square can be read as an emblem of divine perfection, of the hidden unity behind the diversity of appearances. Should we also see it as a precursor of Johns' *Numbers* [Fig. 14]? Where Dürer finds unity in diversity, Johns generates diversity in unity, by placing the repeating sequence of ten digits into a field eleven spaces wide, so that it shifts left with each succeeding row, snaking its way down the grid. Mathematics promises certitude, but does not deliver it.

Fig.15
Jasper Johns
The Seasons, 1989/1990
Acrylic over intaglio
26¹/₄ x 57³/₁₆ inches
2 of 2
Jeffrey and Susan Brotman
Collection

In the 1980s, Johns' allegories become even more complex. Personal references multiply, and the motifs overlap to suggest a crowded three-dimensional space very different from the insistent flatness of his early work. David Sylvester noted the affinity between these later paintings by Johns and the *Studio* paintings that Braque made late in his own career [Figs. 15, 16]. In 1982, there was a major exhibition of Braque's late paintings at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., which traveled to San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Houston.²¹ Johns may have seen the exhibition in one of its venues, or, as

Fig.16
Georges Braque
Studio IX, 1952-56
Oil on canvas
57 1/2 x 57 1/2 inches
Musée National d'Art
Moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, France
© 2010 Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York/
ADAGP, Paris



Sylvester suggests, he may simply have reached pictorial conclusions similar to Braque's by a similar process of extrapolation from Cézanne. Whether the result of influence or a parallel evolution, the results have much in common. As Sylvester writes, the space in Braque's *Studios* "appears pleated, melted, folded, bent." In both Braque and Johns, the arrangement of solids and voids is "fluid but somehow stuttering and sometimes suggests the presence of hidden spaces within."²² Ultimately, it is this suggestion of hidden spaces that most strongly shapes the allegory of Johns' *Studio* paintings, and the prints and drawings deriving from them. More than any of the individual motifs—some of which can be deciphered, others of which remain cryptic—these spaces remind us that the pictures are the work of a self that is both intensely subjective and intensely private. Rather than trying to decode the pictures, we may be best advised to treat them as meditations on the nature of the self, comforted and besieged by objects and images accumulated over a span of years.

It is in this complex context, then, that we need to understand the drawings and paintings over prints that Johns has made throughout his career. Locating them on the axis that stretches from icon to allegory, we will examine the ways that Johns has used reworking to cancel, revise, and transform the hypnotic and obsessive emblems of his imagination.

ICONS

Johns' *Flag*, painted in 1954-55 [Fig. 17], is the first great icon of his career. When it was exhibited in 1958 at the Castelli Gallery, along with his early target and number paintings, it seemed a neo-Dada gesture, a readymade in the tradition of Duchamp's *Fountain*. But where Duchamp selected objects that were usually overlooked (a bicycle wheel, a snow shovel) or ignored because of shameful associations (a urinal), Johns selected something that was hidden in plain sight, displayed so often that it had become invisible, at least to the sophisticated members of New York's art world. On one hand, Johns' bold appropriation of a popular image led to Pop Art; on the other, the rigid formal structure of the *Flag* led to Frank Stella's black paintings of 1959 and to Minimalism.



Fig.17
Jasper Johns
Flag, 1954-55
Encaustic, oil and collage
on fabric mounted on
plywood
42¹/₄ x 60⁵/₈ inches
The Museum of Modern
Art, New York
Gift of Philip Johnson in
honor of Alfred H. Barr Jr.

After 1970, however, critics began to reinterpret *Flag* as an allegorical image. Begun in 1954, when Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunt for Communists dominated American politics, it might be seen as a slyly ironic commentary on "hysterical patriotism."²³ Delving into Johns' family history, critics discovered that Johns' first name derived from a Southern hero of the Revolutionary War, Sergeant William Jasper, famous for rescuing the American flag under enemy fire. Politics might, in this instance, be read as an allegory for personal experience. Politically, the memory of William Jasper points back to a moment when North and South were united in defense of the young American nation, before the traumatic divisions of the Civil War; personally, it might therefore be seen as a symbol of an early moment in Johns' childhood, before the trauma of his parents' separation.²⁴

Throughout his career, Johns has returned regularly to the motif of the flag, first in paintings, then in prints, and later in drawings over prints. What he

himself has chosen to emphasize in these revisitings is the formal quality of the image. With only a handful of exceptions he has remained faithful to the image of the American flag as it existed in 1955, with forty-eight stars [Fig. 18]. In 1959, when Alaska became a state, one star was added, and another in 1960, when Hawaii joined the Union, bringing the total to fifty. Despite these changes, Johns continued to make flags with forty-eight stars. In the 1960s, when the change was still recent, interviewers asked him why he hadn't updated his paintings. Since the additions, he said, "the design does not interest me anymore."²⁵

Comparing the 48-star version of 1955 with the 49-star version of 1959 suggests why. The forty-eight stars are grouped into six rows and eight columns, their linear alignment echoing the six stripes below and the seven stripes to the right. In contrast, the forty-nine stars are grouped into seven rows of seven stars each, with successive rows sliding left or right to fill the blue field, laterally, and to avoid a sense of overcrowding, vertically [Fig. 19]. The stars align themselves into diagonal rather than vertical columns, and the left and right sides of the star field form a saw-tooth pattern that is both jagged and asymmetrical, with four protruding stars on the left but only three on the right. The fifty-star flag adopted in 1960 groups the stars into five rows of six, alternating with four rows of five, so that there are rows of six stars at both top and bottom, protruding evenly to left and to right; but the star field remains strongly diagonal in orientation.

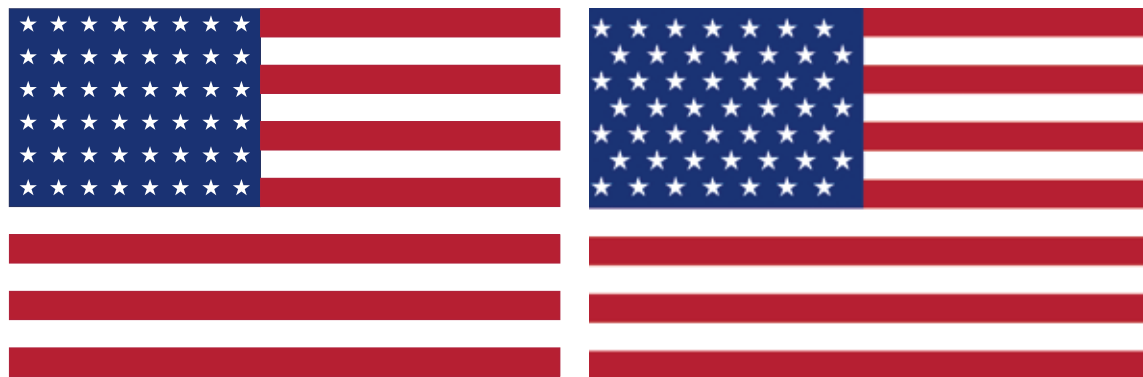
Evidently, what Johns liked in the pre-1959 flag was its sense of balance and stasis. The dynamism of the image was to come, not from its macroscopic structure, but from its microscopic texture. Fred Orton notes that the surface of Johns' *Flag* offers

lots of bits and pieces to attract the beholder's glancing gaze... Just as Cézanne articulated, mapped or negotiated a surface by applying his paint in pronounced touches or brushstrokes...so Johns's use of trailing or sliding dabs or patches of wax, paper scrap and oil paint enable him to handle the entire surface in the same way...the more you look at the surface the more you come to dwell on its details.²⁶

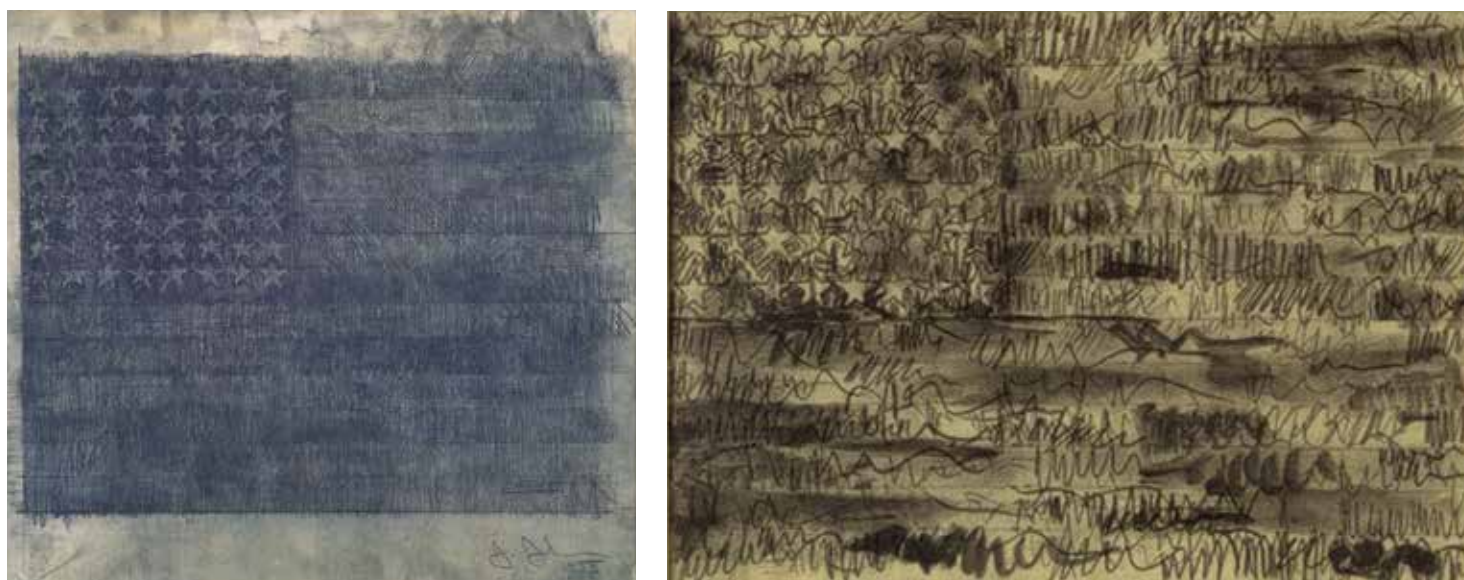
The tactile quality of the surface of Johns' *Flag* contributes strongly to the painting's sense of iconic presence—the all-over animation of the surface suggests that the paint has ceased to be inert matter and has actually come alive. As Max Kozloff wrote in 1964, Johns applies the paint "so caressingly as to make one think that the canvas was once some vast erogenous zone."²⁷

Fig.18
Illustration of US flag,
1912-58

Fig.19
Illustration of US flag,
1959



The subsequent development of the flag image in Johns' drawings, prints, and drawings over prints consists primarily of explorations of different types of marks and textures, sometimes enhancing the image and sometimes threatening to obliterate it. In a drawing contemporary with the first painting of the motif, the image of the flag emerges from a field of grey-brown washes [Fig. 20]. The borders of the stripes are drawn with carefully ruled lines, while the spaces between them are filled with rows and clusters of parallel strokes. Within each stripe, a first layer of vertical strokes seems to have been overscored with patches of diagonal hatching. Some of these diagonal hatches extend over two stripes, or connect with patches inclined the other way, so that the image as a whole is traversed by powerful visual currents, colliding and intertwining like the streams of air and water in Leonardo da Vinci's drawings of the Deluge.²⁸ At left and bottom, the straight-edged borders of the flag have been reinforced with heavy lines, and the hatching ends more or less neatly at these borders.



In contrast, the ruled line at the top edge of the flag is almost invisible, and the hatching spills over it, while the hatching at the right edge fades out as it approaches the ruled border, falling short in some stripes and spilling over in others. Working with a restricted vocabulary of marks, Johns produces an astonishing variety of visual effects.

In another flag drawing, done in 1958, Johns takes a radically different approach [Fig. 21]. The basic design of the flag is neatly ruled, but the shading seems anarchic. Broad horizontal strokes of graphite wash are smeared along some of the stripes, disregarding which are supposed to be light and which dark. The stripes are filled with linear squiggles, some neatly controlled, approximating the meticulous hatching of the 1955 drawing, others breaking free in wild undulations. Describing Johns' 1960 lithograph *Target*, Richard Field writes that "The crayon rushes over the surface almost oblivious to the image that is being formed."²⁹ The 1958 flag drawing gives the same impression, but the seeming obliviousness of Johns' line is something of an optical illusion. In fact, his scribbled lines rarely transgress the borders of the stars and stripes, and when they do so it seems to be the result, not of carelessness, but of a quest for dramatic effect.

Fig.20
Jasper Johns
Flag, 1955
Graphite and graphite wash
on prepared paper
8⁵/₈ x 10¹/₈ inches
The Museum of Modern Art,
New York
Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
(by exchange) and Committee
on Drawings Funds

Fig.21
Jasper Johns
Flag, 1958
Graphite pencil and graphite
wash on paper
9⁷/₈ x 12 inches
Collection of Barbara Bertozzi
Castelli

Johns' 1960 lithograph, *Flag I* [Fig. 21], translates the vocabulary of his 1958 drawing from the narrow, hard stroke of pencil to the thick, flowing stroke of lithographic tusche applied with a brush. As in the drawing, the vocabulary of the marks is structured around a contrast between broad horizontal strokes and narrower vertical squiggles. The contrast between drawn and painted marks, and the variety of different marks appearing within the theoretically identical stripes of the flag, recall comments that Johns made in a 1963 interview with Billy Klüver:

At one point you rule a line...made with the narrow point of a pencil, and this is called a straight line. And in another situation you make it with a very fluffy brush and with your arm...and you end up with what you call a straight line. But they're very different one from another...the work tends to correct what lies underneath...like drawing a straight line—you draw a straight line and it's crooked and you draw another straight line on top of it and it's crooked a different way and then you draw another one and eventually you have a very rich thing on your hands which is not a straight line.³⁰

For all their freedom, the marks in *Flag I* strive to remain within the channels of the stripes and the borders of the stars. The liquid medium means that the strokes expand to fill the spaces allocated to them, changing the balance of light and dark compared to the 1958 drawing.

Instead of a light field sprinkled with dark markings [Fig. 21], the flag becomes a dark field sprinkled with areas of white. These tend to appear at the edges of the stars and stripes, where Johns' brush has stopped short to avoid overrunning the border. As a result, the image is animated by a kind of visual flicker, white glints that dance along the edges of the geometric forms.

In *Flag II*, a second state of the same lithographic stone, Johns adds additional layers of tusche, applied with both brush and pen. As the inked area grows increasingly dense, the image of the flag begins to disappear into a monochrome rectangle. Johns responds by reversing the relationship between figure and ground, printing the flag in white ink on brown Kraft paper. In a third state, *Flag III*, Johns opens up the image by scratching a series of scribbled lines into the inked areas, and by printing it in grey ink on a white ground.³¹

In addition to making flags with different textures, Johns experimented with a number of different formats: superimposed flags, flags paired with blank fields, flags drawn backwards. One of his most durable variations was the double flag, one stacked atop another, which first appeared in a drawing of 1960 [Fig. 23]. The scribbled strokes of this drawing resemble those of the contemporary print,

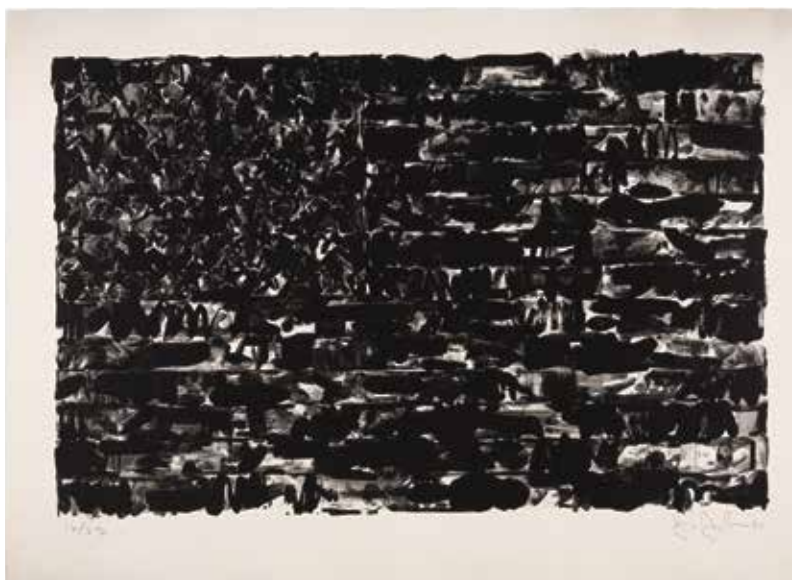


Fig. 22
Jasper Johns
Flag I, 1960
Lithograph
22 x 30 inches
Edition of 23
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions

Flag I; but the medium, graphite wash, encourages narrower strokes and permits a more nuanced range of light and dark. The dark lines stand out dramatically against the field of white and grey, making it easy to see how different the upper flag is from the lower, despite their identical format.

The doubling of the image raises a question found in Ludwig Wittgenstein (one of Johns' favorite authors) and in the "ordinary language" philosophers inspired by him. For instance, Wittgenstein asks what it means to say that two people have the same pain; Stanley Cavell responds, in a 1968 essay, by posing the more general question, "How can two things be the same thing?" As Cavell points out, two people can have the same car, but this "does not mean that there are not two of them." Similarly, the fact that two cars are the same (the same brand) does not mean that there are not significant differences between them; perhaps "mine is badly battered and yours freshly hammered out and repainted."³² Two actual flags may differ in size and fabric, but may still both be the American flag, evoking the same pride, the same shame, the same pain. Do the same rules apply to art? Are Johns' two flags the same or different? The musical analogy is useful here: we could say that they are two different "performances" of the same composition. Starting from the same point, the artist and the viewer end up at different places.

Johns returns to the double flag image in a 1972 lithograph [Fig. 24]. The "brushwork" of this lithograph is closer to the painterly language of his 1960 flag prints than to the linear drawing of the same year. The consistent viscosity of the lithographic tusche encourages more rounded "scribbles" and permits longer horizontal strokes. Comparison to the 1960 print [Fig. 22] shows how Johns has learned to modulate the density of the tusche, so that it thins and thickens in the course of a single stroke. Cumulatively, Johns tends to darken the upper right corner of each flag, so that it balances the dark rectangle of the star field, separated by an area of lighter grey. In the top flag, this lighter area spreads all across the lower stripes; in the bottom flag, it is limited to the center. There is a wave-like undulation of light and dark as the eye moves upward through the two flags. The liquid, dissolving character of the horizontal strokes is offset, however, by the harsh white *sgraffiti*, borrowed from *Flag III* but returning here with wilder, more jagged oscillations.

The white *sgraffiti* play an important role in the lower flag's star field, counteracting the density of the black ink. They are less prominent in the upper

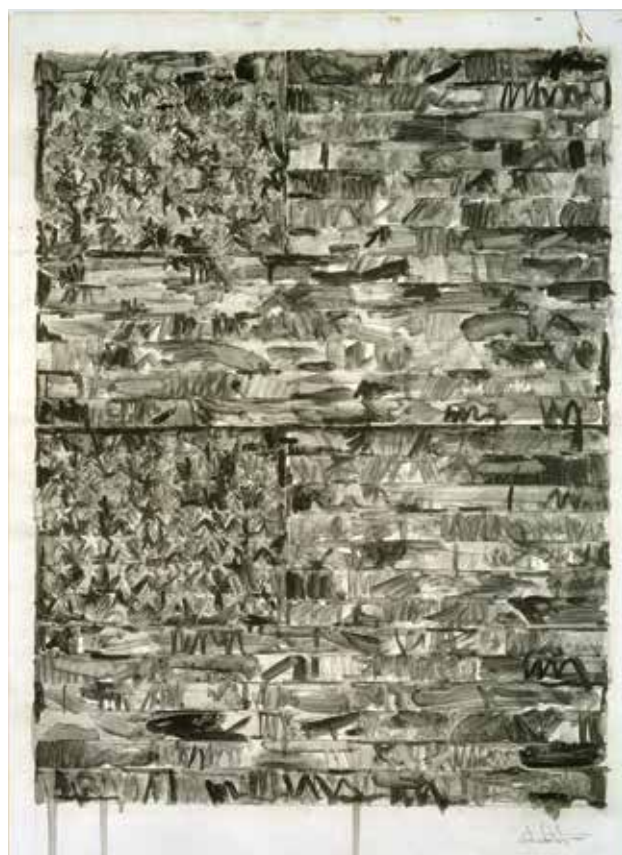


Fig.23
Jasper Johns
Two Flags, 1960
Graphite wash on paper
29½ x 21¾ inches
Collection of the artist

star field, where there is a greater variation of light and dark within the field itself. Close examination of these areas also reveals a subtle change in their formal structure, compared to earlier flags. As discussed earlier, Johns continued to prefer the 48-star flag to the later versions with 49 or 50 stars because of the clarity of its organization, with the stars arranged in a simple grid, six high and eight wide. However, there was always a formal tension between the six horizontal rows of stars and the seven stripes to their right. In the actual flag [Fig. 18], this was resolved by stretching out the spacing of the six rows so that they occupied a height equivalent to that of the adjacent stripes. As a result, the stars did not line up with the stripes. The lowest star is in line with the red stripe to its right; the next highest star is mostly in line with the adjacent white stripe, but overlaps slightly with the next red stripe; the third star falls right on the border between the red stripe and the next white stripe; and so on. In his first flag painting [Fig. 17], Johns stayed close to this arrangement, although he moved the stars closer together, creating a blue border

between them and the adjacent stripes. (In his preliminary drawing [Fig. 20], he mimicked the progressive displacement of the stars, moving out of alignment with the stripes, but miscalculated, ending up with eight rather than six rows.) Finally, in the *Two Flags* lithograph of 1972 [Fig. 24], he resolved this formal problem by lining up the upper edges of the stars' extended arms with the upper edges of the six stripes to their right. This achieved a greater formal coherence between stars and stripes, but left a large blank area at the top of the star field

The 1972 *Two Flags* [Fig. 24] was printed from two separate lithographic stones. In the course of working on it, Johns evidently pulled a number of proofs from the stone bearing the upper flag [Fig. 25]. Over twenty years later, he returned to these proofs and used them as the starting point for an extraordinary

series of drawings. (The source image can be identified in most cases by the single dot of black ink floating near the right edge of the flag.)³³

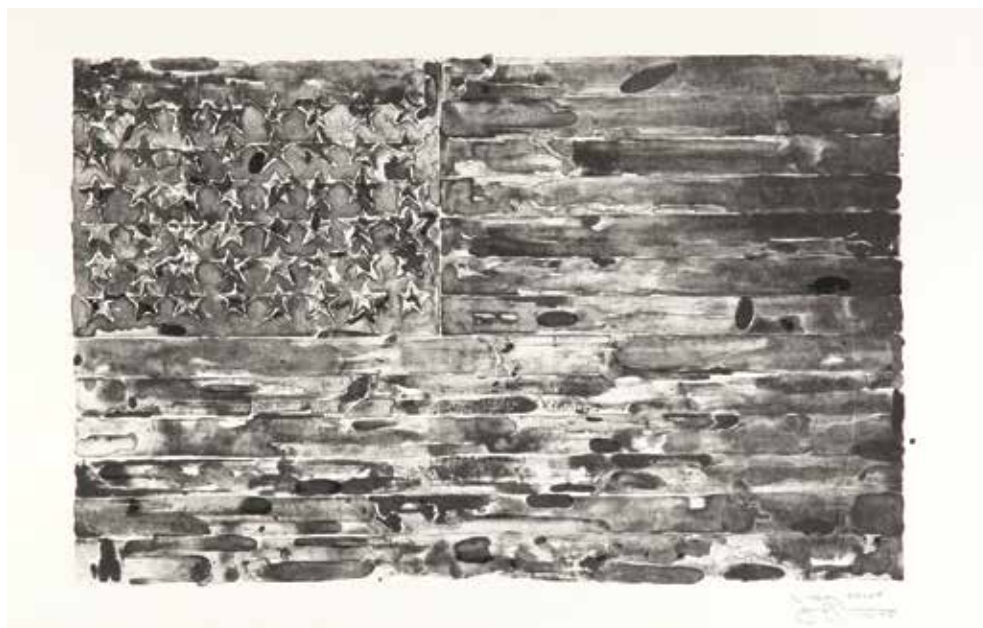
In a sensuous, understated reworking of the image [Fig 26], Johns paints over the 1972 print with a wash of carborundum. This is a gritty abrasive used in both lithography and intaglio printing. In lithography it is used to prepare stones for reuse by grinding them down, erasing earlier images. In intaglio printing, it is mixed with an adhesive and applied to the plate, where it holds the ink in a layer that can be more or less dense; the result is an area of ground tone, like the background of an aquatint.³⁴ Carborundum is not typically used for drawing—but, then, Johns is a master of unusual materials. The carborundum wash shares the contradictory



Fig. 24
Jasper Johns
Two Flags, 1972
Lithograph
31½ x 23 inches
Edition of 40
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions

qualities of the graphite wash that Johns used in his drawings of the early 1960s. It has both a granular texture and a gunmetal sheen, distinctively different from the matte quality of lithographic inks.³⁵

The most obvious effect of the overpainting with carborundum wash is to cancel out most of the tonal variation in the 1972 print [Fig. 25]. The white *sgraffiti* vanish completely, the light areas go dark in the horizontal stripes, and the black vertical scribbles disappear under the dark washes, remaining subliminally visible like transparent ghosts in a dark room. The striped quadrants of the image lose their “flag” quality and become passages of pure abstraction. (Indeed, they look like fragments of paintings by Frank Stella or Brice Marden,



artists profoundly influenced by Johns). Conversely, the “flag” image becomes more visible in the field of stars. The outlines of the stars in the 1972 print are almost lost in the vivid alternation of light and dark throughout the field. The overpainting in the 1994 drawing suppresses the value contrasts in the field, so that the white outlines of the stars emerge more clearly, springing into sight the way that the actual stars do on a moonless night. This makes the blank area at the top of the star field more visible than it was in the original print.

Where are the borders of an image? In a canvas, we tend to assume that the “painting” corresponds, literally, to the area covered by paint. If there are blank spaces within this, they are part of the composition. Blank spaces outside the composition are *not* part of the composition, and are generally eliminated by folding the blank canvas around the stretcher so that it cannot be seen. Johns challenged this convention in a series of paintings begun in 1955, where he placed one or more flags on a larger blank field.

In a print, the relationship between image and support is more ambiguous. As a practical matter, the image is generally printed onto a larger sheet of paper, leaving a considerable margin. Often, when a print is framed, this border is partially or completely hidden by overmatting; similarly, when prints are reproduced, they are often cropped to the image edge.

Fig.25
Jasper Johns
Trial proof 1/2 for
Two Flags, 1972 (top flag)
Lithograph
21³/₄ x 28¹/₂ inches
Collection of the artist



Fig.26
Jasper Johns
Flag, 1972/1994
Carborundum wash over
lithograph
17¹/₈ x 23¹/₂ inches
Collection of the artist

In several of his drawings over the 1972 flag lithograph, Johns addresses the ambiguous status of the border, bringing it back into the composition, much as he had in his paintings of the late 1950s and 1960s. In one drawing [Fig. 27], he surrounds the flag with broad swathes of black ink. The stripes of the flag are overscored with horizontal strokes of ink, concealing much of the “painterly” brushwork in the print, and reducing the tonal variations. In the star field, the stars themselves are modified only slightly, but the background is repainted as a dense black. The result is that the flag is now defined primarily by the reserved lines between the stripes, around the stars, and around the flag as a whole. These white lines, and the remaining areas of grey, shimmer in front of a broad black field.

In another drawing [Fig. 28], Johns seems to have reworked the image in two stages, first laying down washes of brown paint both within the flag and throughout the surrounding border, and then reworking the flag image with white acrylic.

The result is a more delicate, ethereal version of the 1960 *Flag II*, where Johns printed the flag in white on brown Kraft paper. The black-and-grey brushwork of the underlying lithograph is only dimly visible through the successive layers of brown and white paint. What you see, instead, are shapes defined by the overpainting that selectively conceals the dark ink of the original image. The topmost layer of white acrylic recapitulates the print’s contrast between horizontal strokes and vertical squiggles, but the change of medium leads to a change in the character of the strokes. Like the encaustic of Johns’ early work, the white acrylic is a stiff medium, requiring forceful movements of the brush. The strokes become angular instead of curved, and the paint is scumbled unevenly across the surface, varying from opaque to transparent. The stars are filled with denser accumulations of white paint than the surrounding field. Johns limits his strokes so that each white star seems to be contained within a black outline retained from the underlying print. Similarly, he reinforces the edges of the flag with four dark lines, drawn with pencil and ruler. The hard precision of the border emphasizes, by contrast, the mobile white strokes within the flag and the uneven brown washes surrounding it. Once again, Johns imbues his abstract icon with an exceptional sense of presence by animating its surface. Like its black-on-black counterpart, the white-on-brown flag also exemplifies Johns’ uncanny ability to make absence palpable: to enhance the iconic image by making it vanish before our eyes.

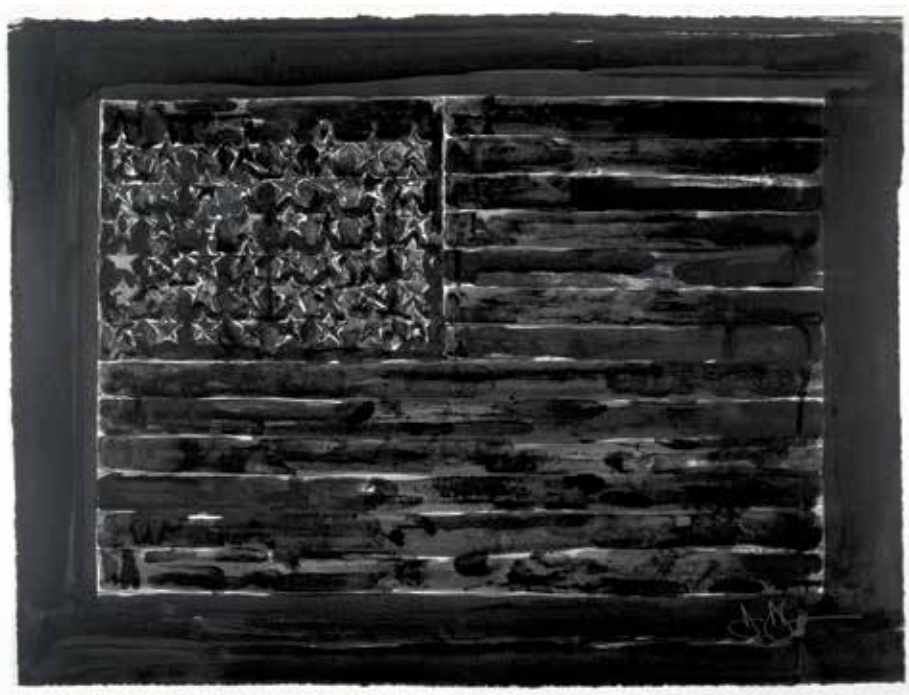


Fig.27
Jasper Johns
Flag, 1972/1994
Ink over lithograph
16⁵/₈ x 22⁵/₁₆ inches
Museum of Fine
Arts, Houston
Gift of Caroline
Weiss Law

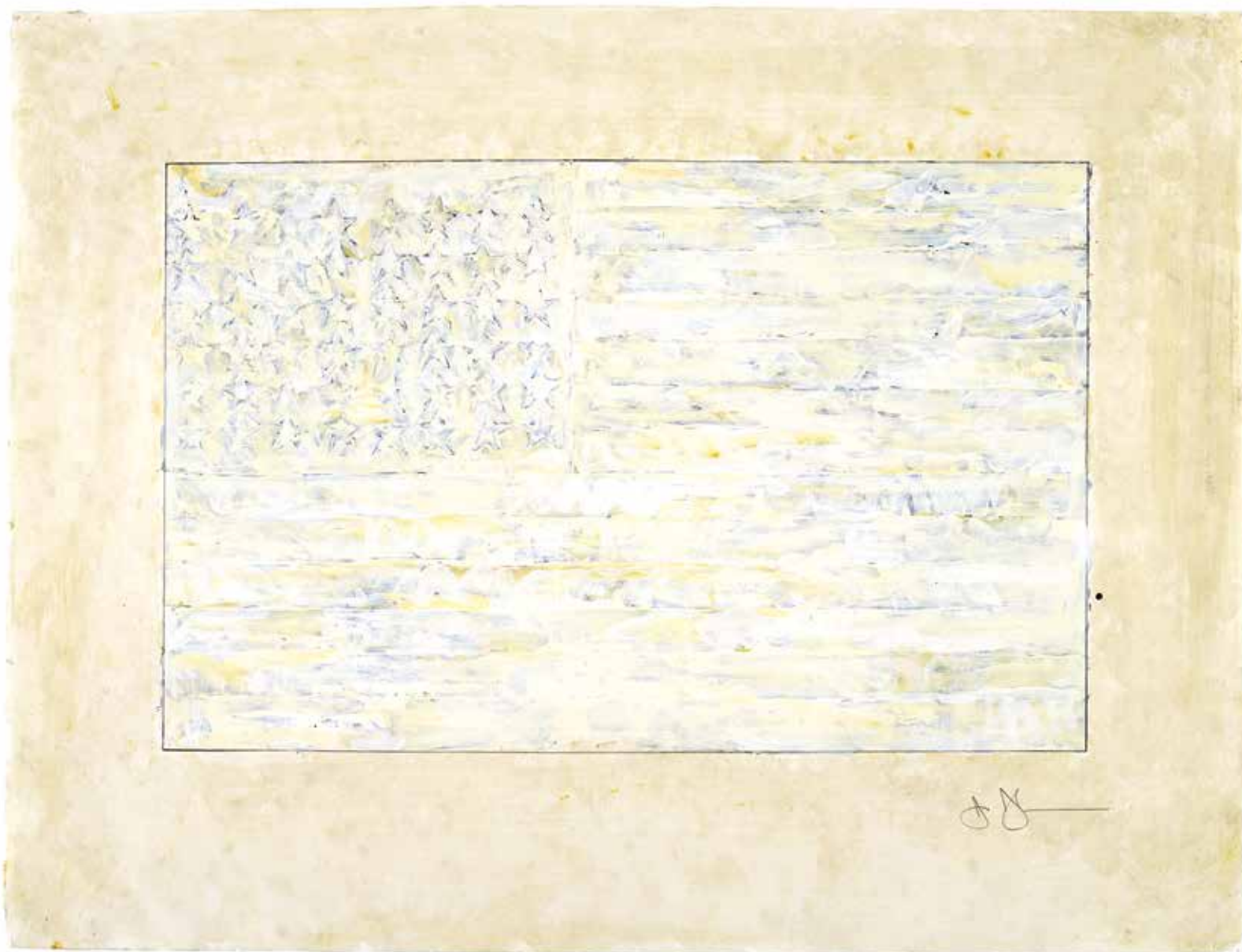


Fig. 28
Jasper Johns
Flag, 1972/1994
Acrylic and graphite
over lithograph
19⁵/₈ x 25⁷/₈ inches
Sally and Wynn
Kramarsky Collection

Johns' first number paintings, done in 1955, were single, iconic images: isolated numerals, centered on blank fields. Soon thereafter, he came across a chart of the letters of the alphabet, arranged in a table. This gave him the idea of arranging symbols within rectangular grids: first alphabets, then series of numbers.³⁶ Beginning with his very first alphabet and number paintings, Johns decided to add an extra column to his tables, so that the series would shift place in each succeeding row:

_0123456789
 01234567890
 12345678901

...

In the last row, the series reappears in its initial position (concluding with 9), signaling that the possible variations have been exhausted. The length of the series thus determines the height as well as the width of the table. The ten numbers 0-9 require a table 11 spaces wide and the same number high. The alphabet requires a 27 by 27 table. If the resulting pictures are rectangular rather than square, it is because the letters and numerals are taller than they are wide; their proportions determine the shape of each cell within the table, and this in turn determines the proportions of the grid as a whole.

Johns painted a series of numerical grids in 1958. He also explored this image in drawings done in 1958 and 1966, followed by a 1967 lithograph, *Numbers* [Fig. 29]. These images utilize the same old-fashioned, stenciled typography found in the 1958 paintings, but in the 1967-68 works Johns makes the numerals wider, with the result that the grids too are broader, closer to squares than to columns. The subtle play of blacks, whites, and greys in the lithograph anticipates the palette of his 1972 *Two Flags* [Fig. 24]. While printing the lithograph, or shortly thereafter, Johns made a working proof, modified with black gouache, to see what the image would look like with a starker opposition between black and white [Fig. 30].³⁷ The bodies of the numerals are filled more solidly, so that their contours are picked out more clearly against the field of black. The transformation heightens the visual drama of the image, and also the relationships among adjacent cells—for instance, the way that the diagonal sides of the 4s line up to create two longer diagonals dividing the visual field.

The geometric relationships among the shifting numerals in *Numbers* suggest the internal relationships of a Buddhist *mandala*, a complex diagram of the universe which can nonetheless be understood as a unity because of its symmetrical composition. Within this framework, the numbers 0 through 9 repeat like a mantra within the meditative grid.



Fig.29
 Jasper Johns
Numbers, 1967
 Lithograph
 28 x 23½ inches
 Edition of 35
 Published by
 Universal Limited
 Art Editions

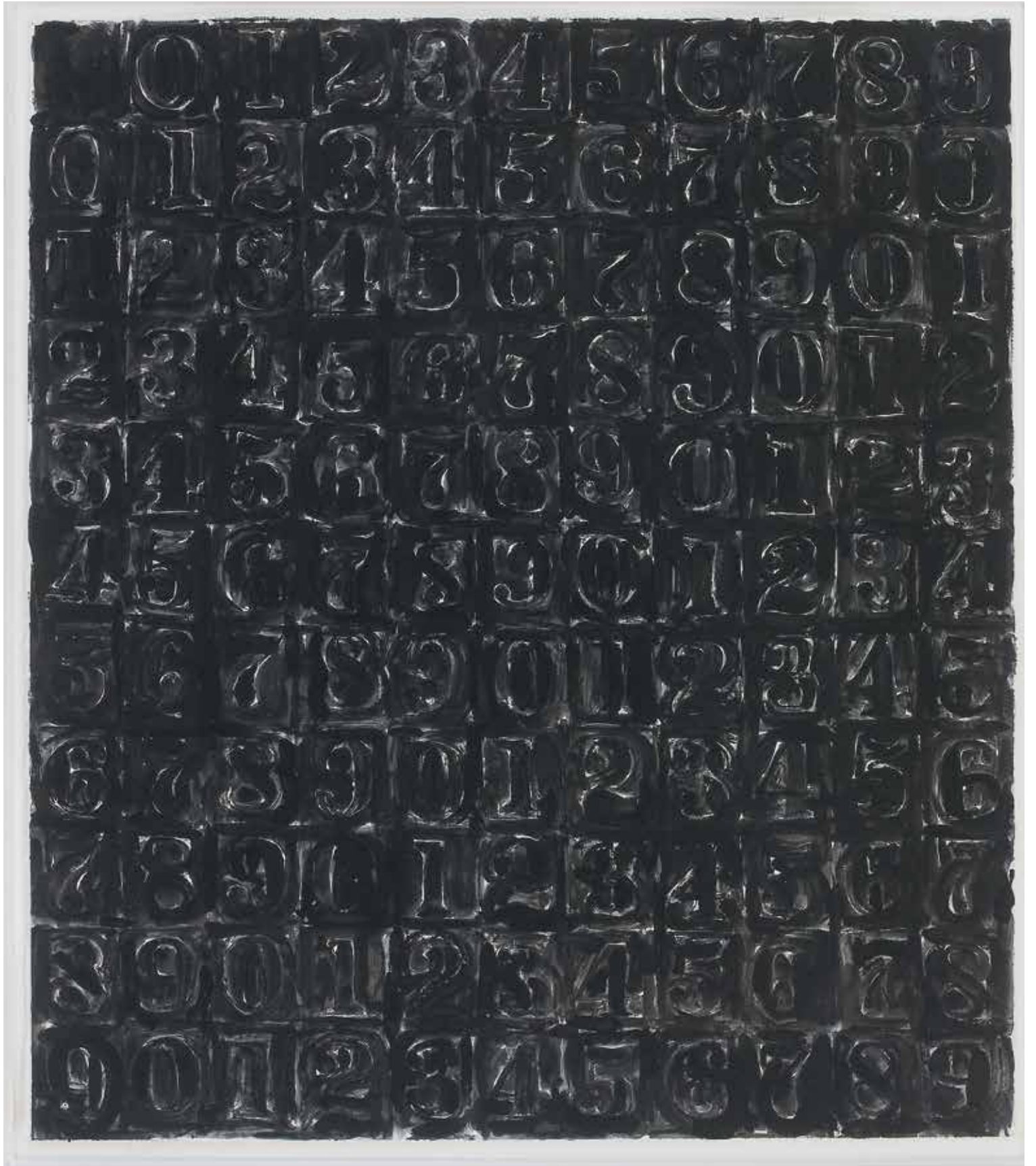


Fig.30
Jasper Johns
Numbers, c.1967
Gouache over lithograph
22⁵/₁₆ x 19¹¹/₁₆ inches
Collection of Irving Blum

After arriving at the format of the numbered grid, Johns soon began to look for other ways of utilizing numerical sequences. One alternative, first broached in 1960, was to depict the numbers 0 through 9 superimposed on one another in a single composition. At first glance, this idea seems surprising, even bewildering. It makes more sense, however, if seen as Johns' response to the use of superimposition by modern masters such as Pablo Picasso and Willem de Kooning.

In an often-quoted statement of 1935, Picasso had described his work as a “sum of destructions.” What he meant was that he would paint a picture, then radically rework it, then rework it again.³⁸ For the Old Masters, reworking a finished canvas was something to conceal. Where such changes—*pentimenti*—have become visible, it is usually because the passage of time has had the unanticipated effect of rendering the upper layer of paint transparent. In contrast, for Picasso, reworking was standard operating process. Far from



concealing it, he made a point (particularly after 1930) of leaving traces of his earlier designs visible in his finished works, inviting the viewer to follow the evolution from initial idea to finished composition.

Picasso's 1931 still life *Pitcher and Bowl of Fruit* [Fig. 31] was long in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, although it now belongs to the Guggenheim. Here, the primary image of pitcher, fruit bowl, and table is composed of heavy black lines and areas of glowing color, evoking a stained-glass window. Picasso's example persuaded American artists such as Richard Pousette-Dart and Romare Bearden to turn to cathedral windows as a model for modernism. Other artists, such as Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock, were more influenced by the way that Picasso's work preserved the record of its own development. In *Pitcher and Bowl of Fruit*, the web of pale intersecting lines in the background reveals the compositional alternatives that Picasso tried and discarded on the way to the final design. The painting can be read as a series of layers, allowing us to look backwards in time.

De Kooning's 1949 canvas, *Asheville*, for instance, shows Picasso's influence not only in its curving biomorphic figuration, but also in its visible

Fig.31
Pablo Picasso
*Pitcher and Bowl of
Fruit*, 1931
Oil on canvas
51½ x 64 inches
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, New York
© 2010 Estate of Pablo
Picasso/Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York

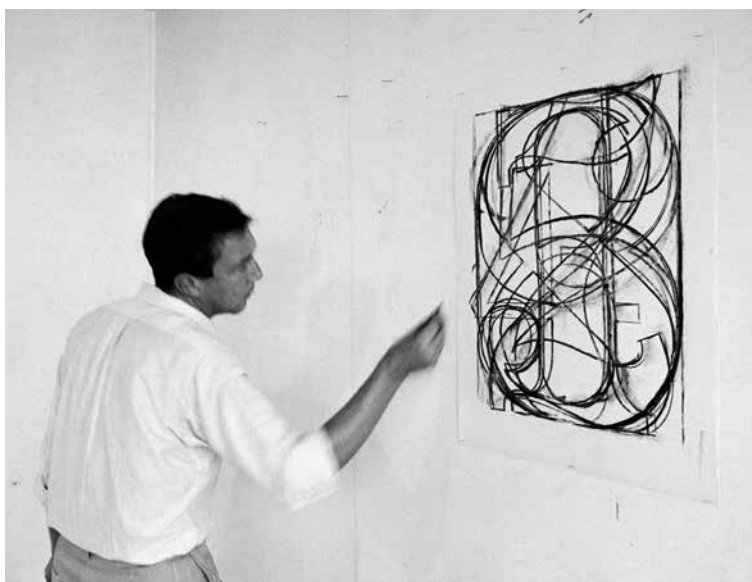
Fig.32
Willem de Kooning
Asheville, 1949
Oil and enamel on
cardboard
25⁹/₁₆ x 31⁷/₈ inches
The Phillips Collection,
Washington, D.C.
© 2010 The Willem de
Kooning Foundation/
Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York

reworking. An early composition of vivid reds, oranges, yellows and blues can be seen disappearing beneath new layers of white and black overpainting [Fig. 32]. It was pictures like this (and not just the dripped abstractions of Jackson Pollock) that inspired Harold Rosenberg's concept of "action painting." As Rosenberg wrote:

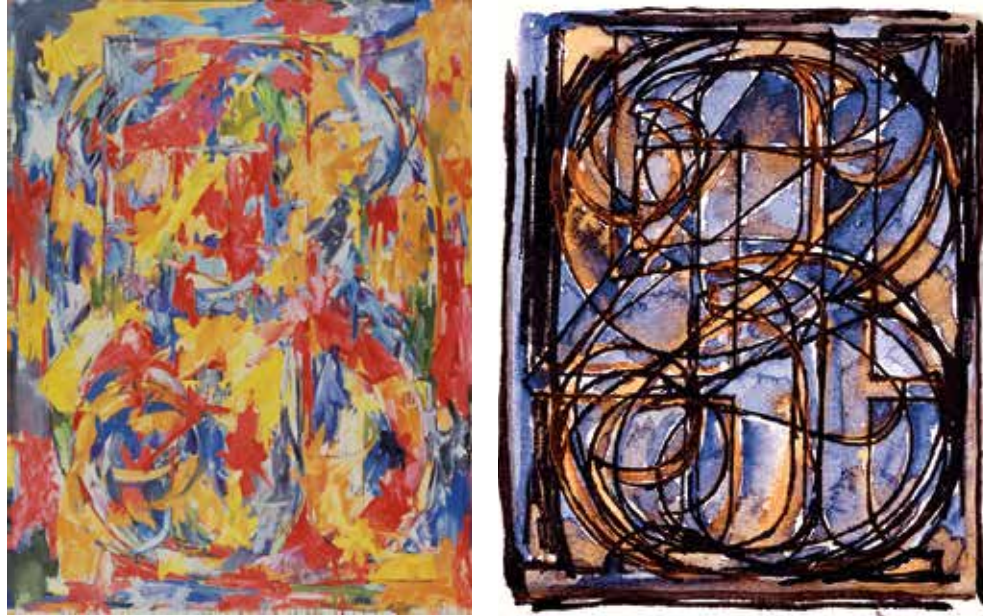
The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter... The canvas...[is] itself the 'mind' through which the painter thinks by changing a surface with paint.³⁹

This idea—that a painting should be the spontaneous result of a process of reworking—was carried to new extremes by the Abstract Expressionists, quickly becoming an item of dogma for the New York School.

Fig.33
Jasper Johns
In Edisto Beach, 1965
Photograph: Ugo Mulas
© Ugo Mulas Heirs
All rights reserved



Rosenberg's description of the painter "doing something" to the "material in front of him," studying the result, and then acting again, is echoed in Johns' prescription: "Take an object / Do something to it / Do something else to it." However, Johns rejects the programmatic spontaneity of Abstract Expressionism, replacing it with careful premeditation. From this perspective, we can see Johns' superimposed numbers as an ironic response to the model of successive revision in Picasso and de Kooning. A 1965 series of photographs by Ugo Mulas shows Johns drawing the numbers 0 through 9 [Fig. 33] by carefully inscribing one numeral over another. The relationship between successive layers, echoing some elements of the preceding numerals and departing from others, resembles the relationship between the layers of a Pollock or a de Kooning. What is different is that this relationship is not the result of spontaneous reworking. Rather it reflects the principles of typography, according to which designers try to create the different letters and numbers from a basic vocabulary of repeated forms. A similar curve typically appears at the top of the 2 and the 3, for instance, although they diverge in their lower halves. For the subjective necessity of Abstract Expressionism, Johns substitutes impersonal logic.



Johns' drawings of the *0 through 9* motif were crisply linear, the better to reveal the complex interweaving of forms. In contrast, his paintings of this motif [Fig. 34] display dense, painterly brushwork, looking back to de Kooning. In a 1962 essay, "After Abstract Expressionism," Clement Greenberg analyzed Johns' paradoxical relationship to his predecessor:

Jasper Johns...brings de Kooning's influence to a head by suspending it clearly, as it were, between abstraction and representation...The painterly paintedness of Johns' picture sets off, and is set off by, the flatness of his number, letter, target, flag, and map images...The original flatness of the canvas, with a few outlines stenciled on it, is shown as sufficing to represent adequately all that a picture by Johns really does represent. The paint surface itself, with its de Kooning-esque play of lights and darks, is shown, on the other hand, as being completely superfluous to this end. Everything that usually serves representation and illusion is left to serve nothing but itself, that is, abstraction; while everything that usually serves the abstract or decorative—flatness, bare outlines, all-over or symmetrical design—is put to the service of representation.⁴⁰

As Greenberg suggests, the color, shading, and directional brushwork of the painted *0 through 9* seem as though they should evoke a human figure or a natural scene, but are deprived of that function; meanwhile, the outlines of the numbers—suspended somewhere between figuration and abstraction—vanish into the welter of colored strokes.

In 1976, Johns returned to the linear version of the *0 through 9* motif, using it in a small lithograph intended as a bookplate for the Friends of the Sarah Lawrence Library.⁴¹ Several proofs of this image served in turn as starting points for a series of colored drawings. The transparent washes of color in one of these drawings [Fig. 35] look back beyond de Kooning to Picasso's "stained-glass" style of the 1930s [Fig. 31]. At the same time, the palette of blues and greens recalls the

Fig.34
Jasper Johns
0 through 9, 1960
Oil on canvas
72 x 54 inches
San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art,
San Francisco

Fig.35
Jasper Johns
0 through 9, 1976
Watercolor over
lithograph
11¹/₄ x 10¹/₂ inches
Private collection

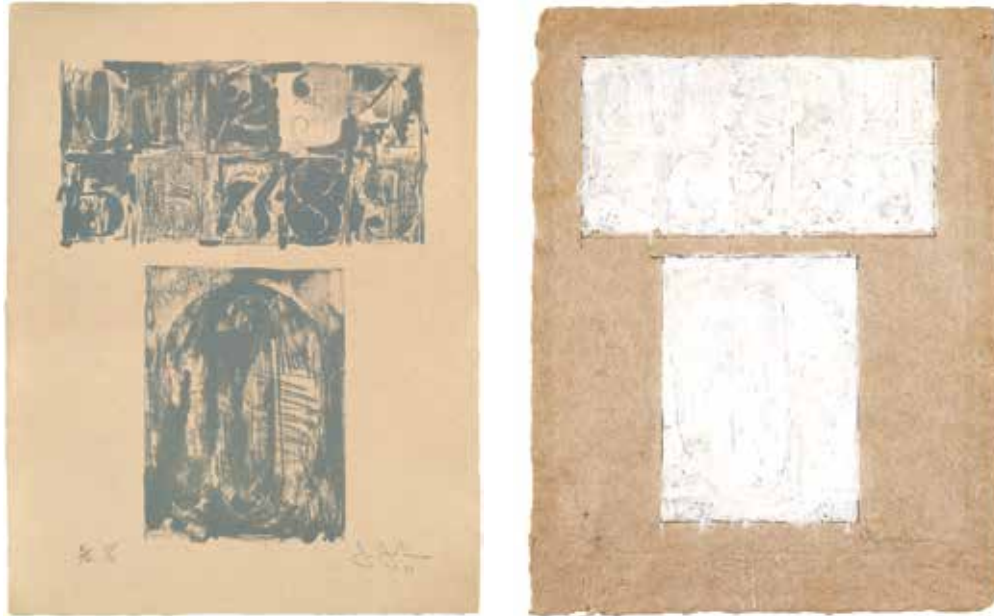


Fig.36
 Jasper Johns
0 – 9 (Gray), 1963
 portfolio of 10 lithographs
 in 1 color each
 20½ x 15¾ inches
 Edition of 10, B/C
 Published by Universal
 Limited Art Edition

Fig.37
 Jasper Johns
0 – 9, c.1962
 Oil, encaustic and
 graphite over lithograph
 20½ x 15¾ inches
 Collection of
 Michael Goldberg

landscape watercolors of Paul Cézanne, another of Johns’ great exemplars. As if to bear out the justice of Greenberg’s analysis, the evocation of natural light and color is paired with abstract form.

In 1960, the same year that he invented the *0 through 9* motif, Johns conceived of a variant dubbed *0-9*, realized as an ambitious series of lithographs. Here, the ten digits from 0 to 9 are presented sequentially rather than being superimposed. However, the relationship is evoked by juxtaposing each individual number with a chart containing all ten of them. Furthermore, the ten different digits are not drawn on different lithographic stones. Instead, Johns used the same stone, modifying it to transform each numeral into its successor. All ten numbers are not simultaneously visible in *0-9*, as they are in *0 through 9*. However, as Robert Rosenblum noted, “Each print, with the necessary exception of the first, bears the marks of its predecessors.”

The first proofs were done in 1960, juxtaposing a large 0 with a small chart divided into two rows, 0-4 and 5-0 [Fig. 36]. The two-row chart was a motif that Johns had previously used in a 1959 painting. If the large numeral is an icon, then the chart becomes a kind of predella such as you sometimes find in early Renaissance altarpieces, with small pictures grouped beneath a large image. (Of course Johns’ chart appears above, not below, the large iconic numeral.) The project was interrupted by a search for an ideal paper, and resumed only in 1963, when Johns reworked the stone to create the remaining nine numerals. (Beginning with number 5, he also reworked the small chart.) From these ten sequential images, three separate portfolios were printed. In Rosenblum’s summary:

The first set, A, is in black ink on off-white paper; the second, B, in gray ink on unbleached linen paper; and the third, C, in a sequence of ten colors and non-colors (yellow, green, blue, violet, red, orange, brown, black, gray, and white) that recall, like the ten digits, Johns’s attraction to listing a complete and fundamental series, whether it be alphabetical, numerical, or chromatic.⁴²

Meanwhile, in 1962, Johns had taken an early proof, on a sheet of rough brown paper, and repainted it in white [Figs. 1, 37]. The palette of this unique work corresponds to that of a contemporary lithograph, *Flag II*, printed in white on brown; and anticipates the last sheet of Set C, where the number 9 is also printed in white ink. The tactile quality of the white paint, canceling the printed image, and the carefully penciled borders, also anticipate—at a much greater remove—the white flag drawing of 1994 [Fig. 28]. As discussed earlier, the overpainting of the original image in this case yields a new, symbolic form: a white cross. White, here, might be taken simply as a symbol of purity. But the fact that it has been used to cancel a more detailed image suggests that we might also read it as an allegory of the *via negativa*, the path that leads to God by eliminating every specific quality, leaving only the vast blankness of infinite possibility.

Johns returned to the theme of sequential numbers in 1968, executing a set of large single numerals. In a feat of virtuoso draftsmanship, each numeral in



the 1968 series is drawn with a different combination of graphic marks, creating different relationships between figure and ground. Johns throws a surprise ball in the number 7. At first glance, it looks like an enlarged version of the 7 from the 0-9 series of 1960-63 [Fig. 38]. However, a crude but recognizable version of the head of the *Mona Lisa* appears in the bulbous stem of the 7. As Johns explained, just before he began work on the series, “someone gave me some iron-on decal ‘Mona Lisas’ which you would get from sending in something like bubble gum wrappers and a quarter,” and he incorporated one of these decals into the lithographic image. The borrowed image was doubly charged for Johns, recalling not only the original painting by Leonardo da Vinci but also Marcel Duchamp’s transgressive gesture of painting a moustache on a reproduction of Leonardo’s masterpiece.⁴³

The first version of this series of numerals was printed in black and brownish grey on a white sheet. Over the course of 1968-69, Johns reworked the same stones and plates into a complex series of color lithographs. Each numeral in

Fig.38
Jasper Johns
7 from 0 – 9 (Black), 1963
portfolio of 10 lithographs
in 1 color each
20³/₂ x 15³/₄ inches
Edition of 10, A/C
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions

Fig.39
Jasper Johns
Figure 7, 1969
Lithograph
38 x 31 inches
Edition of 40
Published by Gemini,
G.E.L.

was now printed over three horizontal bands of color. Like the numbers and alphabets in Johns' grid paintings, these bands shifted methodically as the series advanced. Johns visualized the spectrum as a color circle with alternating primary and secondary colors: blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple, and back to blue again. The colored bands in *Figure 5* were green, yellow and orange; those in *Figure 6*, yellow, orange and red; and those in *Figure 7*, orange, red, and purple.⁴⁴ In the "spectral" version of *Figure 7* [Fig. 40], the image of the *Mona Lisa* is emphasized by glowing orange highlights, and it is accompanied by a ghostly white handprint not present in the earlier black and grey print. (The handprint is borrowed from earlier paintings such as *Land's End* [Fig. 43].)

Johns began to explore the medium of etching at the end of the 1960s, and continued with increasing intensity through the 1970s. In 1975, he created two etched versions of the series 0-9. Both were executed on ten small copper plates. However, one was published as a series of small, individual numbers on separate

Fig.40
Jasper Johns
0 - 9, 1975/1988
Watercolor over
intaglio
9³/₁₆ x 13⁷/₈ inches
Kimiko and John
Powers Collection



sheets; the other as a two-row table like that in the upper section of the 1963 0-9 lithographs.⁴⁵ Johns printed a proof of the first series in the same tabular format as the second, but did not publish it. In 1988, he took a copy of this unpublished proof and overpainted it in white—not in the all-encompassing manner of the cancelled 0 from 1960 [Fig. 37] or the whited-out flag of 1994 [Fig. 28], but selectively, leaving visible or reinscribing the contours of the numerals, while covering their interiors and their backgrounds with tiny, energetic strokes of white paint, so that the numbers seemed on the verge of disappearing into a snowstorm. The one exception was the figure 7, which was painted white and then repainted with orange, red and purple so that it resembled the *Figure 7* lithograph of 1969; Johns also added tiny versions of the face of the *Mona Lisa* and the white hand accompanying it. If the two rows of iconic numbers recall the predella of an early Renaissance altarpiece, the personalized 7 here seems to represent Johns' special patron saint, the subject of a personal devotion. Appropriately, it is inscribed to his early collector and friend, Kimiko Powers.

ALLEGORIES



Johns' *Untitled* drawing of 1987/2008 presents a disturbing image—a wristwatch dangling amid the ruins of a face—in strangely seductive guise. The lips are lipstick red, the eyes are glowing yellow, and the background is purple and pink, shaded from dark to light. We might be able to decode the symbolism of the watch and the face, but finding the key to Johns' allegory would not tell us why he has decided to decorate it in such sickly sweet colors.

Discussing the role of allegory in Johns' work, Fred Orton notes that the word comes from the Greek *allegoria*, "other-speaking." To express yourself allegorically is "to speak otherwise or to signify other than that which is said... *Allegoria* is a private, guarded way of speaking: the 'mob' may hear it, but it is most intended for the 'few'; what is spoken is spoken publicly but, at the same time, privately."⁴⁶ Johns' allegories take this tendency to an extreme. Impelled by private experience, but reluctant to disclose it, they seem intended to be understood not by the few, but by none. Like Wittgenstein's insistent "one must be silent," they communicate the pathos of the incommunicable.

Fig.41
Jasper Johns
Untitled,
1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

Nonetheless, over the last half century, Johns has changed his manner of being silent. By examining his allegorical drawings over prints, and the works from which they derive, we can trace the evolution of this silence.

In retrospect, Johns' first allegorical works seem to be the pictures of 1963 linked to the poet Hart Crane, such as *Periscope (Hart Crane)*, *Diver*, and *Land's End*. But identifying the appearance of the allegorical mode in Johns' work is trickier than it seems.

In each of the "Crane" pictures, there appears the motif of a straight-edge or a hand sweeping along the arc of a circle. This image derives from a 1959 canvas, *Device Circle*, in which Johns traces a circle on canvas by means of a rudimentary compass: a stick attached at one end to the center of the canvas and pierced at the other hand by a pin that traces a circle through the painted field. The placement of the circle within the rectangle of the canvas is like the placement of Johns' targets in his previous canvases, as if the picture were an early stage of a painting from that series, left unfinished. The home-made compass is a trick of the trade, a device for drawing perfect circles. Coincidentally (or not), the demonstration echoes Georges Braque's maxim, "The painter who wished to make a circle would only draw a curve...the compass would give him certitude."⁴⁷ The product is an actual circle, not a picture of a circle, just as the *Flag* [Fig. 17] is not an illusionistic painting of a flag. In its insistence on literalism rather than illusion, and on process rather than self-expression, *Device Circle* is what Jeffrey Weiss calls "an allegory of painting" — a manifesto stating what seemed artistically possible or valid in 1959.

This homemade compass returns, with a different function and a different meaning, in the 1961 canvas, *Good Time Charley*. Here, an 18" ruler is bolted to the right edge of a canvas, sweeping out a circle that begins near the upper right corner, traverses the center of the picture, and heads back toward the right edge. This time, it is the full length of the straight-edge, and not just a pin at the tip, that scrapes through the paint surface, smearing and scumbling as it travels. However, the ruler does not complete its rotation. It stops short at approximately an eight o'clock position, apparently halted by encountering the obstacle of an upside-down metal cup, fixed to the canvas and engraved with the words "Good Time Charley." It is as though the artist's labor has been interrupted by a friend intent on partying.⁴⁸

In 1961-62, Johns executes two paintings called *Device*, colored and grey versions of the same composition [Fig. 42]. Here, two rulers or straight-edges are attached to the canvas, one at either side. Each one creates a semi-circle of smeared paint, contrasting with the regular pattern of brushstrokes on the rest of the surface. The word, "DEVICE," is stenciled at the lower edge of the canvas. Johns had recently completed his sculpture *Painted Bronze*, which reproduced a Savarin coffee can serving as a holder for a bunch of paintbrushes. As Fred Orton argues, Johns' interest seems to have been piqued by the Savarin label, which ran in a continuous band around the can, suggesting the idea of a painting in the shape of a cylinder, with a top and bottom, but no right or left edge. The continuous band of the label is evoked in a 1962 painting, *Fool's House*, where the title is stenciled onto the canvas, beginning at the right with the letters "FOOL'S HO"

and concluding on the left with “USE,” as if the left side of the painting were in fact a continuation of the right, joined by an invisible seam.⁴⁹ It seems probable that we should interpret the two semi-circles of the *Device* paintings in the same manner, as the right and left halves of a single circle, divided along a seam, and unfolded so that they appear in reverse order on opposite sides of the canvas.

From this perspective, the plank attached to the center of the grey *Device* should probably be read as a bar from the painting’s stretcher. If the device circle were centered on the canvas, then the bar would be where it is supposed to be: at the edge of the canvas. Since the image has been rotated 90° (around the imaginary cylinder), it appears instead at the center. Evidently, the bar has also migrated from the back of the canvas to the front. This is not an unfamiliar move in Johns’ work of the era. We find reversed canvases, displaying their stretchers, in works such as *Canvas* (1956), on *Fool’s House* [1962], and on *According to What* (1964 [Fig. 51]).

In sum, in the grey *Device* painting, we seem to see a cylindrical work



Fig.42
Jasper Johns
Device, 1962
Oil on canvas
with wood
40 x 30 inches
The Baltimore
Museum of Art
Purchased with funds
provided by The
Dexter M. Ferry, Jr.,
Trustee Corporation
Fund, and by Edith
Ferry Hooper, 1976

Fig.43
Jasper Johns
Land’s End, 1963
Oil on canvas
with wood
67 x 48¼ inches
San Francisco
Museum of
Modern Art
Gift of Mr. & Mrs.
Harry W. Anderson

simultaneously from two different angles, and from both front and back. The allegorical implications go beyond the formalist concerns of the 1959 *Device Circle*. The contrast between the frontal, public face of the canvas and its hidden, private face echoes Wittgenstein’s opposition between the public space of language and the private space of inexpressible experience. The shifting angles from which the cylindrical composition may be viewed evoke a *Rashomon*-like sense that truth depends on the perspective of the viewer, and that there is in the end no one true story. *Device* is not just an allegory of painting, but an allegory of the self.

With *Land’s End* of 1963 we arrive for the first time at work by Johns that seems to have a specific personal reference, announced by a closely related work, *Periscope* (*Hart Crane*). Tormented by doubts about his identity and talent, the poet Hart Crane committed suicide in 1932 by jumping off a ship. One recent critic, Brian Reed, interprets *Land’s End* unambiguously as a representation of this event, “an elegy for a drowning man. Crane waves to his would-be rescuers, or strains toward the setting sun, even as he sinks below the waves.”⁵⁰ The Crane reference is in turn an allegory for the turmoil in Johns’ private life in 1963.

Obviously, the painting can be read this way. But doing so requires that we ignore or reinterpret most of what's actually on the canvas, whose imagery has more to do with Johns' prior work than with Hart Crane. For instance, the three horizontal bands, inscribed with the stenciled words "RED," "YELLOW," and "BLUE," look back to a 1959 painting, *Out the Window*, where the visual field is divided into zones that should correspond to the primary colors—but don't: the fields and lettering are divided into a welter of mixed colors. The scumbled semi-circle at upper right of *Land's End*, which Reed interprets as a setting sun, derives from the *Device* pictures, as does the descending arrow. The raised "arm" can be recognized as a version of the stretcher bar from the grey version of *Device*, resembling an arm only because it is topped by the imprint of a hand. This hand, in turn, seems like a reference, not to Crane, but to Jackson Pollock, whose *Number 1, 1948* (Museum of Modern Art) includes a series of similar handprints. It would be a mistake to read *Land's End* as a disguised image of Hart Crane sinking beneath

Fig.44
Jasper Johns
Land's End, 1979
Lithograph
52 x 36 inches
Edition of 70
Published by Gemini
G.E.L.



Fig.45
Jasper Johns
Land's End,
1979/1989
Pastel over intaglio
41 1/2 x 29 7/16
inches
Collection of
the artist



the waves of the Gulf of Mexico. The references to Crane are important, but they need to be read in tandem with the abstract imagery of the picture: the semi-circle that has lost its other half, the stretcher bar that has come unmoored, the stenciled U that has fallen out of the word BLUE. In contrast to these images of dissolution, the handprint asserts the painter's presence as *homo faber*. Whatever he chooses to reveal or conceal of his private self, his identity as artist remains secure.

In 1979, Johns returned to the imagery of *Land's End*, reinterpreting the painting in a lithograph [Fig. 44]. The stark black and white of the image seems to underscore the morbid associations of the composition, and the ruler carving out the semi-circle has descended from the 9:00 o'clock position to 6:00 o'clock, as if admitting defeat. A decade later, however, when Johns takes the lithograph as the starting point for a drawing, he fills the image with brilliant pastel colors [Fig. 45]. These are divided into three distinct color fields—red, yellow and blue—evoking an *ur*-state of the image not to be found in any existing painting, although it can be seen in a 1962 print.⁵¹ The drawing is improbably cheerful, as if announcing that the mourning is over, that what was lost has now been found.

Rulers play key roles in *Land's End*, the *Device* paintings, and many of Johns' works of the early 1960s. Sometimes the ruler serves primarily as a straight edge, carving a path through the paint surface. At other times, it functions as a device for measurement. Where Johns' *Device* compositions suggest a *Rashomon*-like subjectivity of vision, the ruler reinforces the objectivity of Johns' work, insisting that what we see is what we see: an arrangement of actual-size forms, not an illusionistic representation.

At the same time, the ruler looks back to Marcel Duchamp and the subversion of the idea of measurement in his 1913-14 work, *Three Standard Stoppages* [Fig. 46].

Measurement had a political significance in France that it did not possess in England or the United States. The leaders of the French Revolution rejected the traditional units of measurement along with the rest of the feudal system. Like the foot and the mile, these older units were arbitrary (why are there 5,280 feet in a mile?) and often inconsistent, varying in value from one place to

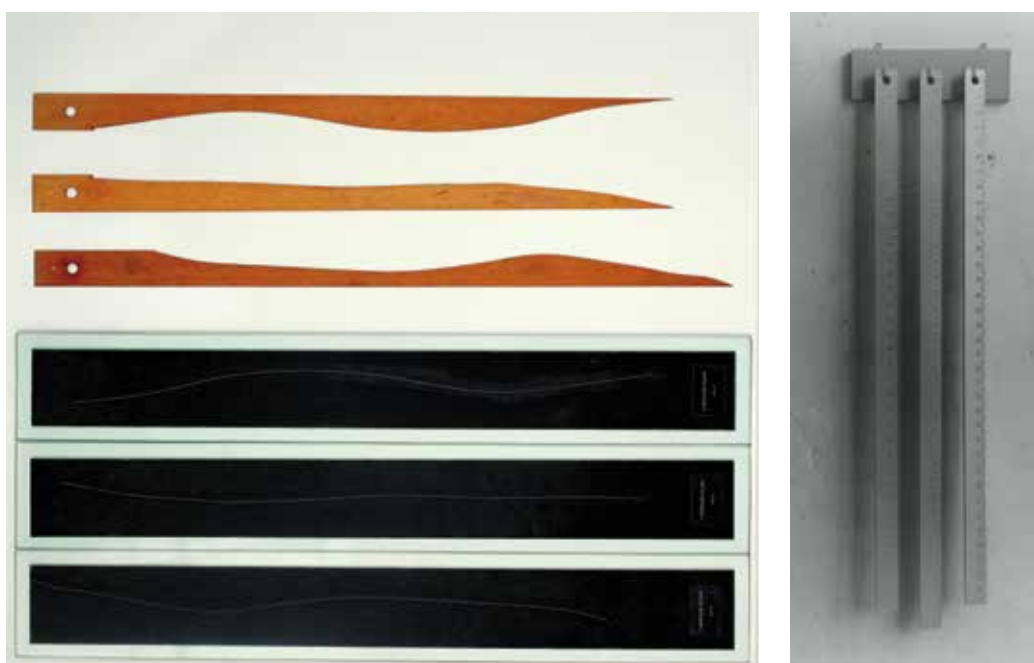


Fig.46
Marcel Duchamp
3 Standard Stoppages,
1913-14
Wood box
11¹/₈ x 50⁷/₈ x 9 inches,
with three threads 39³/₈,
glued to three painted
canvas strips
5¹/₄ x 47¹/₄ inches, each
mounted on a glass panel
7¹/₄ x 49³/₈ x 1¹/₄ inches,
three wood slats
2¹/₂ x 43 x 1¹/₈ inches,
shaped along one edge to
match the curves of the
threads.
The Museum of Modern
Art, New York
Katherine S. Dreier
Bequest
© 2010 Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York/
ADAGP, Paris/Estate of
Marcel Duchamp

another. In their place, the revolutionaries decreed the adoption of the metric system. The meter itself was one ten-millionth of the distance from the Equator to the North Pole; all the other units (centimeters, kilometers, grams, kilograms, etc.) were rationally related to the meter.

In 1889, for reference purposes, the standard meter was defined as the distance between two marks on a platinum-iridium bar kept at a fixed temperature in a vault in Sevres, France. Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages* is a deliberate mockery of this standard meter. He created it by dropping three threads, each a meter in length, and marking the curves that they formed when they fell. Duchamp then had these curves carved into three lengths of wood, creating three "rulers" corresponding to the three renditions of the standard meter. The official unit of measurement was transformed back into something arbitrary and inconsistent. By implication, the rationality of government policy, in general, was rendered suspect.

Fig.47
Robert Morris
Three Rulers, 1963
Painted and
incised wood
42 x 11¹/₂ x 1¹/₂ inches
Abrams Family Collection
© 2010 Robert Morris/
Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York

Johns' use of rulers reawakened other artists' interest in the *Three Standard Stoppages*, inspiring Robert Morris, for instance, to create his *Three Rulers* of 1963 [Fig. 47]. Here, we encounter three yardsticks, each of which looks perfectly normal. When they are displayed together, however, it becomes apparent that, like Duchamp's *Stoppages*, they are all different lengths. Two of them, at least, are not in fact a yard in length. In its own historical context, *Three Rulers* questions the technocratic ideal of American society in 1963.

Works such as *Three Standard Stoppages* and *Three Rulers* lead away from traditional painting and sculpture toward a new art of allegorical assemblage (what Donald Judd called "specific objects"), on the border between neo-Dada and Minimalism. Although Johns played a crucial role in this development, he chose to continue to work primarily in more traditional media. Increasingly, his work progressed by a dialogue between painting and print. In a pair of 1969 prints, he highlighted the ruler's role as a straight-edge, scraping its way through the visual field.⁵²

Fig. 48
 Jasper Johns
Untitled (Shit),
 1971/1974
 Pastel, graphite,
 gouache and pencil
 over lithograph
 18 1/2 x 24 1/4 inches
 Nancy Ganz Wright
 and Alton Wright



In the 1971 print, *Untitled (Shit)*, the ruler remains static, floating serenely in the center of the visual field. Johns here expands on the idea of modulating colors that he had first explored in the color version of the 0-9 sequence [Fig. 39]. Here, the background modulates from red to orange to yellow, while the markings in and around the ruler modulate from green to blue to purple. In the print, the background modulation precedes smoothly, interrupted only by a single scribbled shape above the ruler and a broad horizontal mark below it. (This turd-shaped mark seems to have inspired the print's subtitle.)

The 1974 drawing [Fig. 48] was created after this copy of the original print suffered water damage. To compensate for the damage, Johns heavily reworked the sheet. The smoothly modulated background colors were overscored with energetic strokes of color, while the two floating shapes (turd and scribble) were extended to the right. The revised image has a consistently handmade character, enhancing the contrast with the rigid order of the ruler.

After exploring a series of related motifs, Johns returned in 1979 to the overall composition of the 1963 painting *Land's End* [Fig. 43], reworking it in a large-scale etching and a series of large lithographs [Fig. 44].⁵³ In 1981-82, he came back once again to this composition, executing a set of three variations that were realized in matching pairs of large and small colored etchings, and then (in 1984) as a large painting.⁵⁴ The series was reprised in 1998 with two sets of small colored etchings, which in turn provided the starting point for new drawings [Figs. 49, 50].

Each image of the printed trio offers a different selection of motifs from the original composition. In the etching on the left, we find the semi-circle at upper right, the downward arrow, and the raised hand and “arm;” but the orientation of the “arm” has now shifted so that it tilts left instead of right. In the etching in the center, we find the semi-circle, arrow, and arm, all in their original orientations, but a spray of lines emerges from the hand, like the bristles of an old-fashioned straw broom. The RED, YELLOW, and BLUE labels of the painting have returned, but are now conspicuously handwritten, forsaking the



impersonality of the original stenciled lettering. The semi-circle at upper right is now joined by a faintly indicated semi-circle at upper left, as in the original *Device* paintings [Fig. 42]. In the etching on the right, the “arm” disappears, replaced by a large, downward-pointing arrow. The semi-circle at upper right has disappeared and been replaced by a semi-circle on the left, which seems to have started at the lower edge of the image and migrated upwards. Handwritten versions of RED and BLUE make a return appearance, but YELLOW is absent. The prints have been realized in multiple kinds of intaglio (aquatint, etching, softground, and open bite), generating variations in texture as striking as the variations in imagery. All three images are printed in soft blues and greens.

The background of the image at left is filled with little circles that go back to the 1981-82 etching, where they appear to be holes in a perforated screen.⁵⁵ The little circles also appear at the right edge of the right-most etching, suggesting that we are meant to see it as a continuation of the leftmost print. The trio is thus another example of Johns’ penchant for cyclic or cylindrical compositions meant to be read as a repeating series. (This is confirmed by comparison to the 1984 painting that provides the closest model for the 1998 etchings; if the sequence of images there is ABC, then the sequence of the prints is BCA.)

Johns’ redrawn version [Fig. 50] of the trio of etchings retains their imagery but dramatically changes their affect and effect. As in the *Land's End* drawing of 1989 [Fig.45], the imposition of the primary colors, deployed in solid

Fig.49
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1998
Intaglio in 4 colors
41³/₄ x 81 inches
Edition of 44
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions

Fig.50
Jasper Johns
Untitled (Red, Yellow, Blue), 1998
Acrylic over intaglio
9⁹/₁₆ x 12¹/₂ inches
Collection of
Rebecca Young

bands, replaces the minor-key harmonies of the print with a ringing major chord. The semi-circles, colored white, now stand out distinctly from the rest of the composition. The series seems to progress from the isolated semi-circle at left to the complementary forms at right, forming a single unified circle. As in the Platonic allegory of love, the two separated halves have finally found each other.

Concurrently with his graphic explorations of the imagery from *Land's End* and the other paintings linked to Hart Crane, Johns made a series of prints reproducing details from his mural-scale masterpiece of 1964, *According to What* [Fig. 51]. This is a multi-panel work including a hollow cast of part of a seated figure, a small canvas with its face turned inward, painted and metal letters spelling out the names of the primary colors, a set of circular stencils, a row of silkscreened pages from newspaper, a bent wire hanger, and multiple kinds



Fig.51
Jasper Johns
According to What,
1964
Oil on canvas with
objects
88 x 192 inches
Private collection

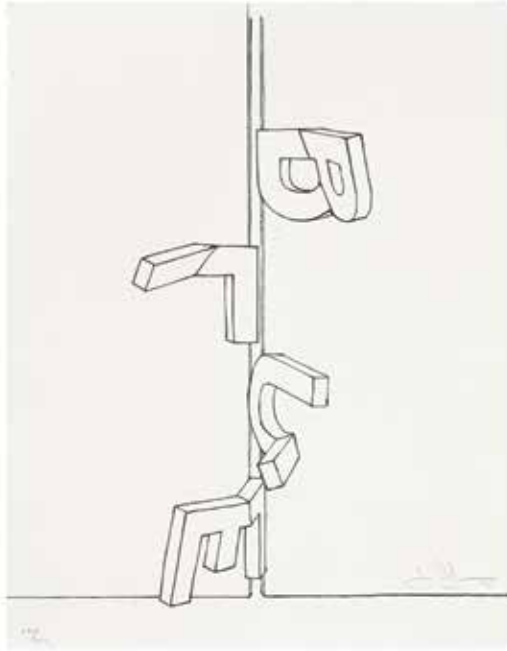
of paint-handling: translucent washes, gestural brushwork, areas of flat, solid color, and modulated shading. According to Christian Geelhaar, Wittgenstein's discussion of the different ways that language is used led Johns to attempt to summarize the different ways that paint could be used.⁵⁶ Johns' notes suggest that the painting's title came from a philosophical reflection on the criteria for evaluating vision:

"Somewhere here, there is the question of "seeing clearly."

Seeing what?

According to what?"⁵⁷

In *Periscope* and *Land's End* [Fig. 43], Johns had painted letters that seemed to be falling off the painting. In *According to What*, he continued to explore this idea of the word as something subject to the laws of the physical world. In a 1966 interview, he said that, "I thought that one thing to do with the written word was to pretend that it was an object that could be bent, turned upside down, and I began more or less folding words."⁵⁸ At one of the divisions between panels of *According to What*, Johns inscribes the names of the primary colors. To the right of the division, they appear in their normal orientation, and,



to the left, as mirror images. In between, a series of metal letters, cast to resemble the painted letters, project into space; some of the letters are bent, as if damaged in transit. These metal letters become the starting point for a series of prints and, ultimately, a drawing.

Before discussing them, however, we need to pause to consider a detail of the painting that remains hidden in most reproductions, but is important for Johns' later work. At the lower left of *According to What*, there is a small canvas attached to the larger panel, facing inwards, so that Johns' signature, the painting's title, and the date, written on the back, are visible. This canvas is in fact hinged so that it can be folded down, revealing its front, on which Johns has painted a profile of Marcel Duchamp and a small circle with a line of paint dripping down from it.

The mark might seem accidental, except a similar circle-with-drip appears in Johns' 1963-64 *Field Painting*, and then re-appears in later paintings, such as *The Dutch Wives* of 1975, where the sexual context suggests that it should be read as an emblem of ejaculation. The motif seems to be linked to Duchamp's large painting on glass, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. In 1960, when Johns reviewed Richard Hamilton's translation of Duchamp's notes for this work, he stressed "the fascinating layout of the erotic machinery," and commented that, "when the bachelors 'shoot,' once each, this 'Hilarious' glass house is pierced through."⁵⁹ As Kirk Varnedoe observed, the circle-plus drip motif seems to be Johns' version of the ejaculatory "shots" from the *Large Glass*.⁶⁰ More literally, it looks like the marks produced by Niki de Saint Phalle in her "shooting pictures" of the early 1960s. (Saint Phalle would attach small bags of paint to her canvases and then shoot them with a rifle, so that the bag exploded, letting the paint drip down. Johns was a friend of Saint Phalle's, and in fact did some of the shooting for one of her 1961 paintings.)⁶¹

However, the erotic content of *According to What* remains literally concealed, while the viewer is encouraged to focus on its range of painterly and linguistic signs.

Fig.52
Jasper Johns
Bent "Blue", 1971
Lithograph
26 x 20 inches
Edition of 240
Published by
Jasper Johns

Fig.53
Claes Oldenburg
Proposed Colossal Monument for Staten Island, N.Y.C. – Fan (Study for cover of Domus Magazine – not used), 1965
Crayon and watercolor
23³/₄ x 18³/₄ inches
Private collection
Photo courtesy
the Oldenburg van
Bruggen Foundation
© 1965 Claes
Oldenburg

Fig.54
 Jasper Johns
Bent "U",
 1971/1974
 Gouache, pencil,
 pastel and chalk
 over lithograph
 20 x 25 inches
 Nancy Ganz
 Wright and
 Alton Wright

In 1971, Johns executed a series of eight lithographs reworking "fragments" from *According to What*.⁶² One of these was devoted to the motif of the upside-down figure in a chair, one to the bent coat-hanger, one to the circular stencils, and one to the hidden face of the small canvas at lower left, while the remaining four depicted the stenciled and sculpted variants of the word BLUE. One print offered a close-up of the letter U, with its dramatically bent upright. As in the painting and the other related prints,



the U was shown sideways, mounted to a strip between the two large painted panels. Johns decided to evoke the panel on the left with a series of colored washes, while leaving the panel on the right completely blank. The U itself was drawn in pure outline, like the letters in the related print *Bent Blue* [Fig. 52].

Bent "U" was one of the many works by Johns acquired by the great collectors Victor and Sally Ganz in the 1960s and '70s. Its transformation into a drawing was the result of an accident. Susan Lorence tells the story:

[In 1974], when Johns called to thank the Ganzes after a dinner at their home, Victor told him that a water leak had resulted in damage to two prints. Johns suggested that they send the prints to him to see what might be done to repair the damage. He returned the two works [*Bent "U"*, Fig. 54, and *Untitled (Shit)*, Fig. 48] after adding watercolor and gouache to cover the water-damage, transforming the prints into new and unique works. Besides changing the orientation of *Bent "U"* from vertical to horizontal, Johns covered virtually the entire surfaces with marks and brush strokes, and rubbed out and relocated his signature. Victor naturally called Johns to thank him, and when asked what he had been up to, Victor replied, 'I am pouring water on all the other prints.' What he did do was to buy unaltered copies of the two reworked prints so that both versions could hang side by side.⁶³

The change in orientation from vertical to horizontal made the picture into a kind of surrealistic landscape, with a vast bent U rising up from the horizon. In effecting this transformation, Johns may have had in mind the landscape drawings of Claes Oldenburg, made as projects for giant sculptures to be installed in urban or rural settings. The fan in Oldenburg's *Proposed Colossal Monument for Staten Island* [Fig. 53] occupies only a fraction of the sheet of paper, but its placement on the horizon suggests a sculpture that would, indeed, be of colossal proportions. Johns achieves a similar effect of monumentality by even simpler means.

In the mid-1960s, Johns executed a large painting and lithograph both entitled *Voice*. In the painting, a straight-edge attached to a string scrapes a swathe across a mottled grey surface; in the lithograph, a mysterious light patch appears in the middle of a field of dark grey. Neither composition has any obvious connection to the idea of “voice,” except to imply, paradoxically, that silence may be a form of speech.

Johns returned to this theme in a very large, three-part painting called *Voice 2*, which he worked on from 1968 through 1971. Here, the principal image of the work was the painting’s title, inscribed in giant stenciled letters running along the work’s lower edge. Some of the letters were repeated and displaced upwards, as if floating away from their original places. Every panel was divided in half: one vertically, one horizontally, one diagonally. Furthermore, the letter V appeared both at the left edge of the first plane and at the right edge of the last panel, as though the word VOICE was going to start over again. As Michael



Fig.55
Georges Braque
The Portugese Man,
(detail)
1911-1912
Oil on canvas
46 1/16 x 32 1/8 inches
Kunstmuseum Basel,
Switzerland
© 2010 Artists Rights
Society (ARS), New York/
ADAGP, Paris
photo:
Bridgeman-Giraudon/
Art Resource, NY

Fig.56
Jasper Johns
Voice 2, 1983
Lithograph
36 1/2 x 25 1/2 inches
Edition of 36
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions

Crichton observes, Johns was returning to his earlier idea of a cylindrical painting. The composition of *Voice 2* was broken into three panels with the thought that, by hanging the panels in different orders, the artist could simulate the experience of a viewer circumambulating a painted cylinder, beginning at different points.⁶⁴

Roughly a decade later, Johns made a nine-part color lithograph of *Voice 2*, illustrating precisely what he had in mind [Fig. 56]. In the bottom row, the inscription VOICE 2 is broken into three panels in the usual sequence—call it ABC. In the middle row, the same series of letters appears in the sequence BCA; in the top row it is CAB.⁶⁵ The three versions of each unit are not in fact identical. From row to row, Johns changes the coloring of each unit, and even the graphic marks that give it texture. The grid as a whole is tied together by the diagonal running through unit C, which begins at the upper left of the grid, traverses the center, and expires at lower right. Despite the shadowed lighting and browned-out colors, there is something strangely cheerful about the print. The variations suggest

Fig.57
Jasper Johns
Voice 2,
1982/1991
Acrylic and graphite
over lithograph
35¹/₂ x 24⁷/₈ inches
Collection of
the artist



that even if the facts of our lives are fixed and unchangeable, our experience is not. There is room to rearrange it, to create new patterns and meanings from the same materials. The willed helplessness that Johns described in his 1965 interview with David Sylvester is replaced, here, by a sense of quiet mastery.

In 1991, Johns reworks his 1983 lithograph into a single unified composition [Fig. 57]. Extending a gold and brown coloring throughout the image, he eliminates the spaces between the nine separate panels, joins together the vertical and horizontal divisions to make a continuous grid, and extends and reinforces the diagonal tying the composition together. The coloring of the image seems to allude to the gold and brown palette of 1910-12 Cubism [Fig. 55], which inspired Johns at the very beginning of his career [Figs. 2, 3, 4]. Now, however, he cites not just the stenciled lettering of Braque's work, but also the distinctive structure of Cubism, with forms and symbols moving forwards and backwards in a shallow, layered space.

In paintings of the early 1980s such as *Perilous Night* [Fig. 60], Johns moves towards new forms of allegory. Although quotation has long been an

Fig.58
Mathias Grunewald
The Iseheim Altar, closed,
c. 1515
Limewood
106 x 255 7/8 inches
Musée d'Unterlinden,
Colmar, France
photo: Erich Lessing/
Art Resource, NY

Fig.59
Mathias Grunewald
*Resurrection from The
Iseheim Altar*, c. 1515
Musée d'Unterlinden,
Colmar, France
photo: Erich Lessing/
Art Resource, NY



element of his compositional practice, it now assumes a new character and importance. Johns mingles motifs from his own work with motifs and passages borrowed from other artists. Furthermore, these quoted elements increasingly appear as three-dimensional objects hanging on a wall, or arranged in a shallow space. Johns says farewell to the indissoluble bond of design and surface that had characterized his earlier iconic images.

In *Perilous Night* (as in many of Johns' paintings of this moment) we seem to be looking at a studio wall, with various objects leaning against or fastened to it. At left is a large dark panel whose identity at first remains mysterious. At right is what seems to be a wall with roughly paneled wainscoting. Several pictures are pinned to the wall, along with three speckled casts of a hand and arm. Below, a handkerchief is pinned to the wooden paneling. Almost every motif in the picture seems to cry out for identification and interpretation. The print at upper right shows a version of the hatchmark pattern that accounted for much of Johns' production in the preceding decade. The grey painting beneath that, and also the much larger grey image at left, are different versions of a detail from

Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece. As discussed earlier, the nail and shadow holding the handkerchief are a citation from Braque's Cubist work [Figs. 8, 9]. The wood paneling is probably also a reference to Braque, who utilized similar wood-graining in his Cubist pictures of 1911-12. The handkerchief itself seems to be a reference to Picasso's *Weeping Women* of the late 1930s.⁶⁶ Each of these quotations or allusions could be followed up in more detail; we could then examine the philosophical and personal implications of the resulting web of references. For now, however, we will focus solely on Johns' quotations from Matthias Grünewald, since they return in his drawings over prints of 1999.

Johns visited Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece [Fig. 58] in 1976 and 1979, and became seriously engaged with its imagery in 1981. The altarpiece is a complex polyptych. Its outermost panels show the *Crucifixion* [Fig. 58] and the *Deposition*, flanked by figures of *Saint Sebastian* and *Saint Anthony*. When the outer panels are opened, they reveal a middle set of panels, showing an *Angelic Concert* and a *Nativity*, flanked by an *Annunciation* and a *Resurrection* [Fig. 59]. When these middle panels are opened, they reveal sculptures of Saint



Anthony and other saints, flanked by paintings of the *Meeting of Anthony with Paul* and the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*. The most extraordinary panel of the altarpiece is the *Crucifixion*, where Christ's body is emaciated and covered with horrific sores. As Andrée Hayum has argued, this probably reflects the fact that the altarpiece served a hospital devoted to the victims of ergotism, then known as "Saint Anthony's Fire," a disease which caused similar lesions. As Hayum also points out, the design of the altarpiece also suggests parallels between different scenes. For instance,

the sleeping soldier in the *Resurrection* is lying in virtually the same pose as a demon covered with lesions in the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*; it is clearly not a coincidence that the soldier and the demon occupy the same location in the two overlapping panels on the right. It is these two parallel figures that Johns has quoted repeatedly in his work since 1981.⁶⁷

In the context of the emergence of AIDS/HIV in the 1980s, it seems impossible not to read the diseased demon as a reference to the new epidemic—specifically to the lesions of Kaposi's Sarcoma, an opportunistic infection that often signals the presence of HIV. Johns has said that the demon was not specifically intended as a symbol for AIDS, but, as Nan Rosenthal has observed, he used a drawing of the demon in a 1988 watercolor donated to help raise money for AIDS research.⁶⁸ However, Johns seems to have used the image of the fallen soldier as a motif in his work more often than that of the demon. The soldier appears in grey "painting" on the right of *Perilous Night* and also in the large dark area on the left, although here he is reversed and rotated 90 degrees. The soldier's meaning, for Johns, is also harder to fathom. Together with his two companions, the soldier remains asleep during the Resurrection,

Fig.60
Jasper Johns
Perilous Night, 1982
Encaustic on canvas
with objects
67 1/8 x 96 1/8 x 6 1/4 inches
National Gallery of Art,
Washington D.C.
Robert and Jane
Meyerhoff Collection

the greatest miracle of the Christian faith. His slumber means that he fails to see an event of overwhelming importance. The soldier might be taken as a symbol of those who refused to recognize the gravity of the AIDS crisis. Or he might be understood more broadly as a symbol of moral blindness, a failing not limited to the immediate context of the 1980s.

It was the image of the fallen soldier, reversed, as in the left panel of *Perilous Night*, that Johns used as the template for a print done in 1990 [Figs. 61, 62, 63]. The soldier is wearing a quilted doublet with vertical seams and a matching skirt. In Grunewald's painting, these garments are colored a uniform yellow. In Johns' print, however, the channels of the doublet alternate between yellow and blue, and those of the skirt between yellow and red. The channels narrow and converge at the soldier's waist, so that the alternating stripes make a pinwheel pattern like the one in the background of Paul Signac's 1890 portrait of the art critic Félix Fénéon [Fig. 64]. Signac's painting was not just a portrait



but also an artistic manifesto demonstrating the expressive power of color and rhythm, as proclaimed in the work's full title: *Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*.

It is also possible that Johns was aware of the symbolic meanings assigned to stripes in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, when striped fabric was regarded as "the devil's cloth." According to Michel Pastoureau, it was acceptable to have one or two bands crossing a solid surface, but "striped surfaces seem to cheat, since they forbid the eye to distinguish the figure from the background." Spotted surfaces were associated with impurity or disease (as in Grunewald's demon), and striped surfaces were almost as bad: "In thirteenth-century miniatures, Lucifer and the rebel angels often have bodies covered with horizontal stripes, a lively sign of their fall." (The association persisted into the eighteenth century, when the striped prisoner's costume was invented.) By dressing the fallen soldier in striped fabric, Johns brings him closer to the spotted demon.⁶⁹

In the 1999 print [Fig. 61], the image of the fallen soldier is reversed, rotated to a vertical position, and drawn atop a *trompe-l'oeil* sheet of paper which

Fig.61
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1999
intaglio
27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
Edition of 37
Published by
Jasper Johns

Fig.62
Mathias Grunewald
*Resurrection from The
Isenheim Altar*,
c. 1515
Musée d'Unterlinden,
Colmar, France
photo: Erich Lessing/Art
Resource, NY

Fig.63
Jasper Johns
Untitled, (detail, rotated
and reversed), 1999
intaglio
27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
Edition of 37
Published by
Jasper Johns

is taped to an imaginary wall. The sheet's upper left corner seems to curl forward. The print is also imprinted with two dripping black marks, placed symmetrically on the actual page, not the imaginary one. These are updated versions of the "shot" mark found in *According to What* [Fig. 51] and the *Dutch Wives*. The combination of beauty and disease implied by the soldier's striped doublet is thus linked to the theme of erotic experience. (Johns used another version of this image for *The Geldzahler Portfolio*, a set of ten prints created by different artists in honor of the curator Henry Geldzahler, and sold to raise money for the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, an organization that helps creators preserve their artistic legacies.)⁷⁰

The 1999 print [Fig. 61] provides the starting point for a remarkable series of drawings exploring differences in texture, color and shading. In one [Fig. 65], Johns adds diagonal hatching marks to the colored surfaces in the print. The light areas are striated with darker shades of the same colors, while the dark areas

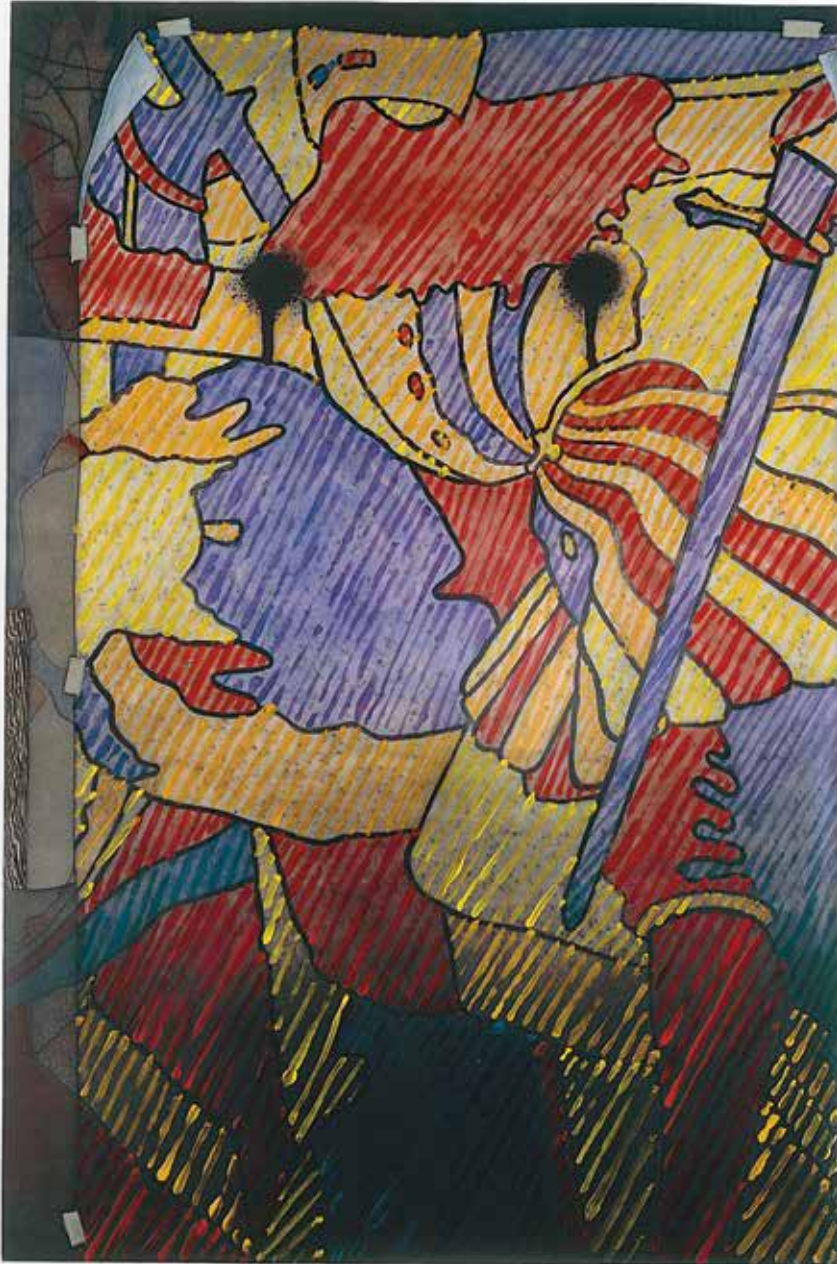


in the lower part of the print are striped with lighter colors. In another drawing [Fig. 66], the light areas are traversed by horizontal striations of grey, blue and brown, creating a dense harmony of close-valued hues. In a third [Fig. 67], they are shaded with lines of vertical dashes, recalling the brushwork of Signac's contemporary, Édouard Vuillard, whose cloistered interiors seem patched together from swatches of fabric. In other drawings [Fig. 68], Johns overpaints the soldier's costume with smoldering layers of brown and grey, outlined with white, so that the print becomes a ghostly version of itself. Most of these transformations render the image of the soldier less legible, leaving meaning and emotion to be communicated

by color and texture rather than conventional symbolism.

In 1985-86, Johns executed a cycle of paintings on the theme of *The Seasons*. This has traditionally served as an allegory of the human lifespan, beginning with the promise of birth and childhood (spring) and passing through the heat of youth (summer) before arriving at cooler temper of maturity (fall), which leads inexorably to the icy desolation of old age (winter). For nature, if not for the individual, the seasons are cyclic: winter is followed by the rebirth of spring. It is not surprising that Johns was drawn to a theme corresponding so closely to his long-standing penchant for cyclic compositions. He chose, however, to begin the cycle with summer, perhaps to celebrate the unflinching intensity of his own creative powers. Johns' revised sequence—summer, fall, winter, spring—emphasizes the theme of rebirth. In his rendition, the seasons are no longer an allegory of man's chronological existence, but of a spiritual journey that may be experienced more than once in the course of a lifetime: from self-confidence to doubt to despair, and then back to hope. The recurrent motif in the four panels of *The Seasons* is the shadow of a standing male figure, derived from a tracing of

Fig.64
Paul Signac
Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890, 1890
Oil on canvas
29 x 36½ inches
The Museum of Modern Art,
New York
Fractional gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller.
© 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



J. Johns 1999

RESTE UNIPROFICUA ADIUTANT

Fig.65
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1999
Acrylic over intaglio
27³/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
Collection of
the artist



Fig.66
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1999
Acrylic over intaglio
27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
Collection of
the artist



Johns' own shadow.⁷¹ At each stage of his spiritual progress he is accompanied by flags, device circles and other motifs from his own work, and also by emblems of the natural order such as stars, snow, and rain.

In 1986-87, Johns executed a suite of large color etchings modeled closely on the *Seasons* canvases. These seem to have been executed in the traditional sequence, beginning with spring and concluding with winter.⁷² They were accompanied by a number of variations, including a large black and white etching of the series as a whole, restored to Johns' preferred order of summer, fall, winter, and spring.⁷³ Johns seems also to have experimented with printing the four separate color etchings as a single, continuous composition. The results of this experiment were never officially published, but two proofs from it served as the basis for major drawings [Figs. 16, 69].

Rather than cataloguing the contents of these drawings and their wide-ranging references, it seems more useful to note the structural features that change from one frame to the next. As in the paintings, the series begins on the left with *Summer*. Here, Johns' silhouette occupies the left side of the picture. As the seasons advance, the silhouette moves across the frame—not from left to right, as one might expect, but in the opposite direction, as if the image were mounted on a cylinder and the figure was rotating counter-clockwise. In *Fall*, it has moved leftwards, so that it is halfway out of the picture, but the missing half has reappeared at the right edge of the frame. In *Winter*, the figure has completed its transit across the seam joining left and right edges, and appears, whole, at the right side of the frame. Finally, in *Spring*, the figure moves to the center of the frame, but the background is now in transit across the seam, so that its left side appears at right

Fig.67
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1999
Acrylic over intaglio
27³/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
Collection of
the artist

Fig.68
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1999
Acrylic over intaglio
27³/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
Collection of
the artist

and its right side at left, like the figure in *Fall*. The silhouette of Johns' own figure is now joined by the silhouette of a young boy, stressing the theme of rebirth.

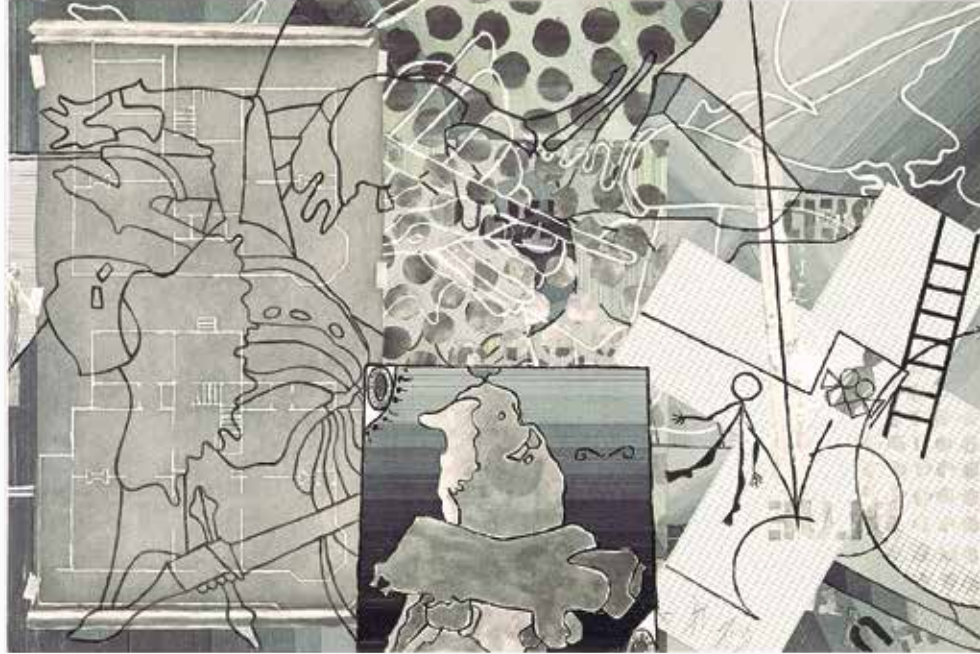
In the paintings and the prints, the transit of the figure is accompanied by other regular changes. In *Summer*, the "arm" in the device circle extends just south of nine o'clock; in *Fall*, it has moved counter-clockwise to seven o'clock; in *Winter*, it reaches its nadir at six; in *Spring*, it advances to just past noon. In the drawings, the arm in *Summer* has been obscured by additional shading; it remains visible in *Fall* and *Winter*, but is almost invisible in *Spring*. As Mark Rosenthal has observed, the mysterious ladder in the background of *Summer* is a quotation from Pablo Picasso's 1936 painting, *Minotaur Moving His House*, inspired by changes in Johns' living arrangements.⁷⁴ The ladder is broken in *Fall* and *Winter* and repaired in *Spring*, although this is not immediately evident because the two halves of the background have been separated. In *Summer*, the sky in the background is filled with bright yellow stars; in the clear sky of *Fall*, the stars turn white; in *Winter*, they are obscured by drifts of snow; in *Spring*, they are yellow again, but overscored with slanting lines of rain. The stars themselves follow the same pattern in the drawings, but the diagonal shading in *Spring* seems to absorb and eliminate the rain. Overall, the reworking of the prints transforms the prints from graphic to painterly, but does not radically affect their iconography.

A few years after completing the *Seasons*, John embarked upon another grand allegorical project, once again combining art historical references, citations from his own work, and personal references. This was realized in two enormous canvases bearing the same tripartite composition, one roughly painted (The Eli and Edythe L. Broad Collection), the other more smoothly finished (The Museum of Modern Art, Promised Gift of Agnes Gund), that Johns worked on from 1992 through 1995. The composition was also reprised in a 1997 etching [Fig. 70].

As Kirk Varnedoe noted, the tripartite structure of these works was, in effect, a response to the etched and painted triptychs that Johns had created

Fig. 69
Jasper Johns
The Seasons,
1989/1990
Acrylic over intaglio
26³/₄ x 57³/₁₆ inches
1 of 2
Collection of
the artist





in the early 1980s, and was to return to in the late 1990s [Figs. 49, 50].⁷⁵ Grünewald's sleeping soldier reappears at left, superimposed on the floor plan of the house Johns grew up in. The perforated screen from the earlier triptychs fills the background of the center section, atop a linear design transcribed from an as-yet-unidentified painting. A simplified version of the device circle appears on the right, accompanying the boy and the ladder from *The Seasons* and figures quoted from Picasso and other artists.

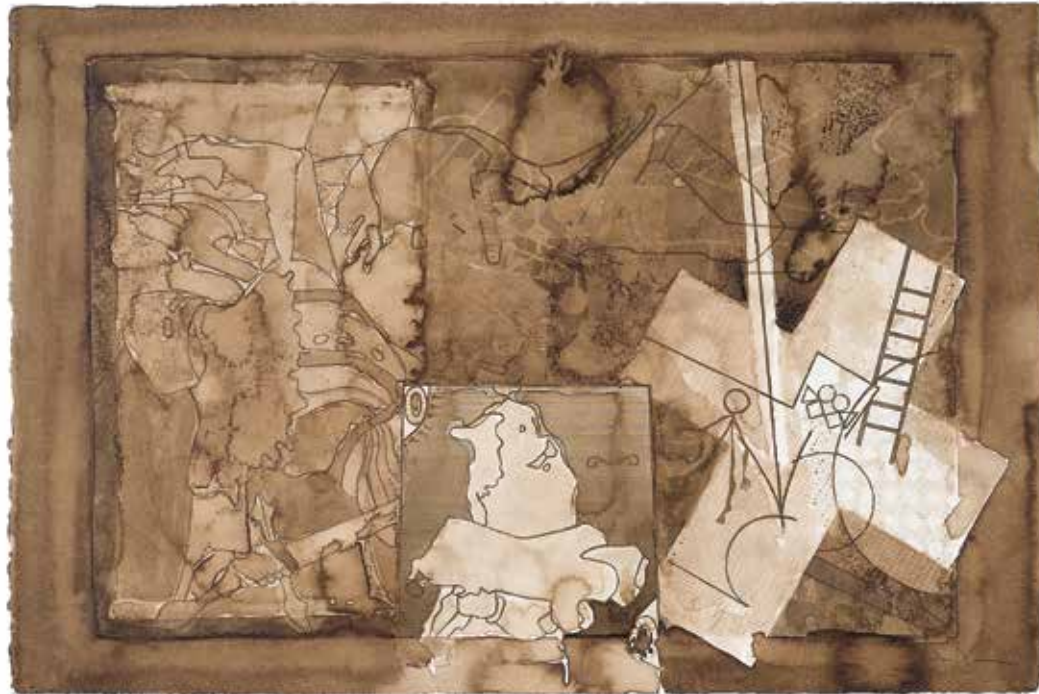
The etched version of this composition is a *tour de force* of modulated greys, allowing the viewer to distinguish clearly among the many levels of superimposed imagery. However, Johns evidently felt impelled to experiment with adding color to the etching, perhaps with the thought that the resulting drawings might serve as

Fig.70
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1997
Intaglio
20 x 25³/₄ inches
Edition of 49
Published by Universal
Limited Art Editions

Fig.71
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1997/2003
Ink over intaglio
15³/₈ x 22³/₈ inches
Collection of
the artist



Fig. 72
Jasper Johns
Untitled,
1997/2003
Ink over intaglio
14⁷/₈ x 22¹/₂ inches
Collection of
the artist



working proofs for a colored etching. In one drawing executed with brown washes made from walnut ink [Fig. 71], he enhances tonal contrasts by darkening most of the image while reserving the sheet with the soldier at left and the graph-paper cross at right. The large arrow at right is thickened, and highlighted with a border of naked white paper, so that it seems to plunge dramatically into the white cross. The mysterious shape or figure at bottom center is tinted with pale washes, but emphasized by being placed against an especially dark field.

Another drawing [Fig. 72] seeks a more delicate balance among these elements. The soldier, the cross, and the arrow remain lighter than their surroundings, but are toned down with thin brown washes. The ground of the rectangle at bottom center is lightened so that the “figure” does not stand out quite so powerfully. Much of the shading here was painted wet into wet, so that the pigment puddles and spreads unevenly across the surface: the image seems simultaneously to be forming and dissolving.

The most recent of Johns’ drawings over prints [Figs. 10, 41, 74-79] explore the image of a man’s wristwatch dangling from a nail, against the background of a face broken apart into dissociated elements: one eye at upper left, one at lower right, mouth and nostrils distributed seemingly at random. As discussed previously, the image of the dissociated face derives from an essay about the effects of schizophrenia. It provided the framework for many of Johns’ paintings of the late 1980s. Johns executed the plate of face-with-watch in 1987, but did not print it until 2008, when he used it as the starting point for a series of drawings. The watch seems to be a deeply personal symbol, based on a family heirloom that Johns expected to receive, only to be disappointed.⁷⁶ In a traditional allegorical still life, a clock is usually a *memento mori*: a reminder of impending death, and therefore of the unimportance of worldly goods and pleasures. Johns’ watch, on the contrary, seems to be a reminder that we are condemned to live, and must therefore make the best of what we already have.



Fig.73
Salvador Dalí
The Persistence of Memory, 1931
Oil on canvas,
9½ x 13 inches
The Museum of
Modern Art, New York
Given anonymously
© 2010 Salvador Dalí,
Gala-Salvador Dalí
Foundation/Artists
Rights Society (ARS),
New York

Fig.74
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¼ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

Fig.75
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¼ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

Johns' presentation of his father's wristwatch, suspended from a nail (a quotation, as we have seen, from Georges Braque [Fig. 8]), recalls the pocket-watch draped over a branch in Salvador Dalí's *Persistence of Memory* [Fig. 74]. There is a similar pathos to the images, although Johns' wristwatch, stretched out to its full length, has a dignity denied to Dalí's pocket-watch. In some of Johns' drawings [Figs. 74, 76], the wristwatch is given a Baroque halo of light and darkness, underscoring its iconic power. Even if the viewer is not familiar with the personal associations of the image, it is clearly charged with metaphysical significance.

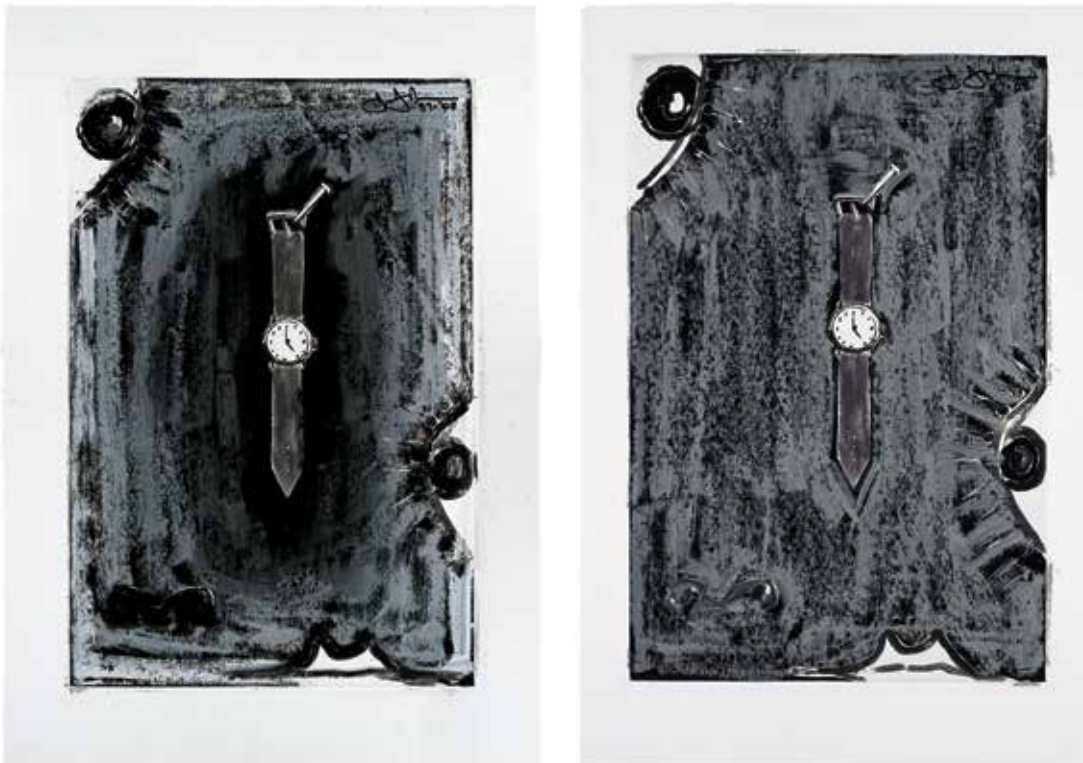




Fig.76
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of the artist



Throughout the series of drawings, Johns reworks the flat grey background of the print with a painterly freedom new to his work. In one drawing [Fig. 75], black shading imbues the ground with stormy turbulence. In others [Figs. 77, 78], the bright coloring of the ground completely changes the character of the image, shifting it from a minor key to a major. In other drawings, it is the nature of the stroke that is new; one [Fig. 79] is colored with curlicues of light and dark blue, evoking the loose, undulating brushstrokes of Monet's paintings of waterlilies.

Fig.77
Jasper Johns
Untitled,
1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

Fig.78
Jasper Johns
Untitled,
1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

Fig.79
Jasper Johns
Untitled,
1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

Like Monet, Johns has entered into a brilliant late phase of his career, freed from self-imposed restrictions and prepared to follow his art wherever it takes him. The allegorical language of his recent work remains complex, and the sense of cherished privacy is equally intense. Nonetheless, it has become easier to decipher individual symbols, and his colors and textures manifest a new sense of emotional

warmth. Johns has apparently been released from the old sense of loss and numbness. Looking back to the relics of his childhood, his work now seems to celebrate the pleasures of retrospection, and a lifetime's accumulation of experience. •





Fig.80
Jasper Johns
Untitled, 1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of the artist

NOTES

I would like to thank Jasper Johns for speaking with me about his work, and for his gracious hospitality. Sarah Taggart and the other members of his staff provided much assistance with my research, and a warm welcome to the studio. I am grateful to Barbara Bertozzi Castelli for giving me this opportunity to write about Jasper Johns, and for her unfailing help and patience.

Endnotes

- 1 Robert Rosenblum, colophon to the 0-9 portfolio, 1963. Reproduced in Bill Goldston, with Richard S. Field, *The Prints of Jasper Johns, 1960-1993: A Catalogue Raisonné* (West Islip, NY: Universal Limited Art Editions, 1994) [hereafter CR], no. 18.
- 2 The iconic character of Johns' work, in formal terms, and of the abstract and minimal art that derived from it in the 1960s, seems in turn to have influenced the art historical understanding of the evolution of modern art. The contrast between iconic and narrative modes of presentation emerged from medieval and renaissance studies, and was disseminated by Sixten Ringbom's influential book, *Icon to Narrative, the Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting* (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1965). It was then taken up, and reversed, by William Rubin in his ground-breaking article, "From Narrative to 'Iconic' in Picasso: the Buried Allegory in *Bread and Fruitdish on a Table* and the role of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 65, no. 4, December 1983, pp. 615-649. Although Johns is not cited explicitly in Rubin's article, Rubin's attention to the esthetic power of frontality and symmetry in Picasso echoes his earlier writings on Frank Stella, who had absorbed these lessons directly from Johns' work.
- 3 Jasper Johns, notes from sketchbook A, p. 42, c. 1963-64; transcribed in Varnedoe and Christel Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 54.
- 4 Nan Rosenthal, "Drawing as Rereading," in Nan Rosenthal and Ruth E. Fine, *The Drawings of Jasper Johns*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1990), p. 14.
- 5 Michael Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 26.
- 6 Dodie Kazanjian, "Cube Roots," *Vogue* no. 179 (September 1989), p. 729; cited in Nan Rosenthal, "Drawing as Rereading," p. 19; also cited in Kirk Varnedoe, "Introduction: A Sense of Life," p. 47.
- 7 Author interview with Jasper Johns, June 25, 2010.
- 8 Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," originally published in *Art International*, October 25, 1962; reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 126. More recently, Jeffrey Weiss, describing some 1959 paintings by Johns, noted that they brought to mind "the role of the stenciled or typographical word in cubism in 1911-12 where the flatness of the word as sign, optically bound to the surface of the canvas, throws pictorial space into low relief." See Weiss, "Painting Bitten by a Man," pp. 9-10. Weiss makes the same visual comparison, to Braque's *Le Portugais*, made in the present essay [Fig. 3]. The argument that Braque's lettering "throws pictorial space into low relief" looks back to Greenberg's influential statement that the role of the letters and numbers in Braque's 1911 paintings was, "by their self-evident, extraneous and abrupt flatness," to stop the viewer's eye "at the literal, physical surface of the canvas...specifying the very real flatness of the picture plane so that everything else on it would be pushed into illusioned space by force of contrast." See Greenberg, "The Pasted-Paper Revolution," originally published in *Art News*, September 1958; reprinted in O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4*, p.62. This essay was reprinted under the title "Collage," and in a revised form, in Greenberg's 1962 compilation, *Art & Culture*.
- 9 Leo Steinberg, "Jasper Johns," *Metro* (Milan), no. 4/5, May 1962, pp. 94, 98; revised version published in Steinberg, *Other Criteria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 31-33; reprinted in Susan Brundage, ed., *Jasper Johns—35 Years—Leo Castelli* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993); it is in the commentary of the 1993 volume that Steinberg describes himself as a "slightly bewildered stooge." The original article plus the commentary are reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, pp. 83-84.
- 10 Georges Braque, "Pensées et réflexions sur la peinture," *Nord-Sud* (Paris), no. 10, December 1917; translated in *Artists on Art*, ed. Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, (New York: Pantheon, 1958), pp. 422-423.
- 11 Aphorisms no's 8, 11, 33, 7, 43, 18 from *Cahier de Georges Braque, 1917-1947* (New York: Curt Valentin, 1948). The original French texts appear in the same plates with the drawings, written in longhand, but there is a folio with English translations by Bernard Frechtman inserted in back of the book.
- 12 Interview with David Sylvester, recorded for the BBC in June 1965; printed in *Jasper Johns: Drawings*, exh. cat. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974); reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, eds., *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 118. Similarly, discussing his breakthrough of the mid-1950s, Johns told Michael Crichton: "What I wanted to do was to find out what I did that other people didn't, what I was that other people weren't...I wanted to know what was helpless in my behavior—how I would behave out of necessity." (Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 27.)
- 13 Duchamp's Eliot quotation comes from "Tradition and the Individual Talent," originally published in 1919. Speaking on his own behalf, Duchamp added: "In the creative act, the artist goes from intention to realization through a chain of totally subjective reactions. His struggle toward the realization is a series of efforts, pains, satisfaction, refusals, decisions, which also cannot and must not be fully self-conscious, at least on the esthetic plane. The result of this struggle is a difference between the intention and its realization, a difference which the artist is not aware of. Consequently, in the chain of reactions accompanying the creative act, a link is missing. This gap, representing the inability of the artist to express fully his intention, this difference between what he intended to realize and did realize, is the personal 'art coefficient' contained in the work. In other words, the personal 'art coefficient' is like an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed." Duchamp originally delivered "The Creative Act" as a lecture for a meeting of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas, in April 1957. The text was printed in *Art News*, vol. 56, no. 4, 1957, pp. 28-29; and

- reprinted on pp. 77-78 of Robert Lebel's influential monograph *Marcel Duchamp*. (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959).
- 14 Rosenblum, colophon to the 0-9 portfolio (as in n. 1).
 - 15 Aphorisms #77 and 78 from *Cahier de Georges Braque, 1917-1947*.
 - 16 Discussing a 1983 painting by Johns, *Ventriloquist* (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), Nan Rosenthal discusses the presence of "an illusionistic nail, resembling that depicted in 1909-1910 oils by Georges Braque." See Rosenthal, "Drawing as Rereading," note 9.
 - 17 Clement Greenberg, "The Pasted-Paper Revolution," p.62.
 - 18 As Fred Orton notes in his analysis of the role of allegory in Johns' work: "It is a defining characteristic of allegory that it has an antecedent text—some verbal or visual representation external and prior to it—that it echoes and alludes to." (Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994], p. 118.)
 - 19 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 32.
 - 20 The references to Hart Crane's poetry and suicide in *Land's End, Periscope*, and other paintings of the early 1960s were first identified by Alan Solomon in his introduction to the catalogue of the Johns retrospective he organized for the Jewish Museum in 1964; see Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 74. Johns' references to Hart Crane were explored in greater depth by Roberta Bernstein in *Jasper Johns' Paintings and Sculptures 1954-1974* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1985), pp. 104-110; cited in Nan Rosenthal, "Drawing as Rereading," p. 28.
 - 21 See Herschel B. Chipp, *Georges Braque: the late paintings 1940-1963*, exh. cat. (Washington D.C.: The Phillips Collection, 1982).
 - 22 David Sylvester, *About Modern Art* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), pg. 476.
 - 23 The phrase "hysterical patriotism" was coined by Moira Roth in "The Aesthetic of Indifference," *Artforum*, November 1977), p. 77; cited in Fred Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 100.
 - 24 As David Schapiro writes, "[For] Johns, with his shattered family history... The flag must then be said to be a private dream-image with enormous psychic weight. It is an extraordinary instance of the restorative powers of art that the son could create a portrait of lost time with this image that seems to be testing the real." (Schapiro, *Jasper Johns: Drawings*, exh. cat. [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984], p. 56.)
 - 25 See Lil Picard, "Jasper Johns," *Das Kunstwerk* (Stuttgart), vol. 17, no. 5, November 1963; reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 92. A similar exchange appears in Johns' 1965 interview with David Sylvester, recorded for the BBC in June 1965; printed in *Jasper Johns: Drawings*, exh. cat. (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974); reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, pp. 113-114.
 - 26 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, pp. 117-118.
 - 27 Max Kozloff, "Jasper Johns," *The Nation*, March 16, 1964; reprinted in Kozloff, *Renderings: Critical Essays on a Century of Modern Art* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 209; cited in Fred Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, pp. 120-122.
 - 28 In 1977 interview, Johns commented: "I find all use of space emotionally affective... There's a Leonardo drawing that shows the end of the world [presumably one of the Deluge drawings], and there's this little figure standing there, and I assume it's Leonardo... For me, it's an incredibly moving piece of work." (Mark Stevens with Cathleen McGuignan, "Super Artist: Jasper Johns, Today's Master," *Newsweek*, vol. 90, no. 17, October 24, 1977; reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 165.)
 - 29 Richard S. Field, *Jasper Johns: Prints, 1960-1970*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1970), n.p. [4]; the lithograph in question is CR 1.
 - 30 Billy Kliver, interview conducted in March 1963, published in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, pp. 91 and 85.
 - 31 See the color reproductions of *Flag II* and *Flag III* in the plates accompanying CR 5 and 7; see also the technical notes in Field, *Jasper Johns: Prints, 1960-1970*, catalogue entries 6 and 7.
 - 32 Stanley Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," in Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 242-246.
 - 33 I am grateful to Susan Lorence for bringing this to my attention.
 - 34 I would like to thank Scott Gerson, paper conservator at The Museum of Modern Art, for his explanation of the different uses of carborundum.
 - 35 Ruth Fine explains that graphite wash is "powdered graphite suspended in lighter fluid... The wash is marked by a clearly articulated granular quality, shiny in appearance and almost metallic in character." (Fine, "Making Marks," in Rosenthal and Fine, *The Drawings of Jasper Johns*, pp. 58-59.)
 - 36 From Johns' 1965 interview with Walter Hopps: "The first number paintings were just single figures. And that seemed to me very much the same [as the flags and targets]. Then I saw a chart. You know the gray alphabet painting? I saw a chart in a book that had that arrangement of the alphabet. Then I of course realized I could do the numbers that way too." (Hopps, "An Interview with Jasper Johns," *Artforum*, vol. 3, no. 6, March 1965; reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 108.)
 - 37 On the definition of "working proof," a term used by Johns' printers Gemini G.E.L., see Geelhaar, *Jasper Johns: Working Proofs*, p. 9.
 - 38 "A picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture—then I destroy it." (Christian Zervos, "Conversation avec Picasso," *Cahiers d'Art*, vol. 7, no. 10, 1935, translated in Dore Ashton, *Picasso on Art: A Selection of Views* [New York: Viking, 1972], p. 38.)
 - 39 Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News*, Vol. 51, no. 8, December 1952; reprinted in Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 25-26.
 - 40 Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," p. 127; cited in Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 134. On pp. 120-123, Orton discusses the ways in which the critics of the 1960s saw Johns' brushwork as clearly derived from Abstract Expressionism, and yet somehow different from it: more delicate and nuanced, and not used as a mode of self-expression.
 - 41 CR S12.
 - 42 Rosenblum colophon, as in note 1. See also the discussions in Field, *Jasper Johns: Prints, 1960-1970*, [p. 15], and the entry for catalogue #'s 37-46; and Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 44.

- 43 Joseph E. Young, "Jasper Johns: An Appraisal," *Art International*, vol. 13, no. 7, September 199; reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 133.
- 44 CR 44-53 and CR 59-68; see also the paired reproductions in Field, *Jasper Johns: Prints, 1960-1970*, entries 94-103 and 104-113, and Field's commentary on p. 27.
- 45 The individual prints are catalogued as CR 156-165, the table as CR 155; see also the reproductions in Roberta Bernstein and Carter E. Foster, *Jasper Johns: Numbers* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2003), catalogue no's 31 and 30, respectively, where the variations in the drawing of the numbers are easier to see.
- 46 Orton, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, p. 157.
- 47 See note 18.
- 48 Primary definition from Christine Ammer, *The American Dictionary of Idioms* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). Secondary definition from www.urbandictionary.com
- 49 Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 58.
- 50 Brian M. Reed, "Hand in Hand: Jasper Johns and Hart Crane," *MODERNISM/modernity*, vol. 17, no. 1, January 2010, p. 36.
- 51 The 1962 print version of *Painting with Two Balls* (CR 8) is divided into three distinct bands of color, although the actual 1960 painting is not.
- 52 CR 78 and 80.
- 53 CR 197, 199, 200, 201.
- 54 The small format etchings are CR 221, 222, 223 and 217 (the first three images printed together on one sheet); the large etchings are CR 218, 224, and 225. The trio of images in CR 217 provided the template for the 1984 painting, *Untitled (Red, Yellow, Blue)* (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), reproduced in Varnedoe, *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective*, pl. 195.
- 55 This perforated-screen motif seems to appear for the first time in the numeral 1 from a 1975 set of *Ten Numerals*; see CR 157.
- 56 Christian Geelhaar, "Experiences on 'Other Levels': on the graphic work of Jasper Johns," in Geelhaar, *Jasper Johns: Working Proofs*, p. 18.
- 57 From sketchbook A, p. 55, c. 1964; transcribed in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 60. The same sketchbook suggests an alternative title for the work: "ACCORDING TO WHAT" or "FOCUS". (Sketchbook A, p. 48, transcribed in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 54.)
- 58 From TV documentary, "U.S.A. Artists 8: Jasper Johns," 1966; interviews transcribed in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 127.
- 59 Jasper Johns, "Marcel Duchamp," originally published in *Scrap* (New York), no. 2, December 23, 1960, p. 4; reprinted in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 20.
- 60 Kirk Varnedoe, "Introduction: A Sense of Life," p. 14.
- 61 See the entry for Niki de Saint Phalle, *Shooting Picture*, 1991, on the Tate Modern web site, <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=13063>
- 62 Seven of these (CR 90-96) are explicitly labeled *Fragments—According to What Series*, while the eighth (CR 97 [Fig. 52]) is a closely related image of the bent sculpted letters.
- 63 Susan Lorence, "Johns: Prints," in Michael Fitzgerald, ed., *A Life of Collecting: Victor and Sally Ganz* (New York: Christie's, 1997), p. 128.
- 64 Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, p. 58.
- 65 Compare Johns' sketchbook notes:
 "Shake (shift) parts of some of the letters in VOICE (2).
A not complete unit or a new unit. The elements in the 3 parts should neither fit nor not fit together.
 One would like not to be led. Avoid the idea of a puzzle which could be solved. Remove the signs of 'thought.'
 It is not the 'thought' which needs showing...
 The condition of a presence.
 The condition of being here
 ...the parts
 can be shifted."
 (Sketchbook B, p. 42, c. 1968; transcribed in Varnedoe and Hollevoet, *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, p. 64.)
- 66 For a comprehensive review of Johns' artistic citations, see Roberta Bernstein, "'Seeing a Thing Can Sometimes Trigger the Mind to Make Another Thing,'" in Varnedoe, *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective*, pp. 39-91.
- 67 The fullest account of Johns' engagement with the Isenheim altarpiece is given by Nan Rosenthal in "Drawing as Rereading," pp. 33-41. Rosenthal in turn relies on Andrée Hayum's seminal interpretation in *The Isenheim Altarpiece: God's Medicine and the Painter's Vision* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
- 68 Ruth Fine and Nan Rosenthal, "Interview with Jasper Johns," in Rosenthal and Fine, *The Drawings of Jasper Johns*, p. 75 and 82; and Rosenthal, "Drawing as Rereading," pp. 40-41, in the same catalogue.
- 69 Michel Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991; trans. New York: Washington Square Press, 2003), pp. 28, 21-22, 55-58.
- 70 See the mission statement at <http://www.artistswithaids.org/mission/index.html>.
- 71 Rosenthal, "Drawing as Rereading," p. 32.
- 72 CR 238, 239, 240, and 241.
- 73 CR 244.
- 74 Mark Rosenthal, *Jasper Johns: Work Since 1974*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1988), p. 89.
- 75 Varnedoe, "Introduction: A Sense of Life," p. 14.
- 76 According to Michael Crichton, Johns, as a boy, "lived with his grandfather, but his father saw him intermittently. Once his father promised him his watch when he was grown up. Soon after, Johns decided that he was grown up; he went to his father's house and took the watch. His father came and took it back. 'I guess I wasn't grown up after all,'" Johns commented. (Crichton, *Jasper Johns*, pp. 20-21.)

CATALOGUE

This catalogue lists all of Jasper Johns's drawings over prints.

The drawings are listed chronologically. When two dates appear separated by a slash (eg. *Figure 0*, 1963/1971), the first date refers to the publication of the print and the second date refers to the execution of the drawing. In *Untitled* *1987/2008, the asterisk indicates the year in which the etching plate was finished. The edition was published and the drawings executed in 2008.

Dimensions indicate sheet size.

Works included in the exhibition are indicated with •



White Flag, 1960
Oil and collage
over lithograph
22¹/₄ x 29³/₄ inches
The Eli and Edythe L.
Broad Collection,
Los Angeles



• *0 - 9*, c.1962
Oil, encaustic and graphite
over lithograph
20¹/₂ x 15³/₄ inches
Collection of
Michael Goldberg



Untitled, 1967
Oil over lithograph
29 x 35³/₈ inches
The Israel Museum,
Jerusalem



• *Numbers*, c.1967
Gouache over lithograph
22⁵/₁₆ x 19¹¹/₁₆ inches
Collection of Irving Blum



0 - 9, 1967
Acrylic over lithograph
5¹/₄ x 10¹/₂ inches
Private collection



Figure 0,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12³/₄ x 10¹/₂ inches



Figure 5,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
11³/₄ x 10¹/₂ inches



Figure 1,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12⁷/₈ x 10¹/₂ inches



Figure 6,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12¹/₂ x 11³/₄ inches



Figure 2,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12⁷/₈ x 11 inches



Figure 7,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12⁵/₈ x 11 inches



Figure 3,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12³/₄ x 10³/₄ inches



Figure 8,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
13¹/₈ x 11 inches



Figure 4,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
12⁵/₈ x 10¹/₂ inches



Figure 9,
1963/1971
Acrylic and collage
over lithograph
Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris,
Musée National d'Art
Moderne/Centre de
Création Industrielle
Gift of Tatyana Grosman
13 x 11¹/₈ inches



• *Bent "U"*,
1971/1974
Gouache, pencil,
pastel and chalk
over lithograph
20 x 25 inches
Nancy Ganz
Wright and
Alton Wright



O through 9, 1976
Watercolor over
lithograph
11³/₈ x 10¹/₂ inches
Private collection,
New York



• *Untitled (Shit)*,
1971/1974
Pastel, graphite,
gouache and pencil
over lithograph
18¹/₂ x 24¹/₄ inches
Nancy Ganz Wright
and Alton Wright



O through 9,
1967/1981
Ink over intaglio
25³/₄ x 19¹/₂ inches
Private collection



O through 9, 1976
Watercolor over
lithograph
11¹/₄ x 10¹/₂ inches
Private collection



O through 9,
1967/1981
Ink over intaglio
25³/₄ x 19¹/₂ inches
Private collection



O through 9, 1976
Watercolor over
lithograph
11¹/₄ x 10¹/₄ inches
Private collection,
New York



O through 9,
1967/1981
Ink over intaglio
25³/₄ x 19¹/₂ inches
Museum of Fine
Arts, Boston
Gift of Mrs. Frederick
B. Deknatel, The Bruce
A. Beal, Enid L. Beal
and Robert L. Beal
Family Foundation and
anonymous gift



O through 9, 1976
Watercolor over
lithograph
11¹/₂ x 10³/₄ inches
Gift of the Whitney
Museum of American
Art Board of Trustees
in honor of
Leonard A. Lauder



O through 9, 1967/1981
Ink over intaglio
25³/₄ x 19¹/₂ inches
Private collection



O through 9,
1967/1981
Ink over intaglio
25³/₄ x 19¹/₂ inches
Private collection,
courtesy of Greenberg
Van Doren Gallery



• *The Seasons,*
1989/1990
Acrylic over intaglio
26¹/₄ x 57³/₁₆ inches
1 of 2
Collection of
the artist



Untitled,
1982/1986
Watercolor over
intaglio mounted on
watercolor paper
41 x 78 inches
Museum of Fine
Arts, Houston
Gift of the artist



• *The Seasons,*
1989/1990
Acrylic over intaglio
26¹/₄ x 57³/₁₆ inches
2 of 2
Jeffrey and Susan
Brotman Collection



• *0 - 9,*
1975/1988
Watercolor over
intaglio
9³/₁₆ x 13⁷/₈ inches
Kimiko and John
Powers Collection



Summer,
1985/1990
Watercolor and
crayon over intaglio
and lithograph
(2 attached
sheets)
15 x 18 inches
Private collection



• *Land's End,*
1979/1989
Pastel over intaglio
41¹/₂ x 29⁹/₁₆ inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Ale Cans,*
1964/1990
Watercolor and
crayon over
lithograph
16¹/₂ x 12⁷/₈ inches
Collection of Gail
and Tony Ganz



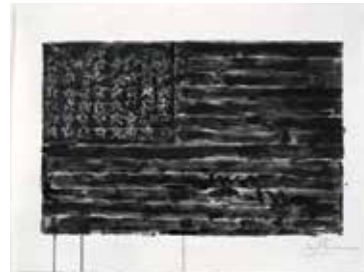
Untitled, 1990
Acrylic over
lithograph
10¹/₂ x 8 inches
Collection of
Bree Jeppson



• *Voice 2,*
1982/1991
Acrylic and graphite
over lithograph
35¹/₂ x 24⁷/₈ inches
Collection of
the artist



Jubilee, 1962/1994
Pastel over
lithograph
24³/₈ x 19⁷/₈ inches
Irving Stenn Family
Collection



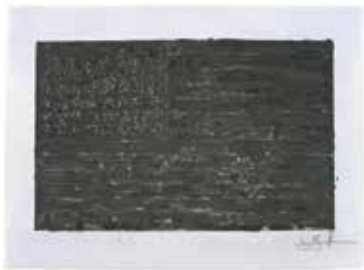
Flag, 1972/1994
Ink over lithograph
17 x 23¹/₄ inches
Barbaralee
Diamonstein-Spielvogel



• *Flag*, 1972/1994
Carborundum wash
over lithograph
17¹/₈ x 23¹/₂ inches
Collection of
Susan Lorence



• *Flag*, 1972/1994
Acrylic with
carborundum and
collage over lithograph
17¹/₈ x 22³/₈ inches
Private collection



• *Flag*, 1972/1994
Carborundum wash
over lithograph
17¹/₈ x 23¹/₂ inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Flag*, 1972/1994
Ink over lithograph
16⁵/₈ x 22⁵/₁₆ inches
Museum of Fine
Arts, Houston
Gift of Caroline
Weiss Law



• *Flag*, 1972/1994
Acrylic and graphite
over lithograph
19⁵/₈ x 25⁷/₈ inches
Sally and Wynn
Kramarsky Collection



*Untitled (Red, Yellow,
Blue)*, 1998
Acrylic over intaglio
9⁹/₁₆ x 12¹/₂ inches
Robert and Ann
Freedman



• *Flag*, 1972/1994
Acrylic and graphite
over lithograph
17¹/₈ x 23¹/₂ inches
Private collection



*Untitled (Red, Yellow,
Blue)*, 1998
Acrylic and graphite
pencil over intaglio
9¹/₂ x 12⁹/₁₆ inches
Private collection



Untitled (Red, Yellow, Blue), 1998
 Acrylic over intaglio
 9⁹/₁₆ x 12¹/₂ inches
 Collection of
 Rebecca Young



Untitled, 1999
 Acrylic over intaglio
 27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
 Collection of
 the artist



• *Untitled (Red, Yellow, Blue), 1998*
 Acrylic and graphite
 pencil over intaglio
 9⁹/₁₆ x 12¹/₂ inches
 Collection of
 the artist



Untitled, 1999
 Acrylic over intaglio
 27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
 Collection of
 the artist



Flags, 1968/1998
 Ink and graphite
 pencil over lithograph
 40 x 29³/₈ inches
 Collection of Gayle
 and Paul Stoffel



Untitled, 1999
 Acrylic over intaglio
 27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
 Collection of the artist



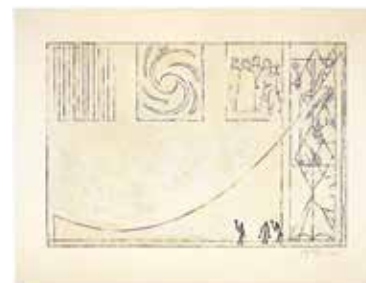
Untitled, 1999
 Acrylic over intaglio
 27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
 Collection of
 the artist



Untitled, 2001
 Collage over aquatint
 and etching
 24⁷/₈ x 32¹/₂ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 1999
 Acrylic over intaglio
 27¹/₄ x 19³/₄ inches
 Collection of
 the artist



Untitled, 2001
 Acrylic over aquatint
 and etching
 24⁷/₈ x 32¹/₂ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



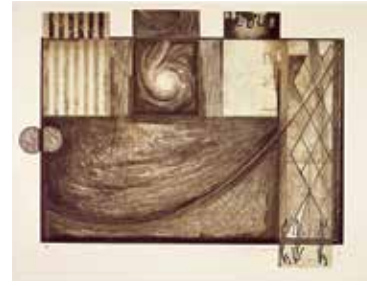
Untitled, 2001
 Acrylic over aquatint
 and etching
 24⁷/₈ x 32¹/₂ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Acrylic over aquatint
 and etching
 24⁷/₈ x 32¹/₂ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Collage and acrylic
 over aquatint
 and etching
 24¹⁵/₁₆ x 32⁵/₁₆ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Collage over aquatint
 and etching
 24¹⁵/₁₆ x 32³/₈ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Acrylic over aquatint
 and etching
 24¹³/₁₆ x 32⁹/₁₆ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Acrylic over aquatint
 and etching
 24¹⁵/₁₆ x 32⁹/₁₆ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Collage over aquatint
 and etching
 25 x 32³/₈ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Collage and acrylic
 over aquatint
 and etching
 24¹³/₁₆ x 32¹/₂ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Collage over aquatint
 and etching
 25 x 32¹/₂ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
 Acrylic over aquatint
 and etching
 24⁷/₈ x 32¹¹/₁₆ inches
 The Museum of
 Modern Art, New York
 Anonymous fractional
 and promised gift



Untitled, 2001
Watercolor and
gouache over aquatint
and etching
24⁷/₈ x 32³/₈ inches
The Museum of Modern
Art, New York
Anonymous fractional
and promised gift



• *Bushbaby*, 2004
Intaglio collage and string
over intaglio
42¹⁵/₁₆ x 30 inches
Private collection



• *Untitled*,
1997/2003
Ink over intaglio
15³/₈ x 22³/₈ inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Bushbaby*,
2004/2005
Collage over intaglio
43 x 30 inches
Collection of
Susan Lorence



• *Untitled*,
1997/2003
Ink over intaglio
14⁷/₈ x 22¹/₂ inches
Collection of
the artist



Within, 2007
Acrylic over intaglio
38¹/₈ x 29 inches
Private collection



Untitled,
1997/2003
Ink over intaglio
15¹/₂ x 22¹/₂ inches
Collection of
John Lund
recto



Within, 2007
Acrylic over intaglio
39¹/₄ x 31¹/₈ inches
Susan and Larry Marx
Collection



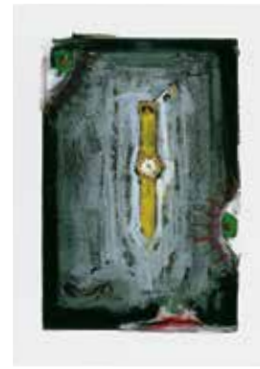
verso



Within, 2007
Acrylic over intaglio
37¹/₄ x 29³/₄ inches
Private collection



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



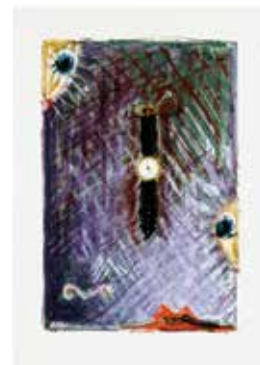
• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Intaglio collage
over intaglio
28¹/₂ x 21¹/₄ inches
Collection of
the artist



• *Untitled*,
*1987/2008
Pigment stick
over intaglio
24¹/₄ x 17 inches
Collection of
the artist

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BBC

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