

In 1964, at the pinnacle of Adolph Gottlieb's career, New York Times critic Brian O'Doherty described his development as:

a parable of the coming of age of modern art in America (from provincialism to sophistication in one hard abstract lesson) and also a parable of the artist's progress. For Gottlieb around 60 is infinitely better than Gottlieb around 40, when he was doing those surrealist pictographs that marked his escape route from realism. From Gottlieb and others a case could be made for art as a middle-aged man's job, the artist coming into his prime, like a surgeon or a lawyer, in his fifties.<sup>1</sup>

As O'Doherty suggests, Gottlieb appears at first glance a paradigmatic Abstract Expressionist. Born in 1903, he spent the 1920s and '30s laboring in poverty. Together with his friends Milton Avery and Mark Rothko, he applied the lessons of the European avant-garde to the motifs of everyday life, hoping to create a distinctively American form of modernism. By 1940, however, this approach seemed like a dead end. Along with painters such as Rothko and Jackson Pollock, he turned to the examples of Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, and Paul Klee, combining their cubo-surrealist syntax with an original vocabulary of archetypal signs. The resulting Pictographs brought Gottlieb critical recognition and a first trickle of sales. Finally, in the 1950s, his Labyrinths, Imaginary Landscapes, and Bursts broke through to a new fusion of abstract composition and gestural brushwork that was widely acknowledged as a major artistic achievement. Over the next two decades, Gottlieb's paintings brought him undreamed-of success. For Gottlieb, as for Mark Rothko, this posed a challenge to the bohemian values that had shaped his art. Unlike Rothko, he lived happily with the contradiction until his death in 1974.

The immense artistic distance traveled by Gottlieb can be measured by comparing one of his early still lifes with a "Burst" from the final phase of his career. *Still Life (Gate Leg Table)*, painted in 1925 (fig. 1), is a skillful exercise in the manner of Paul Cézanne. Numerous artists painted similar pictures in the 1920s.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Gottlieb's *Exclamation* of 1958 (fig. 2) is a profoundly original work. Here, he utilizes the "Burst" format he had invented the previous year, balancing a gestural tangle of brushstrokes in the lower half of the picture against a relatively smooth, self-contained ovoid in the upper half. The painting implies a dramatic narrative of cosmic proportions; and the canvas, 90 inches high, both literally and figuratively towers over the viewer.

*Exclamation* provides a reminder that, if the narrative of Gottlieb's career fits perfectly into the mold of Abstract Expressionism, the character of his mature work is profoundly different from that of his peers and contemporaries. *Exclamation* is not an all-over composition, like Pollock's drip paintings of 1947-50 or Willem de Kooning's abstractions of the same years. There is a clear distinction between figure and ground, although without any suggestion of perspectival space. What sustains the flatness of the picture, and welds it together into a unified composition, is the exact but indefinable relationship between the shapes and their support. Clement Greenberg noted in 1955 that Gottlieb could "place a flat and irregular silhouette, that most difficult of all shapes to

adjust in isolation to the rectangle, with a force and rightness no other living painter seems capable of.”<sup>3</sup> A similar contrast between shape and field could be found in the paintings of Franz Kline, and in 1961 the Guggenheim curator H.H. Arnason coined the phrase “Abstract Imagists” to distinguish artists such as Gottlieb and Kline from more orthodox Abstract Expressionists.<sup>4</sup> Gottlieb differs in turn from Kline, not just in his use of both rough and smooth brushwork, but in the symmetrical placement and contours of his shapes. Despite his abstract imagery, the symmetry and frontality of Gottlieb’s compositions recall the majestic figures of Byzantine mosaic.

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Adolph Gottlieb grew up on Manhattan’s Lower East Side in its heyday as a haven for Jewish immigrants. He gained admission to Stuyvesant, an elite public high school, but dropped out to study art, taking night classes at the Art Students League and Cooper Union while working in his father’s wholesale stationery business.<sup>5</sup> What survives of Gottlieb’s personal library offers a portrait of the artist as a young intellectual: H.G. Wells’ *Outline of History* (1920), *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (a 1914 edition), Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* (translated in 1910), Henry James’s *The Europeans* (a 1922 reprint), James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1917), and the three-volume English translation of Romain Rolland’s *Jean-Christophe* (translated in 1910, 1911, and 1913).<sup>6</sup> This last item, which is unlikely to be familiar to modern readers, is worth pausing over. One of the most popular and most admired books of its era, earning its author a Nobel Prize, *Jean-Christophe* is a lengthy *bildungsroman*, following the life-story of an aspiring German composer who travels across Europe from city to city and from love to love, searching for his true path as a man and a musician, contending with the obstacles of bourgeois venality and incomprehension that stand between him and recognition as an artist. It is, in other words, a book likely to have made a strong impression on the young Adolph Gottlieb.

It may have been Rolland’s novel that persuaded Gottlieb that he needed to make a similar pilgrimage to find his way as an artist. In 1921, at the age of 17, he left school and worked his passage to Europe on a freighter. He spent six months in Paris and then another year in Germany. He immersed himself in art, studying Renaissance and Baroque painting in art museums, tribal art in ethnographic museums, and modern art in galleries. Before Gottlieb left for Europe, John Sloan—his teacher at the Art Students League—had encouraged him to learn about Cubism, and one of his sharpest memories of Paris in 1921 was seeing Fernand Leger’s recently completed *Three Women*.<sup>7</sup> Gottlieb returned with a small library of German books on both modern and classic art. .<sup>8</sup>

Many American artists who visited Europe in the early 1920s responded by experimenting with Cubism, even if they quickly returned to more naturalistic styles. Gottlieb seems not to have done this. His surviving canvases of the 1920s and early 1930s typically represent scenes of everyday life in New York or New England, with bulbous figures in simplified settings, painted in drab tones of brown and gray. In January 1929, when one of his paintings appeared in a group show, Edward Allen Jewell, the art critic for the *New York Times*, took note, writing that, “The ‘Handball Game’ of Adolph Gottlieb, with its well-balanced grays, attracted us as the most workmanlike study.”<sup>9</sup> Later that year, Gottlieb was one of the winners of a nation-wide talent search conducted by the Dudensing Galleries, and he was rewarded with a solo exhibition there in May 1930. As Gottlieb later recalled, his paintings of this time often depicted “lonely

figures in a desolate landscape.” He had recently read T.S. Eliot’s 1922 poem, “The Wasteland,” and borrowed its title for one picture (fig. 3), but the painting shares the poem’s desolate mood rather than its specific imagery.<sup>10</sup>

It was also in the years 1929-33 that Gottlieb formed the personal relationships that would determine the course of his art for the next two decades, and longer. Most important, he met and married a younger painter, Esther Dick, who had been supporting herself as a seamstress. As so often happened in those days, Esther set aside her own career to support her husband’s, taking a job at the Central Needle Trades High School, which later became the Fashion Industries High School, and then the Fashion Institute of Technology. Adolph and Esther remained childless, but she rose to the level of dean before retiring in 1960.<sup>11</sup> Adolph earned some money by taking on a variety of jobs—sign painting, photographic retouching, teaching arts-and-crafts, and serving as a summer camp counselor—but was able to devote himself primarily to painting.<sup>12</sup> In 1933, the young couple moved to Brooklyn, far from the Greenwich Village scene that remained the center of the New York art world until the 1960s.<sup>13</sup>

In 1929, Gottlieb became friends with the painters Milton Avery (fig. 4) and Mark Rothko (fig. 5).<sup>14</sup> Older and more established, Avery had already arrived at his mature manner, depicting the life and landscape of New England in simplified shapes and flat, unshaded colors. As Jill Snyder has shown, Avery, Gottlieb and Rothko formed an artistic partnership that lasted for most of the 1930s. They explored similar subjects and styles, and summered together in Gloucester, Massachusetts.<sup>15</sup> During the same period, Gottlieb also formed friendships with Barnett Newman, David Smith, and the Russian émigré John Graham (originally Ivan Dabrowsky). The four artists shared a strong interest in tribal art, which would later play an important role in Gottlieb’s work.

Gottlieb had his second solo show in February 1934, at the aptly named Uptown Gallery located on the Upper West Side, far from the downtown art scene. His work was admired by Robert Ulrich Godsoe, who began as the art critic for the *Jackson Heights Herald* (a newspaper in Queens, New York), but made the transition to art dealer, becoming director of the Uptown in May of the same year.<sup>16</sup> There, he organized a series of exhibitions of a group of painters, including Avery, Gottlieb, and Rothko, whom he dubbed “Expressionists.” That December, Godsoe opened his own space, the Gallery Secession, on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, closer to the heart of the contemporary scene. As he built up his stable, however, his original band of artists began to feel neglected. Seceding from the Secession, they dubbed themselves “The Ten” (although in fact they numbered only nine), and began exhibiting together, staging annual shows at a series of different New York galleries, and at the Galerie Bonaparte in Paris in November 1936. The group broke up in 1939.<sup>17</sup> Gottlieb’s work was also shown in a variety of other exhibitions, so that, by the end of the decade, he was a familiar figure on the New York art scene. Exposure did not mean financial success: he was lucky to sell a few pictures a year. Nonetheless, Adolph and Esther were able to return to Europe in July 1935, visiting Paris and several other European cities.

The art world of the 1930s was a very different place from the art world of today. The big story of the decade was the wholesale transfer of Old Master painting and sculpture from Europe to the United States as a result of the Depression. Masterpieces of medieval, renaissance and baroque painting and sculpture were sold off by impoverished aristocrats and collectors and, in some cases, by governments.<sup>18</sup> Impressionism and Post-

Impressionism had been accepted into the canon of Great Art, but the jury was still out on modern art made between 1905 and 1930. The political climate of the decade encouraged not just artistic conservatism but also cultural isolationism—a counterpart to the economic isolationism that followed on the collapse of international trade after 1929. The American Scene and Regionalist painting of Reginald Marsh and Thomas Hart Benton matched the mood of the moment.

It is instructive to compare our usual modernist view of this period with the image found in the art magazines of the era. For art historians, the main event of spring 1936 is the Museum of Modern Art's great survey exhibition, "Cubism and Abstract Art." The March 7, 1936 issue of *Art News* presents a very different view. Alfred M. Frankfurter, the magazine's editor and chief critic, offers a dismissive obituary of the Modern's show. "The bone carvings of the Scythians and the hair-locks of the Victorians," he writes, "are arts no deader than the stony corpses of cubism and non-objectivism."<sup>19</sup> The cover and lead story of the magazine are devoted to the Metropolitan Museum's acquisition of a "famous and exquisite" *Birth of the Virgin* attributed to Fra Carnevale, sold by the Barberini Collection in Rome via Knoedler & Co. Leafing through the 1936 issues of the magazine, one finds a majority of the covers devoted to Old Master and Impressionist paintings and drawings. There is a smattering of European modernism—a Blue Period Picasso, a new tapestry sketch by Raoul Dufy—but no abstraction or surrealism. Contemporary American art makes an occasional appearance, but it is mostly of the Regionalist variety.

For those who did believe in the value of avant-garde art, it was a good time to be a collector. The work of modern masters such as Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Klee, and Mondrian was available at very reasonable prices. Collectors did not pay much attention to the American avant-garde artists, whose work was largely derivative of European modernism. There was little reason to buy imitations when they could buy the originals.

Under these circumstances, what did it mean to try to be an avant-garde painter in the United States? Four decades later, Gottlieb told an interviewer: "The whole problem seemed to be how to get out of those traps—Picasso, Surrealism—and how to stay clear of American provincialism, Regionalism and Social Realism."<sup>20</sup> Nor was he drawn to pure geometric abstraction. In some "Notes for a Talk," apparently written in the 1950s or '60s, Gottlieb equated Purism with vegetarianism, adding: "Be yourself don't be little Mondrians."<sup>21</sup>

In the 1930s, however, like Avery and Rothko, he tried to combine the formal innovations of European modernism with American subject matter. The radical simplification of Gottlieb's *Self-Portrait in Mirror*, painted around 1938 (fig. 6) seems to show the influence of both Matisse and Avery. The picture focuses on the pleasures of domesticity, showing the artist reflected in the mirror of his wife's dressing table, with their marital bed visible in the background. In the mirror, we see Gottlieb drawing on a sheet of paper resting on the dressing table, while in the "real" space of the foreground we see Esther's scissors resting on the same table. Her activity as seamstress is implicitly equated with his activity as artist. The flattening out of pictorial space, the clash of different patterns (recalling fabric designs), and the elegant play of curved lines, simultaneously contours and arabesques, give a French accent to the American bedroom.

Gottlieb's paintings of this decade attracted only brief commentary from the New York critics. Edward Alden Jewell, who had admired Gottlieb's work in 1929, responded

to his 1934 solo exhibition by writing that, “In his desire to avoid the commonplace and express himself vigorously, he now and then resorts to distortions of doubtful value.”<sup>22</sup> Commenting on the December 1935 exhibition of “The Ten,” one reviewer noted that Gottlieb’s “distorted figures” were “in the Milton Avery vein,” while another commented that his pictures were “almost monotone in coloring,” and that he seemed to be interested primarily in the “building up of forms.”<sup>23</sup>

Critical reactions to “The Ten” as a group tended to focus on the theme of “expressionism,” a critical catchphrase of the period. When Jewell attacked the work in a June 1934 exhibition organized by Godsoe as “mannered,” “meaningless,” and “obscure,” Godsoe responded that:

The sixteen artists whom I have elected to show at the Uptown Gallery are expressionists in that they place above all matters of comment (literature) or environment (history) the necessity for the ‘expression’ of the human being in terms of line, color, and form. As their sponsor, I believe that the document of the human psyche is of infinitely more importance than a record of time or place.<sup>24</sup>

For critics of the 1930s, the term “expressionist” fluctuated between a descriptive and a derogatory sense: by licensing artists to modify or ignore natural appearances, expressionism relieved them of the need to communicate clearly, or even to demonstrate technical competence. Jewell touched on this theme in his review of a December 1935 exhibition of “The Ten,” writing that, “Perhaps they can be loosely grouped as ‘expressionists.’ The pictures are mostly such as to give any one with the slightest academic sympathies apoplexy... There is much needless obscurity and reasonless distortion in most of the work, rather than any striking originality.”<sup>25</sup> Other critics noted that they had borrowed rather than invented the formal language of their paintings, but praised them for putting this language in the service of an original expressive vision.<sup>26</sup> As of the mid-1930s, then, Gottlieb, Rothko, and the other members of “The Ten” seemed destined to remain minor masters, expressing a melancholy vision of American life in the styles of the School of Paris. Their work was notable principally for belying the boosterism and optimism of better-known American Scene painters such as Marsh and Benton.<sup>27</sup>

Gottlieb’s escape from this dead end was triggered by an unlikely event: his wife Esther’s illness. Her doctor advised her to spend some time in a dry climate, so the couple moved to the West for eight months, from late 1937 through spring 1938, renting a house in the desert on the outskirts of Tucson, Arizona. Gottlieb’s letters to his friend Paul Bodin, a New York painter, are largely devoted to describing the tedium of their daily life. He also describes his struggle to paint the vast landscape around him, and his dissatisfaction with the results, which led him instead to work on still life. According to his letters, Gottlieb began by painting the chessboard and chesspieces that served him and Esther as a nightly distraction. He then turned to painting the oddly-shaped gourds and pieces of dried cactus found in the desert around them (fig. 7). Here, for once, Gottlieb adopted the synthetic cubist language of Picasso and Braque’s mid-1920s still lifes, with their upturned table tops represented by areas of flat color, and their individual motifs reduced to stylized shapes.

Twenty years later, after Gottlieb had arrived at the fully abstract language of his “Bursts,” the art historian and curator William Rubin pinpointed these still lifes as a key

turning point, describing how Gottlieb, “in this environment of meditative isolation...took a big step toward his maturity by tentatively establishing a personal vocabulary of shapes.”<sup>28</sup> In a 1962 interview, Gottlieb confirmed that these still lifes had been decisive for his development. The “fantastic desert shapes” of the cacti and gourds “still carry through in my work,” he said. “There is a definite relationship, let us say, in the disc forms that I use now (fig. 2).”<sup>29</sup> In point of fact, the asymmetrical, indented shapes of the objects in Gottlieb’s 1938 paintings do not look much like the symmetrical shapes in his later paintings. Rather, what the early still lifes and the later abstractions have in common is their metaphysical quality: the way that seemingly neutral objects or shapes become charged with enigmatic significance.

Perhaps the key work, here, is another Arizona painting, *Symbols and the Desert* (fig. 8). As Mary Davis MacNaughton has noted, “the strange space of Gottlieb’s vista—at once far and near—echoes his own experience of the desert’s unreal atmosphere, and in its dreamlike quality is distinctly Surrealist.” Various models have been proposed for the uncanny space of this work: paintings by Salvador Dalí, the Belgian surrealist Pierre Roy, and of course Giorgio de Chirico, the originator of metaphysical painting. (All three artists were included in the Museum of Modern Art’s 1936 survey, “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.”)<sup>30</sup> In the foreground, the rounded, pregnant shapes of fruits and rocks contrast with the furrowed, desiccated shapes of the sticks and sections of cactus preserved under the bell jar. The dramatic, inconsistent shadows crossing the table recall the angled shadows that traverse de Chirico’s streets and plazas. Beyond the table, the curtained window opens onto a shadeless vista of open desert and stony hills.

Although de Chirico may have been Gottlieb’s immediate model, it is worth noting that this format, with its dramatic contrast of close-up and wide-angle views, derives ultimately from 19<sup>th</sup>-century natural illustrations. We find it, for instance, in the flower paintings of the American Luminist Martin Johnson Heade (fig. 9), where exotic orchids and birds appear, greatly enlarged, in the foreground, while the background opens up vertiginously to reveal vistas of mountains and forests. Exact counterparts to Heade’s work appear in nineteenth-century German paintings (which de Chirico would have encountered during his training in Munich). These paintings present simultaneous microcosmic and macrocosmic views of the same objects. The uncanny juxtaposition of these different perspectives returns in de Chirico’s paintings, and in Gottlieb’s *Symbols and the Desert*. Ultimately, it will shape the Imaginary Landscapes and Bursts that Gottlieb begins painting in the 1950s. Before turning to these pictures, however, we need to examine the evolution of Gottlieb’s work in the intervening decade of the 1940s.

In the summer of 1938, Adolph and Esther returned to the East Coast. Instead of returning to Gloucester, as they had in previous years, they instead spent the summer in Provincetown, Massachusetts, which had once again emerged as a summer outpost of Greenwich Village. In 1935, the German painter and teacher Hans Hofmann opened a summer school in Provincetown, initiating a new chapter in the town’s history, this time as a center for avant-garde art. Hofmann was a colleague for Gottlieb, not a mentor, but the decision to summer in Provincetown marks the beginning of a shift away from the concerns he had shared with Avery and towards a new artistic focus.

*Fish and Anchor*, painted in summer 1938 (fig. 10), exports the metaphysical model of *Symbols and the Desert* (fig. 8) from Tucson to Provincetown. The stark desert becomes the flat expanse of the sea.<sup>31</sup> The gourds and stones in the foreground become a

pile of rope. The stick-like forms in the bell jar become the cross-bar of the anchor and the dead fish with its toothy, gaping jaw. The Christian symbols of the cross and fish suggest that the picture should be read as a secular Crucifixion.

Over the next few years, Gottlieb deepened his engagement with the allegorical language of metaphysical painting, focusing on the bleak Cape Cod beaches. In paintings such as *Box and Sea Objects* (fig. 11), he presented his finds within crudely carpentered wooden boxes, like home-made versions of the cabinets of curiosities prized by Renaissance and Baroque aristocrats.<sup>32</sup> In a small etching (fig. 12), he combined the compositions of *Box and Sea Objects* and *Fish and Anchor*, as if defining the two main directions his work would take over the next three decades: the microcosmic imagery of the Pictographs and the macrocosmic imagery of the Imaginary Landscapes and Bursts.

Between 1940 and 1941, however, Gottlieb transformed his style, going from the literal imagery of *Box and Sea Objects* to the abstract symbolic language of his Pictographs. The impetus for this transformation seems to have come, not just from artistic sources, but from the dramatic changes in the larger world around him.

During the Depression, Gottlieb had shared the leftist politics of many artists. In 1936, he was a founding member of the American Artists' Congress, which organized exhibition to raise money for leftist causes. In 1940, however, Gottlieb joined Meyer Schapiro in seceding from the Artists' Congress, protesting the group's failure to condemn the Stalin-Hitler pact and the Russian invasion of Finland.<sup>33</sup> The *Kristallnacht* of November 1938, the aerial bombing of Guernica in spring 1937, the fall of the Spanish Republican government in spring 1939, and the Nazi invasion of Poland the following September showed that forces of radical evil had been set loose in the world. Metaphysical melancholy was not an adequate response to the imminent apocalypse of World War II. By late 1941, when the United States declared war on Japan and Germany, Gottlieb was too old to be called up for military service. As an artist, however, he needed to respond to the nightmare unfolding around him.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, he was re-evaluating his relationship to the European avant-garde. Modern masters such as Picasso, Klee and Miró were hardly unknown quantities in New York; throughout the 1930s, their work was seen in frequent gallery exhibitions. However, between late 1939 and the end of 1941, the Museum of Modern Art held major retrospectives of these three artists, presenting their work and development in unprecedented depth. Like many of the other painters who would become leaders of the New York School, Gottlieb realized at this moment that the path to a distinctively American avant-garde led through the great European masters, not around them. In figure paintings such as *The Rape of Persephone* (fig. 13), he abandoned naturalistic figuration in favor of rounded, biomorphic forms, simultaneously childlike and monstrous, derived from Picasso and Miró. In early Pictographs such as *Eyes of Oedipus* (fig. 14) he took the flat, irregular grid of Piet Mondrian and filled its empty spaces with hieroglyphic signs. In later Pictographs such as *Mariner's Incantation* (fig. 15), he adopted Klee's technique of composing in multiple layers, with linear inscriptions floating in front of soft-edged areas of color.<sup>35</sup>

Gottlieb's longstanding interest in tribal art, shared with his friends Barnett Newman, David Smith, and John Graham, influenced the iconography of the Pictographs, with their abstract signs, mask-like faces, and staring eyes. The grid format of the Pictographs alluded in particular to the example of Northwest Indian art, with its animal

faces divided into symmetrical arrangements of stylized eyes, nostrils, ears, and other features, each isolated within its own compartment of the design.<sup>36</sup> Gottlieb's incorporation of tribal imagery is often attributed to Carl Jung and his theory of archetypes. Indeed, Gottlieb owned a copy of *The Integration of the Personality*, the first English translation from Jung's work, published in 1939.<sup>37</sup> As Stephen Polcari points out, Jung's theories built on earlier interpretations of mythological imagery such as James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (first published in 1890) and Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920).<sup>38</sup> These had deeply influenced T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland*, which made such an impression on Gottlieb at the beginning of the 1930s. From Eliot's example, Gottlieb seems to have taken away the lesson that imagery did not need to be comprehensible to be effective; indeed, that its power might be multiplied by unintelligibility.<sup>39</sup>

Gottlieb's symbols were deliberately ambiguous; and he was quite insistent that his Pictographs were *not* rebuses, with a fixed meaning that could be decoded.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, as Polcari argues, the paintings evoke a mythic narrative:

"Hercules, the hero, struggles with Thanatos or death, and wins a springtime."<sup>41</sup> The classical references, here, might be deleted and replaced with other symbols, but the structure of the narrative would remain consistent. In a 1943 radio interview, Gottlieb argued that modern art inspired by "primitive" art shared not just its formal qualities but also its spiritual meaning:

All primitive expression reveals...the immediate presence of terror and fear, a recognition and acceptance of the brutality of the natural world as well as the eternal insecurity of life. That these feelings are being experienced by many people throughout the world today is an unfortunate fact.<sup>42</sup>

By evoking the terror and fear associated simultaneously with the inner world of the unconscious and the outer world of war, the Pictograph allowed the viewer to confront and surmount these primal emotions. From a Jungian perspective, it functioned as a "dark mirror," enabling a cathartic journey of self-discovery.<sup>43</sup>

The initial critical reaction to the Pictographs focused at first on their seemingly Native American character. When they were first exhibited at the Artists Gallery in December 1942, A.Z. Kruse said in the *Brooklyn Eagle* that: "Adolph Gottlieb's nine semi-abstract interpretations of American Indian symbols constitute an exploit into the realm of eloquent hieroglyphics, pointing new directions in art." As Gottlieb moved away from Indian motifs towards more abstract, biomorphic forms (fig. 16), critics struggled to keep up. Reviewing a February 1944 show of Gottlieb's drawings, Kruse wrote:

At first glance his philosophic semi-abstractions look like nothing more than diagrammed nerve centers exposed upon the top of decaying lower molars, many times magnified. When, however, these pastel drawings are observed with patient and honest attention, well-calculated torsos begin to take shape, with lifelike limbs and enveloping lines based upon the secrets of protoplasmic structure...[Gottlieb] has created an extraordinary sequence of birth, maturity and generation.<sup>44</sup>

In 1943, when Gottlieb and Rothko showed their pictures in the third exhibition of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, their old nemesis, Edward Alden Jewell



of the *New York Times*, confessed himself completely baffled by Rothko's work, and said that he was not prepared "to shed the slightest enlightenment when it comes to Adolph Gottlieb's 'Rape of Persephone' (fig. 13)." <sup>45</sup> In retrospect, it is hard to imagine taking offense at this profession of ignorance, however facetious. However, as Isabelle Dervaux points out, Gottlieb and Rothko had learned from Godsoe that a negative review could be turned into an opportunity for publicity. With Barnett Newman's assistance, they drafted a letter of protest that was printed in the *Times* five days later. Gottlieb himself contributed the statement that: "We favor the simple expression of the complex thought. We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth." Specifically, he explained that:

The Rape of Persephone' is a poetic expression of the essence of the myth; the representation of the concept of seed and its earth with all its brutal implications; the impact of elemental truth. Would you have us present this abstract concept with all its complicated feelings by means of a boy and girl lightly tripping?<sup>46</sup>

The actual painting (fig. 13) depicts the head and breasts of a girl, reduced to large blobby forms. Eye, nose, mouth and nipple are indicated by similar teardrop shapes, borrowed from Picasso's portraits of Dora Maar. Gottlieb has discarded the manifest content of the Persephone myth—the story of the beautiful young girl abducted by the lord of the underworld, who rises out of the earth in his chariot, seizes her, and drags her back to his gloomy realm. Instead, he has gone straight to the myth's latent content as an agricultural allegory out of Frazer, reminding us that the earth must periodically "die," lying bare and fallow, before it again bears fruit. Persephone's mud-colored, roughly-textured visage identifies her as the spirit of the soil.

Meanwhile, the New York art world was in flux. New galleries were emerging that focused on the fusion of abstraction and surrealism visible in the work of Gottlieb and his contemporaries. In 1942, Peggy Guggenheim opened Art of This Century, half a private museum for her collection of European art, half a gallery for the display of new American artists. In December 1944, her brilliant advisor, Howard Putzel, opened his own Gallery 67 with an inaugural exhibition, "40 American Moderns," including Gottlieb, Rothko, Pollock, and Robert Motherwell. When Putzel gave Gottlieb a solo show in March 1945, the critical winds began to shift in his favor. Maude Riley, in *The Art Digest*, noted that: "Much of his color is of the earth, clay, and mineral hues that came onto his palette in Arizona a number of years ago. Only, now that he paints scenes no more, substituting 'enigmas' for natural objects, he is more keenly aware of balance, achieving it by placing carefully chosen color patches exactly." The anonymous critic for *Art News* commented that the show contained "not only the haunting earlier work of the pictograph type but his freer new developments...The new compositions...are developed in free space and are frequently powerful enough to rank...with certain Picassos." <sup>47</sup> Gottlieb was also represented in Putzel's group exhibition, "A Problem for Critics," in spring 1945. Including Gottlieb, Gorky, Hofmann, Pollock, Richard Pousette-Dart, and Rothko (and some of their European models), this was arguably the first coherent exhibition of the movement that would become known as Abstract Expressionism, but that remained for the moment nameless. (The "problem for critics" was coming up with a name.)

In 1947, after Putzel's untimely death, Gottlieb began showing with Sam Kootz, an advertising executive turned art dealer. In 1943 Kootz had published *New Frontiers in American Painting*, a survey mingling conventional figuration, figurative surrealism, pure abstraction, and abstract surrealism; the book included one of Gottlieb's Pictographs, which stood out boldly among its more conventional neighbors. In 1944, another businessman-turned-art-impresario, Sidney Janis, published a compendium of *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*, including Gottlieb along with Pollock, Rothko, Motherwell, Graham, de Kooning, Lee Krasner, and Ad Reinhardt. The New York School was beginning to emerge as a distinct entity, and Gottlieb was at the heart of it.

Meanwhile, in 1947, Kootz flew to Paris, wangled an introduction to Picasso, and persuaded him to send nine recent paintings to New York for the first post-war exhibition of his work in the United States. It was a major coup in international artistic relations. Having decided that the New York avant-garde was now on par with that of Paris, Kootz then sent work by six of his gallery artists-- Gottlieb, Motherwell, William Baziotés, Romare Bearden, Byron Browne, and Carl Holty—for exhibition at the Galerie Maeght. The result was a fiasco. In eyes of the French critics, the American artists' works were blatantly derivative of Picasso and other French artists, and greatly inferior to their models. Only Gottlieb and Motherwell were spared from this blanket condemnation. Out of friendship for Kootz, Picasso made a private visit to the exhibition, but left without saying a word.<sup>48</sup>

However, there was an unexpected sequel to Picasso's visit. Years later, when Gottlieb had a successful solo show in Paris, he told a reporter from a Swiss paper, "Picasso was inspired by my work in 1948."<sup>49</sup> Given the chorus of negative criticism that greeted Kootz's Paris show, this remark may seem fantastical. However, it is confirmed by the testimony of Clement Greenberg, who noted in 1954 that, "Picasso of all people was struck by Gottlieb's pictures when he saw them...said so, and incorporated suggestions from them in his big *Kitchen* painting (fig. 17)." Indeed, Picasso's *Kitchen* of 1948, with its web of heavy lines floating in front of a field of muted colors, strongly resembles Pictographs such as *Composition* of 1945 (fig. 16). It should be said that the linear language of *The Kitchen* derives from Picasso's own earlier work—specifically from his dot-and-line drawings of 1924, which directly influenced Miró's *Constellations* of 1941, which in turn influenced the Pictographs. One might say that, in borrowing from Gottlieb, Picasso was really borrowing from himself. On the other hand, before 1948, the dot-and-line vocabulary had been absent for many years from Picasso's work. It reappears in *The Kitchen*, and then lingers on in his paintings and prints of the next few years. In these later works, however, the dot-and-line pattern serves as a decorative motif attached to particular figures and objects. Only in *The Kitchen* does it form an all-over web comparable to the all-over compositions of the New York School. In this respect, Gottlieb is almost certainly Picasso's model. By the late 1940s, he could justifiably see himself, not just as a major figure of the New York School, but also as a leader in the global art world.

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As of 1948, then, the challenge for Gottlieb was no longer to overcome the European masters of the avant-garde. Rather, it was to compete successfully with his peers of the New York School. Between 1948 and 1958, Gottlieb transformed his work

as radically as he had between 1937 and 1947. Before examining this transformation, however, we need to look at some significant sequels to the Pictographs.

Even as Gottlieb moved toward a more abstract and painterly style in his canvases, he received a series of commissions for synagogue decorations that led him to revive the symbolic language of the Pictographs. In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, there was a widespread religious revival in Europe and the United States, reflecting a hope that traditional faith might compensate for the brutality of the war and the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust. In France, the Dominican friar Marie-Alain Couturier recruited avant-garde artists to create art for churches, most famously persuading Henri Matisse to design the stained glass, tiles, and even vestments for the Chapel of Saint-Marie du Rosaire at Vence, in 1949-51. One of Couturier's counterparts in the United States was the architect Percival Goodman, the brother of social theorist Paul Goodman (*Growing Up Absurd*). After the Holocaust, Goodman argued, it was necessary to reaffirm Jewish life in the United States by reasserting the role of the synagogue as a center of the community. Rejecting traditional historical styles, Goodman argued that the modern synagogue needed to be built in a flexible, contemporary style, allowing it to serve the liturgical, educational, and social needs of the modern Jewish community. Contemporary art seemed to him an essential element of this project.<sup>50</sup>

For one of his first synagogues, Temple B'nai Israel, constructed in Millburn, New Jersey, in 1949-51, Goodman recruited Gottlieb to design a long curtain to cover the ark of the Torah, Robert Motherwell to paint a mural for the antechamber to the sanctuary, and Herbert Ferber to create a sculpture for the exterior of the building, evoking the Burning Bush. When the building opened in October 1951, it received wide attention in the press. Emily Genauer, in the *Herald Tribune*, discussed the tension between abstraction and figuration in the work of all three artists. According to Genauer, motifs that Gottlieb "employed in his sketch simply because they made for good design had to be altered so that they carried specific meaning. A zig-zag line, for instance, with another line or two added, could be read as the traditional crown. Two large white rectangular shapes could be justified as stylized representations of the Holy Scrolls." In point of fact, the crown that appears on Gottlieb's curtain is almost identical to the one that appears in his 1941 canvas, *Eyes of Oedipus* (fig. 14).<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, it seemed to Genauer that the synagogue project resolved the old debate about meaning and obscurity in favor of intelligibility: "And so we have the spectacle of three artists who have long and belligerently refused to translate personal experience into forms that will have group significance doing just that, and achieving the finest work of their careers."<sup>52</sup>

Goodman also commissioned Gottlieb to make a set of tapestries for Temple Beth El, in Springfield, Massachusetts, constructed in 1950-53. However, Gottlieb's largest and most spectacular religious project was a stained glass façade that he designed for the Milton Steinberg Memorial, a community center attached to the Park Avenue Synagogue on East 87<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. The architects' plans for the building called for an all-glass façade five stories tall. Gottlieb proposed a grid of 91 panels, 13 panels high by 7 wide. Of these, 21 were stained glass, using quasi-abstract symbols to evoke the holy days of the Jewish calendar. These colored panels were spaced throughout the façade, separated by panels of uncolored glass divided by diamond-patterned leading. The

façade as a whole evoked the recurring cycle of the Jewish year. The result was one of the great decorative ensembles of New York City (fig. 18). Tragically, it fell victim to the city's ceaseless rage for growth: the Steinberg Memorial was torn down in 1981 to make room for a new, larger community center. The colored panels were saved, and a few incorporated into the new building's fenestration, but the ensemble as a whole was destroyed.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the work of other New York School painters had challenged Gottlieb to revise his approach to working on canvas. In the early 1940s, his use of the grid had pioneered the development of the "allover" composition, breaking down the distinction between figure and ground, and occupying the totality of the visual field instead of separating into discrete figures set against a relatively empty background. As the Pictographs evolved, Gottlieb began increasingly to compose in multiple overlapping layers, so that his pictures seemed to extend both laterally and into an indefinite depth. In a key transitional work, *Sounds at Night*, painted in 1948 (fig. 19), he experimented with jettisoning the grid, letting his linear and planar forms float freely; however, the forms continued to occupy cleanly separated layers of the composition.

Something different was happening in the contemporary canvases of Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. They too were painting allover abstractions: Pollock combining brushwork, drips, spatters and lines of paint squeezed directly from the tube; de Kooning working with a brush (figs. 20, 21). Unlike Gottlieb, however, they intentionally confused and subverted the separation of layers. De Kooning ruptured and redrew his contours, making it impossible to determine their exact spatial locations. The line bordering one shape would suddenly turn out to define its neighbor instead. And the shapes themselves kept changing places. What seemed at one moment like a positive form, coming forward in the composition, would suddenly fade into the background, while some other shape came forward in its place. Pollock seemed to dispense altogether with shapes, building up his compositions from interlacing lines of paint, applied in multiple layers. Each layer would be a single color, but he would use the same color in different layers, which would then fuse together. In a painting like *Alchemy* (fig. 21), for instance, the black lines that disappear under the silver in some places run over it in others. By these radically different methods, de Kooning and Pollock arrived at a similar result: their paintings were woven into an allover web not just side to side, but in depth.

Gottlieb was clearly impressed by the dramatic intensity of Pollock and de Kooning's new paintings. But he seems to have been put off by their turmoil and confusion—qualities absent from his own work, however complex. It was several years before he began to formulate his artistic response, which seems to have been mediated, if not triggered, by an essay by the critic Parker Tyler, "Jackson Pollock: The Infinite Labyrinth," published in March 1950. Gottlieb must have noted that some of Tyler's analyses could serve equally well as a commentary on his own Pictographs: discussing Pollock's "calligraphy," for instance, Tyler says that: "It is as though Pollock 'wrote' non-representational imagery. So we have a paradox of abstract form in terms of an alphabet of unknown symbols." However, most of Tyler's essay was devoted to a doubly allegorical reading of Pollock's work, simultaneously mythological and cosmological:

The thin whorls of color [in Pollock's paintings] not only form an interlacing skein but also must endure the imposition of an indefinite number of skeins provided by other colors. Thus the paint surface

becomes a series of labyrinthine patinas...Because of so much superimposition...we have a deliberate disorder of hypothetical possible hidden orders, or 'multiple labyrinths.' ...In the world of Pollock's liquid threads, the color of Ariadne's [thread] affords no adequate clue, for usually threads of several other colors are mixed with it and the same color crosses itself so often that alone it seems inextricable...A Pollock labyrinth is one which has no main exit any more than it has a main entrance...every movement is...simultaneously entrance and exit.

Without leaving behind the metaphor of the labyrinth, Tyler then added the metaphor of painting as an image of the cosmos:

[Pollock's] labyrinths are by their nature insoluble; they are...to be observed from the outside, all at once, as a mere spectacle of intertwined paths, in exactly the same way that we look at the heavens with their invisible labyrinths of movement provided in cosmic time by the revolutions of the stars and the infinity of universes...Pollock's paint flies through space like the elongating bodies of comets... What are his dense and spangled works but the viscera of an endless non-being of the universe? Something which cannot be recognized as any part of the universe is made to represent the universe in totality of being.<sup>54</sup>

A similar cosmological vision would emerge as the dominant theme of Gottlieb's painting for the remainder of his career. But he arrived at it over the course of several years, working out his ideas in a series of "labyrinths," "imaginary landscapes," and "bursts."

Gottlieb's ambivalence about Pollock and de Kooning is visible in the first of his *Labyrinths*, painted in 1950 (fig. 22). Here, the underpainting of the picture consists of a dense tangle of dark, interlacing brushstrokes—a bravura demonstration that Gottlieb was capable of matching his rivals on their own ground if he wished to. However, the underpainting has been obscured beneath a layer of pink paint, on top of which Gottlieb has painted a pictographic composition. What is most striking about this picture is that the lines of the grid enclosing the pictographic signs are not drawn on top of the second, pink ground. Rather, they are reserved areas where the original composition shows through, so that they are infused with the shimmering energy of his brushwork. Gottlieb achieved this effect by adapting the masking-tape technique invented in 1948 by his friend Barnett Newman. To make the "zips" that divided his broad areas of solid color, Newman laid down strips of masking tape separated by a narrow band, painted in the desired color, and then removed the tapes, leaving a clean, dramatically hard-edged line of color. Gottlieb inverted this procedure, placing strips of masking tape where he wanted his lines to appear, and then painting in the pink "background" between them. When he pulled up the masking tape, the reserved lines revealed the energetic brushwork of the first layer, which was also faintly visible beneath the thin layer of pink paint. In the first layer of *Labyrinth #1*, Gottlieb embraced the dynamic web of Pollock and de Kooning; in the second layer, he cancelled it out.

Only in a handful of 1954 paintings does Gottlieb unequivocally adopt the dynamic, all-over web found in de Kooning's and Pollock's work of 1947-1950. One of these exceptional 1954 paintings is the mural-scale *Black, White, Pink* (fig. 23), where the black and white grids have broken loose from their moorings so that they twist, turn,

and weave in and out of the depths of the picture. When he showed these paintings at Kootz in April 1954, they attracted praise from a new generation of critics, for whom Abstract Expressionism was not a novelty, but rather the baseline against which subsequent painting would be measured. The art historian Robert Rosenblum incisively summed up the evolution of Gottlieb's work from 1938 to 1954:

The compartmented hieroglyphs, the mysterious and barren landscapes of Gottlieb's earlier work have been abandoned, or rather, re-assimilated in an art of impressive breadth of form and imagination.

It is the monumental mural style of Pollock... which seems to have provided the impetus for Gottlieb's vigorous experiments. He has retained the strong linear networks, the pictographic symbols of his older works, but now uses them for the warp and woof of pictures which have become more expansive in size, more complex in form, and far more immediate in their imagery.

Take *Labyrinth* [*Labyrinth #3*, fig. 24], whose very title suggests the more intricate interweavings of line and color structure in these new works. At first, it reminds one of Pollock, not only in its broad horizontal format, but in the over-all agitation and tangle of forms which seem to spread out endlessly beyond the confines of the frame. Yet, by contrast, Gottlieb keeps his symbolic imagery; the vertiginous linear rhythms are punctuated unexpectedly by an arrow, a star, an eye, so that the effect of these symbols, coupled with the ladder-like forms on the picture surface, is that of a huge cosmic vision twinkling in the infinite depths of Gottlieb's multi-layered space.<sup>55</sup>

Rosenblum seems to echo the cosmic imagery of Parker Tyler's 1950 essay. In contrast, the poet-critic-curator Frank O'Hara compared Gottlieb's heavy black grids to New York City's ubiquitous steel armature, writing that, "These are city paintings with the clarity, strength and correctness of man-made structures... Some end in an ultimate black grid on the surface (*The Cage* [fig. 25], *Armature*) and these both imprison the painting's depth of intention and protect the viewer from its natural ferocity."<sup>56</sup>

At the end of April, Gottlieb's paintings traveled to Bennington College for a retrospective organized by Clement Greenberg; from there, it to Williams College. Here, it was reviewed by professor S. Lane Faison. Writing for *The Nation*, Faison noted that Gottlieb's latest work incorporated "something of Pollock's calligraphy... without loss of structure, and something of Pollock's and DeKooning's deep space. If I am not greatly mistaken, *Labyrinth* will take its place as the Léger *City* of the 1950s. We are led not so much through the fragments of metropolis as through the mind of the modern city-dweller."<sup>57</sup> From 1927 to 1943, Léger's 1919 masterpiece, *The City*, had been on display at Albert Gallatin's Museum of Living Art on Washington Square, where it was one of the landmarks of avant-garde art in New York City, playing a role comparable to that of Picasso's *Demiselles d'Avignon* when it went on view at the Museum of Modern Art in the 1940s. Faison's comment must have been deeply meaningful to Gottlieb.

Notwithstanding the critical success of Gottlieb's labyrinths, they remained a sidetrack in his development. What turned out instead to be the mainline was the series of Imaginary Landscapes that he began painting in 1951. In the first canvas of this series, *The Frozen Sounds, Number 1* (fig. 26), the bottom half of the picture is occupied by an

allover field of vigorously brushed lines and colors. This field appears originally to have occupied the entire canvas, as in *Labyrinth #1* (fig. 22), but was then overpainted with white in the top half of the picture. Traces of the original colors remain visible in the interstices of the white brushstrokes. The white field is occupied by a horizontal row of black and red monochrome shapes, some ovoid, some rectangular. Similarly, in *Sea and Tide* (fig. 27), the field of gestural strokes that occupies the lower third of the composition seems originally to have covered the entire surface, but is covered over with white paint in the upper two-thirds of the picture. *Sea and Tide* is almost twice as large as *The Frozen Sounds, Number I*, but the number of red and black ovoids floating atop the white field has been reduced to three, and the sense of pictorial tension has been increased by moving the shapes downward toward the border between the two fields.

A decade later, Gottlieb explained that: “The reason I made the break from the pictograph to the imaginary landscape was that I wanted to get away from the all-over type of painting... Other painters had carried the idea of an all-over painting to quite great lengths, and I wanted to develop my idea in a different direction.”<sup>58</sup> It was not enough to have developed his own version of the allover field: rather than be seen as a follower of Pollock and de Kooning, Gottlieb preferred to invent his own distinctive format.

Gottlieb’s new paintings were shown at Kootz in January 1952 and in January 1953, when he gave them the collective title of “Imaginary Landscapes and Seascapes.” Noting that “there is a horizon line in each painting,” and that “underpainting is used to tie sky, foreground and shapes together,” James Fitzsimmons described the pictures as “compositions of enigmatic simplicity,” pervaded by “an ominous calm.” Another critic, Belle Krasne, wrote that Gottlieb was trying “to stop the hands of the clock, trapping a magnified Morse-code message in the white field of *The Frozen Sounds*. Below this plastic field he introduces another horizontal area—a heaving chaotic swamp. The moment is transfixed, but so are good and evil.” The references to stopped time and an ominous calm suggest that, despite radical differences in style and subject matter, Gottlieb’s paintings reminded these critics of de Chirico’s metaphysical cityscapes, with their looming clocktowers and deserted city squares.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, they return to the near-and-far format of the metaphysical still lifes that Gottlieb had painted in 1948 (Figs. 8, 10), but with a significant difference: the empty skies have now been occupied by symbols as powerful as the ones that fill the foregrounds.

Gottlieb continued to experiment with the composition of his Imaginary Landscapes until, in 1956, he boiled it down to what became known as the “Burst” format. In pictures such as *Exclamation* (fig. 2), the painterly field at the bottom of the Imaginary Landscapes pulls away from the margins of the canvas, retaining its gestural character but giving up its alloverness, shrinking into an ovoid form that echoes the shape of the smoother ovoid floating above it. The upper ovoid is hard-edged, but often surrounded by a kind of nimbus of thinned paint. Both forms now float in a blank field that at first appears flat and plain, but that on closer examination reveals subtle variations in color and density. This format becomes the template for the majority of Gottlieb’s work from 1957 until his death in 1974. Despite its simplicity, it offers almost infinite room for variation and for new expressive effects. All the Bursts are vertical in orientation, but their proportions vary. *Exclamation* is over seven feet high and six feet wide. *Mist*, from 1961 (fig. 28) is six feet high and four feet wide; its narrowness makes it seem even taller than it is, while the middle-valued ground makes the white ovoid at

the top shimmer with quiet brilliance. *Pale Disc*, from 1965 (fig. 30), returns to the broader format of *Exclamation*; the upper half of the picture functions, like *Mist*, by value contrast; the lower half functions by a brilliant contrast of hues. In later paintings, such as *Blue Ground* (fig. 31) and *Red Ground* (fig. 32), Gottlieb experiments with rectangular shapes and asymmetrical compositions.

The Bursts were first shown in Gottlieb's January 1957 exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery. For several years, Gottlieb changed dealers frequently, going from André Emmerich to French and Company to Sidney Janis and finally to Marlborough-Gerson. The announcement for the 1959 exhibition at Emmerich carried a photograph of Gottlieb at work on a Burst, applying paint with a squeegee (fig. 29). This novel technique drew the attention of several critics. William Rubin, an art historian, critic, and collector, saw it as an effective means to an end:

To create an absolute evenness of surface, as well as to generate certain types of jagged forms and accidental spatters, [Gottlieb] creates the dark masses at the bottom by pouring the liquid medium on to the canvas while it lies face up on the floor and then pushing the pigment out from this center 'pond' with a squeegee... The squeegeed area is... carefully 'reviewed' with the brush in order... to give the shape final definition.

In contrast, critic Martica Sawin found Gottlieb's technique "unfortunate." For her, the use of a mechanical implement "emphasize[d] the gulf which separates Gottlieb from the spontaneous school of action painting or from Expressionism."<sup>60</sup>

The contrasting but balanced forms of the Bursts constituted a powerful symbol. But what, exactly, they symbolized was open to varied interpretations. One influential interpretation was first sketched by Hubert Crehan, who wrote in December 1960 that "Gottlieb's shapes seem to be personal coefficients of the Yin and Yang symbols—the ovoid vessel and the spermatozoic flaggela—in a surrounding void."<sup>61</sup> Other critics linked the imagery of the Bursts to the atomic bomb—not a surprising association in the depths of the Cold War, when the development of nuclear weapons seemed to threaten mankind with extinction. In June and July 1959, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London held a retrospective of Gottlieb's work of the previous decade. A Scottish reviewer commented that: "Some of the paintings show a jagged splash like a burst, surmounted by a round smooth shape which cannot but remind us of the cloud which floats away from an atomic explosion."<sup>62</sup> John Russell, reviewing the same show for the London *Times*, recalled that, when he had seen one of the first Bursts in another exhibition earlier that year, it had seemed "compact of menace and foreboding." In contrast, the Bursts in the I.C.A. seemed "by turns jubilant, seraphic, fatal, ironic." How, Russell asked, could "so simple a set of images" take on such varied meanings?

Is it the feeling for colour, voluptuous or incisive at will? Or the oriental fine judgment in matters of placing and proportion? The terrible energy of the burst and the ambiguous movement of the circular form are riddles to which we half-crave, half-dread to know the answer... We do not have to look at the date, 1959... to know that these are paintings in which Today has taken a hand; but it is a Today in which a radiant innocence has also its place. If we live to be old, we may remember our first sight of these paintings.<sup>63</sup>



Two of the first Bursts, painted in 1957, had been entitled *Blast I* and *Blast II*, seemingly confirming that Gottlieb was thinking of bombs when he painted them. Six years later, he told a Brazilian reporter, “I try, through colors, forms and lines, to express intimate emotions... My paintings can represent an atomic bomb, a sun, or something else altogether: depending on the thinking of whoever is looking at it.”<sup>64</sup>

The derivation of the Bursts from the Imaginary Landscapes and Seascapes suggested a less apocalyptic interpretation: that the lower burst represented the land or sea, while the upper burst represented the sun. Gottlieb loved to sail, and critics acquainted with his private life often suggested that his paintings were inspired by this experience. Reviewing Gottlieb’s February 1966 show of Bursts at Marlborough-Gerson, Emily Genauer wrote that, “Whatever Gottlieb is willing to say about his new pictures, they have to do with wonder over the vastness and majesty of the universe. ‘Remember,’ he said, as I left the studio, ‘I’m a city boy, transported to the country. I feel it as a city boy does. And I am also a sailor.’”<sup>65</sup> Thomas Hess, the influential critic, editor, and curator, commented in 1972 that a clue to the artist’s subject matter was offered by the fact that he was “a passionate sailor of small boats... Gottlieb seems to have found renewal and assurance in a contemplation of the sea—perhaps from his sailboat, from the beach near his house in Southampton, from the saline rivers that bound Manhattan.”<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand, Gottlieb resisted the reading of his work as a literal transcription of the landscape. In 1958, when John I.H. Baur included an Imaginary Landscape, *Red Sky*, in a Whitney Museum exhibition on *Nature in Abstraction*, Gottlieb protested: “I never use nature as a starting point, I never abstract from nature, I never consciously think of nature when I paint... In the painting *Red Sky* my intention was simply to divide the canvas roughly in two, using red paint in one area and black paint in the other.”<sup>67</sup>

On balance, it seems mistaken to describe Gottlieb’s paintings as either literal landscapes or “pure” abstractions. They are more like representations of archetypal landscapes, comparable in this regard to the 1945-46 paintings by Barnett Newman evoking the opening lines of Genesis (fig. 33). It is unfair, of course, to compare Newman’s early paintings with Gottlieb’s mature work, which is more clearly structured, more decisive in execution, and more monumental. Like his old colleague Mark Rothko, Gottlieb begins with the sublime melancholy of metaphysical painting, and transforms it into the sublime exaltation of the nineteenth-century Romantic landscape, expressed in the language of abstraction.<sup>68</sup>

The Biblical theme of primeval waters may also lead back to Gottlieb’s early reading of Carl Jung, specifically the passage in *The Integration of the Personality* where Jung describes a curative descent into the self: “The dreamer descends into his own depths, and the way leads him to the mysterious water... an angel descends and touches the water, which thus receives healing power... the breath of the spirit... rushes over the dark water... [it] comes from above... a deliverance from the prison of the chthonian element.”<sup>69</sup> Jung here adumbrates his later theory of the “night sea journey” as a mythical and psychological trope. From this perspective, one might read Gottlieb’s Bursts as icons of a spiritual journey, beginning with a descent from the upper “sun” into the turmoil of the “waters” below, and concluding with a return from the “waters” back to the “sun.” Similar parables of a curative descent into inner chaos were offered by influential authors of the 1960s such as R.D. Laing and Anton Ehrenzweig.

In 1967, Finley Eversole, the editor of an earlier volume on *Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts*, combined the various readings of Gottlieb's symbolism into a detailed reading of *Blast I* as an "image of renewal":

The composite image of *Blast I* is one of the sun rising over the smoking, twisted debris of some inwardly destroyed Hiroshima. Here is violence and chaos, yet over the 'night' a marvelous sun has risen... The original uroboric unity of night and day, heaven and earth, male and female, creation and destruction, good and evil, life and death, sacred and profane, *yang* and *yin* has been split asunder through a heroic act of separation. Yet both poles of experience have been retained in the fullness of their original power... Much of the poetic power of *Blast I* comes from its simplicity as an abstract image, purified of all specific historical and cultural content. Its truth is existential, not cultural... Behind it stands the archetypal war of opposites—Freud's *eros* and *thanatos*—and a thousand myths of battle between sun-god-heroes and the dragons of the deep. The heroes of this 'war' are the founders of culture... Their journey is the journey from birth to death to rebirth... Now *Blast I*'s meaning begins to emerge. The sundering of the world into opposites is the precondition for the world's birth.<sup>70</sup>

He put it more simply in another essay: "Gottlieb's dialectical art is an art of *regeneration*, of perpetual descent and return."<sup>71</sup> Eversole's overheated prose and his fusion of Christian and Jungian thinking may seem dated. Nonetheless, it is an important fact about Gottlieb's work of the 1950s and '60s that it evoked such powerful responses from viewers at the time.

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From 1953 onward, Gottlieb's work earned him a degree of public recognition and even financial success that would have seemed unbelievable a decade earlier. In the American avant-garde of the 1930s and early 1940s, it was a given that artists could not support themselves by selling their work. It was also a given that avant-garde art would be misunderstood and rejected by the American middle class, sunk in a Babbitt-like philistinism. The public liked realistic art that confirmed its prejudices and flattered its self-image. Even in the rarefied world of museums, most institutions—such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art—preferred American Scene painting and Regionalism to avant-garde art. Only a handful of well-educated, usually upper-class collectors, critics, and curators valued avant-garde art.

The 1940s saw the emergence of a few New York galleries showing the painting and sculpture of the American avant-garde. Nonetheless, the artists and critics associated with this movement continued to perceive the situation as desperate. Critics such as Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, and Weldon Kees (a close friend of Gottlieb's who succeeded Greenberg as art critic for *The Nation*) stressed the almost unbearable sense of isolation endured by avant-garde painters in New York. However, this isolation could be seen as an asset, not a liability. In a 1948 essay on "The Situation at the Moment," Clement Greenberg argued that: "Isolation, or rather the alienation that is its cause, is the truth—isolation, alienation, naked and revealed unto itself, is the condition under which the true reality of our age is experienced. And the experience of this true reality is indispensable to any ambitious art."<sup>72</sup>

Gottlieb echoed these sentiments in a 1954 lecture on “The Artist and the Public,” stating that:

By the age of 18, I clearly understood that the artist in our society can not expect to make a living from art; must live in the midst of a hostile environment; cannot communicate through his art with more than a few people; and if his work is significant, cannot achieve recognition until the end of his life (if he is lucky), and more likely posthumously....In America and Europe today the artist is to a large extent exposed to an ignorant, irresponsible and anonymous public whose innate or potential sensibility has been corrupted to the point where it is incapable of responding except to what is crass... The modern artist does not paint in relation to public needs or social needs—he paints only in relation to his own needs. And then he finds that there are isolated individuals, who respond to his work.<sup>73</sup>

To the end of his life, Gottlieb felt that the true artist was necessarily opposed to dominant social values, including those of museum curators and art critics. As in 1943, when he and Rothko had written to the *New York Times* to refute Edward Alden Jewell’s comments about their work, Gottlieb continued to organize and participate in art world protests. In spring 1950, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art announced that it was organizing a large exhibition of contemporary American art, Gottlieb and his colleagues took one look at the list of jurors and decided that the deck would be hopelessly stacked against avant-garde work like their own. Gottlieb drafted a letter of protest and obtained signatures from eighteen painters and ten sculptors including Louise Bourgeois, Herbert Ferber, Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Richard Pousette-Dart, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, and David Smith. The letter was published in the *New York Times* on May 22, 1950. The next day, the *Herald Tribune* published an editorial, entitled “The Irascible Eighteen,” pointing out that “works by no less than eleven of the twenty-eight signators are either owned by the Metropolitan or have been included in its exhibitions.” The imbroglio drew enough attention that *Life* decided to run a feature on it, and commissioned a photographer to take a group portrait of the “Irascible Group of Advanced Artists,” which appeared in the magazine on January 15, 1951.<sup>74</sup> “The Irascibles” stuck for several years as a tag for the Abstract Expressionists. Throughout the 1950s and ‘60s, Gottlieb continued to take a public role in the art world, denouncing misguided museums and critics, protesting the war in Vietnam, and defending the state of Israel when it was attacked in 1967.

The emergence of Pop Art in the early 1960s redrew the battle lines of the art world. In terms of sheer novelty, Pop constituted a new avant-garde, but to the battle-scarred veterans of Abstract Expressionism, it seemed like a throwback to the crowd-pleasing realism of the 1930s. When Sidney Janis included Pop artists in an October 1962 exhibition of “The New Realists,” several older painters left his gallery in protest. In an unpublished interview, Gottlieb proclaimed that, “No self-respecting artist wants to have anything to do with a mass audience.”<sup>75</sup> Until the end of his life, Gottlieb insisted that he was “repelled” by Pop Art, with its basis in commercial illustration. “I’m against popular culture in any form,” he said in 1972. A year later, interviewed on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, he proclaimed:

I would like to get rid of the idea that art is for everybody. It isn't for everybody. People are always talking about art reaching more people. I don't see why they should want to reach so many people. For the large mass of people there are other things than can appeal to them. The average man can get along with art... It is for just a few special people who are educated in art and literature... I think that the great quantitative audience is for Hollywood and Walt Disney, and I think that's the future of art--in that direction. More and more people will get their kicks from Disneyland.<sup>76</sup>

Despite Gottlieb's belief that Abstract Expressionism was inherently an elite, unpopular style, the fact was that, by 1960, the Abstract Expressionists were selling more pictures at higher prices than any previous group of American artists. Dealers such as Kootz and Janis were not just ardent admirers of avant-garde art; they were also highly effective salesmen. Punning on the title of Gottlieb's *Blasts*, *Time* magazine ran an April 1958 article on the "Boom on Canvas," discussing the steadily rising prices for contemporary art, despite a recession in the economy as whole. The magazine reported that Gottlieb's work was selling strongly, at up to \$4,000 a canvas. This was a lot of money in 1958, when the average income of American families was \$5,100, and only ten percent of families in the United States had incomes over \$10,000.<sup>77</sup> By 1965, when *Esquire* magazine ran an article on "The American Painter as a Blue Chip," Gottlieb's paintings were going for \$10,000 to \$15,000. In 1968, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that they were selling for up to \$30,000 each.<sup>78</sup>

In 1957, Gottlieb and Esther moved from Brooklyn to the Upper West Side of Manhattan so they could care for his aged mother. In 1960, he bought a house in East Hampton that had previously belonged to the family of Jacqueline Kennedy. *Esquire* magazine noted that:

In the late Thirties he spent he summers in Gloucester, Massachusetts, for \$25 a month. In the early Fifties in Provincetown he still spent no more than \$300 for the summer. Now, once each summer in East Hampton, Gottlieb throws a huge and stylish cocktail party for perhaps two hundred people—artists, gallery owners, collectors and the local rich who are often the collectors. This year there were several maids, several bartenders, and a local policeman to keep traffic moving.<sup>79</sup>

Gottlieb's financial success reflected, not only his status as a leading Abstract Expressionist, but also the dramatic cultural transformation that had brought publicity and money flooding into the avant-garde art world. In part, this cultural shift resulted from the new role of the United States on the world stage. At the end of the war, the United States emerged as a global superpower. The political and corporate elite that led the "hot" war against Germany and Japan now faced a long "cold" war with the Soviet Union. Under these circumstances, they realized, the United States could not afford to return to the diplomatic isolationism and cultural provincialism of the 1930s. The global ambitions and responsibilities of the United States demanded a new, cosmopolitan culture, one that would equip the representatives of American government and American business to understand and work with other cultures.

Indeed, the new American “power elite” realized that it was necessary not only to understand other cultures, but also to make a positive impression on them, competing with the anti-American rhetoric of the Soviet-sponsored left. In this cultural battle, Abstract Expressionism emerged as a potent symbol of American freedom, and of the value of individualism rather than collectivism. Almost as soon as the World War II ended, the State Department had assembled an exhibition of contemporary American art, including Gottlieb and other avant-garde painters, to be circulated to European and South American capitals.<sup>80</sup> After this first initiative, the job of art diplomacy was largely delegated to the Museum of Modern Art, which organized and circulated a series of international exhibitions of American art. Gottlieb was not included in all of these shows, but he was in the most important of them, “The New American Painting,” which also included Arshile Gorky, Philip Guston, de Kooning, Motherwell, Newman, Pollock, Rothko, Clyfford Still, and seven other Abstract Expressionist painters. In 1958-59, “The New American Painting” toured Basel, Milan, Madrid, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, and London. Together with *Dokumenta II* in 1959 (where Gottlieb was also represented), “The New American Painting” was the exhibition that clearly staked New York’s claim to have replaced Paris as the world capital of avant-garde art.<sup>81</sup> From 1959 through 1961, Gottlieb’s international reputation was also enhanced by solo shows at the Galerie Rive Droite in Paris, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, and other galleries in Paris, Milan, and Basel.

However, the summit of his international exposure came in 1963 when the Walker Art Center, in Minneapolis, was responsible for the American pavilion at that year’s Sao Paulo Bienal, the great international exhibition that takes place in alternating years with the Venice Biennale. The Walker’s curator, Martin Friedman, was already in the process of organizing a Gottlieb retrospective, which opened in Minneapolis in April 1963. Friedman decided to send it to Brazil as the main American exhibition, accompanied by a survey of six contemporary sculptors. The Bienal opened on September 1. Gottlieb flew down to Sao Paulo and was still there at the end of September, when an international jury, presided over by the great Italian art historian Giulio Carlo Argan, awarded him the first prize at the Bienal.<sup>82</sup> It was the first time that an artist from North or South America had won first prize at either the Sao Paulo Bienal or the Venice Biennale, and the event was celebrated in the Brazilian press as a local victory.<sup>83</sup> If Picasso’s *Kitchen* of 1948 (fig. 17) marked the first time that the School of Paris was influenced by the New York School, it had remained largely a private victory, recognized only by a handful of people. Gottlieb’s success at the Bienal was a public victory, certifying his recognition by the international art world.

Back in the U.S.A., Gottlieb was an uneasy beneficiary of the vast expansion of advertising and magazines, particularly those devoted to “shelter,” lifestyle (including art collecting) and fashion journalism. The graphic simplicity and drama of Gottlieb’s Bursts made them an attractive resource for decorators and advertisers, and his work appeared in magazines through the 1950s and ‘60s. The trend began in 1953, when *Advertising Age* ran a feature on the art collection of “versatile adman” Alfred Auerbach, showing him standing next to one of Gottlieb’s Pictographs. In 1958, *Look* magazine celebrated the increasing use of plastic in modern furniture by hiring five interior designers to decorate rooms in a model house: the ultra-modern living room was furnished with plastics from Dow Chemical on the table, and with a Gottlieb on the wall.

In 1962, *Time* published “Modern Living,” a story on the apartments of the new Manhattan elite who had effectively dislodged the “400 families” of old New York. Several of the families included were art collectors, including Ben Heller, Victor and Sally Ganz, and Daniel Weitzman, a banker who collected Gottlieb, Giacometti, and tribal art.<sup>84</sup> In 1965, *Interiors* published a feature on a new, ultra-modern house in the elegant Detroit suburb of Grosse Point, designed for W. Hawkins Ferry, an architectural historian and the heir to a major seed supplier: the living room was dominated by an enormous Imaginary Landscape by Gottlieb. In 1967, bringing it all back home, the fashion magazine *Vogue* ran a long pictorial on “An Art Scholar’s Loft: ‘Light, Silence, and Space.’” This was the apartment of scholar-critic-collector-curator William Rubin, who would, a few years later, become Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art. Rubin had followed the downtown artists in moving out of a conventional apartment into a formerly industrial loft, where the big walls allowed him to display the museum-sized canvases in his personal collection. This constituted a virtual anthology of Abstract Expressionism, including not one but two Gottliebs: both a Pictograph and a Burst.<sup>85</sup>

The graphic simplicity and visual drama of Gottlieb’s paintings helped shape the design sensibility of the era. However, this degree of influence ran the risk of making his work look merely chic. In 1959, *The Nation* referred dismissively to a new group of Gottlieb paintings as representing “high-style abstractionism,” adding that, “The pictures would be perfect as backgrounds for fashion photography.” This was not an idle fantasy. As early as 1950, Pollock’s mural-scale abstractions had been used as background for a fashion shoot by Cecil Beaton. Even today, art historians continue to debate the meaning of this affinity between Abstract Expressionism and fashion.<sup>86</sup> The *Nation* critic’s prediction about Gottlieb’s work soon came true. In October 1962, two weeks after *Time* published its feature on “Modern Living,” the *New York Times* ran a fashion feature showing an elegantly attired model sitting on a leather-upholstered, Bauhaus-style bench in the Weitzmans’ apartment, with a Gottlieb visible directly behind her. The following year, Hans Namuth, the house photographer for the Abstract Expressionists (he had taken the famous photographs of Pollock painting in 1950), let himself into Gottlieb’s East Hampton studio, posed a model on a ladder, and photographed her in front of several pictures-in-progress. In November 1963, the photograph appeared in an ad for Medaglia d’Oro, an upscale brand of coffee, published in *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times Magazine*. Gottlieb was furious at this unauthorized use of his work. Since it was too late to withdraw the photograph, he arrived at a legal agreement with Namuth and Medaglia d’Oro, allowing them to reprint the advertisement, but only with a credit line explaining, “Paintings by, and photographed in the studio of, Adolph Gottlieb, winner of the grand prix at the 1963 Sao Paulo Biennial of Painting and Sculpture” (fig. 34).<sup>87</sup> Unlike his old friend Mark Rothko, who found art and commerce irreconcilable, Gottlieb was able to put his material success in the service of his art without excessive agonizing.

Gottlieb’s status as a leading figure of the New York School was confirmed, yet again, in 1968, when his work became the subject of a two-museum exhibition. Guggenheim curator Diane Waldman had been planning a survey of the Pictographs, Whitney curator Robert Doty a show of his more recent work. When they discovered their overlapping projects, they joined forces. The two exhibitions, with a shared catalogue, opened in February 1968, and then traveled to the Corcoran Gallery in

Washington, D.C., and to the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University. In a surprising reversal, reviews in the popular press (the *New York Post*, the *Daily News*, and the *Washington Post*) were glowing, while reactions in the more sophisticated art press (*Artforum*, *The Nation*) were lukewarm. By 1968, Minimalism represented the cutting edge of the avant-garde. Indeed, Donald Judd's first major museum survey opened at the Whitney two weeks after Gottlieb's retrospective, and the two exhibitions were on view concurrently through most of March. Beneath the various criticisms offered by critics such as Max Kozloff and Jane Harrison Cone, there is a general sense that Gottlieb's style was overly familiar and out of date.<sup>88</sup>

The critical backlash against Gottlieb was particularly ironic in that his radically simplified work of the late 1950s was in fact an important precursor to Minimalism. Abstract Expressionism is generally identified as an expression of subjectivity, while Minimal art is seen as objective and impersonal. Gottlieb always identified himself as a subjective painter.<sup>89</sup> However, the critical response to his work from 1959 onward focused increasingly on the objective, impersonal character of his work, especially the Bursts. When he showed a group of new paintings at Emmerich in January 1959, Emily Genauer (by this time, one of his most fervent supporters), wrote:

Gottlieb's art is so strong, so demanding, so aggressive that it pushes me aside completely...Gottlieb's pictures...have no bearing that I can see on subconscious longings or memories, or the search for identity which artist and viewer can share. They create a world of their own, distant and ominous, and I find myself outside looking in. What I see as I look is an extraordinary concentration of dynamism. I can no more relate myself to it than I can to Sputnik moving in orbit. And yet it *is* a world Gottlieb has painted, a world bigger than the single artist's egocentric assertion of self which his pictures may at first seem to be.<sup>90</sup>

A few months later, when Gottlieb's work was shown at the Galerie Rive Droite in Paris, Annette Michelson, was struck by its "extreme, almost minimal simplicity." For Michelson, Gottlieb's new paintings manifested a radical new conception of art: "This painting represents, along with certain recent works by Rothko and Kline...a conception of painting which is recent in the history of Western art, and dominated by the notion of an instantaneous immediacy. It is literally *illegible*, cannot be 'read,' but engages the eye of the beholder totally and all at once."<sup>91</sup> Michelson's allusion to the "instantaneous immediacy" of Gottlieb's work anticipates an idea that would achieve widespread currency in the art world in 1962-63, when it was applied to the new stripe paintings of Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis: the idea of an image that can be grasped in a single glance, achieving a sudden overwhelming effect rather than yielding a series of small discoveries. As Gottlieb said, describing his own Bursts, and the contemporary work of other New York painters: "You take it in its totality, instantaneously, and it's not something that you look at with an eye for detail...The important thing is the immediate impact."<sup>92</sup> Martin Friedman, writing the following year, reiterated that, "Gottlieb wants the observer to be immediately engaged and feels that the picture should contain nothing not instantly perceivable." More than that, he argued, Gottlieb "presents a concept of painting as 'anti-composition.'"<sup>93</sup>

More broadly, Gottlieb had demonstrated that Abstract Expressionism did not need to be an art of subjective expression. As Emily Genauer noted in 1959, he took the

visual language of Abstract Expressionism—the huge canvases, the compressed spaces, and the bravura brushwork—and used it to make a statement about the world. In 1963, Martin Friedman wrote that Gottlieb had “arrived at a dispassionate world view,” based on “rudimentary physical principles—gravity, suspension, motion.”<sup>94</sup> Gottlieb used the language of painting to evoke these qualities of the physical environment, determining the conditions of our existence as human beings. The artists of the next generation set out to explore them via performance, installation, and sculpture. Whether or not they chose to recognize the debt, they were Adolph Gottlieb’s heirs. His legacy remains alive, today, in the environmental installations of artists such as James Turrell and Olafur Eliason (fig. 38). What they achieve with tungsten lights, fog generators, huge mirrors, and artificial waterfalls, he achieved with paint and canvas. In an era when artists felt that painting had reached its limits, Gottlieb showed how much painting still had left to say.

Annette Michelson’s description of Gottlieb’s work as “illegible” links it to a different critical tradition: that of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *nouveau roman* and Roland Barthes’s concept of “writing degree zero.” Robbe-Grillet’s novels present an uncanny world of inanimate objects, from which all traces of human subjectivity have seemingly been erased. Barthes’ criticism, inspired by Robbe-Grillet, proposes a model of language stripped of all connotation, forcing the reader to confront the brute factuality of words and things. Over the next few years, these ideas would seep osmotically into the American avant-garde, transmitted by critics and translators such as Wylie Sypher, Richard Howard, Susan Sontag, and Michelson herself.<sup>95</sup>

Formally, the new “cool” sensibility of 1960s painting and sculpture was characterized by symmetry, clarity, and sequentiality—key qualities of Gottlieb’s work. As Martin Friedman wrote in 1963, “Gottlieb’s influence is now clearly manifested in the work of many younger artists. He pioneered the dictum of the target image, a simple form directly placed in anti-cubist fashion on a white canvas.”<sup>96</sup> For instance, the centered, symmetrical composition of the Bursts clearly provided the model for Noland’s floating disks of the late 1950s (fig. 35), although Noland’s concentric rings derive from Jasper Johns’ more literal targets. Similarly, the sequence of hard-edged forms in the upper registers of Gottlieb’s Imaginary Landscapes (fig. 26) anticipate the serial arrangements of discrete shapes in the works of artists such as Al Held (fig. 36) and George Sugarman. It might even be argued that the repeated units of Judd’s wall reliefs (fig. 37) reflect Gottlieb’s example, reduced to an impersonal geometry that Gottlieb himself would never have countenanced.

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chose to recognize the debt, they were Adolph Gottlieb's heirs. His legacy remains alive, today, in the environmental installations of artists such as James Turrell and Olafur Eliason (fig. 38). What they achieve with tungsten lights, fog generators, huge mirrors, and artificial waterfalls, he achieved with paint and canvas. In an era when artists felt that painting had reached its limits, Gottlieb showed how much painting still had left to say.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Brian O'Doherty, "Adolph Gottlieb: The Dualism of an Inner Life," New York Times, Feb. 23, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Gottlieb himself later commented: "The majority of exhibitions in New York at that time consisted of paintings that imitated Cézanne quite literally...I just didn't want to develop that way." John Johns interview with Adolph Gottlieb, November 3, 1965, typescript p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Clement Greenberg, "American-Type Painting," 1955/58, in *Art and Culture*, p. 216

<sup>4</sup> H.H. Arnason in *American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists*, 1961 exh. cat. for Guggenheim Museum. [NG: good quote from Arnason in Doty 1968, p. 24.]

<sup>5</sup> Lee Dembart, "Adolph Gottlieb, Abstractionist, Dies," New York Times MONTH AND DAY TK, 1974: "Mr. Gottlieb was born on March 14, 1903, near Tompkins Square, a son of parents who had emigrated from Hungary. He enrolled in Stuyvesant High School but dropped out to work in his father's wholesale stationery business and to study art at night at the Art Students League where he still painted in realistic style, and at Cooper Union."

<sup>6</sup> Entries from the Gottlieb Foundation's catalogue of the artist's library. The first volume of *Jean-Christophe* is in fact missing from the list, but it seems safe to assume that Gottlieb had read it, given that he bought the second and third volumes.

<sup>7</sup> "When I was in Paris I would see the current work being done. For example, there was a great Leger which is now at the Museum of Modern Art and I saw it in Salon d'Autoune in Paris in 1921; it had just been freshly painted and it just bowled me over. The Leger of the three ladies having tea. And then, of course, I saw the new work of the other painters: Matisse, Picasso, and so on. I was tremendously impressed. I took to it all like a duck to water." Dorothy Seckler interview with Adolph Gottlieb, October 27, 1967, transcript, page 6 (in Gottlieb Foundation files).

<sup>8</sup> In her DATE TK interview, Dorothy Seckler asked: "Was there anything in Munich or Vienna comparable to the impact of the Leger on you?" Gottlieb responded: "Oh yes, things by Titian and Tintoretto and El Greco." (Ibid.) The books Gottlieb seems to have acquired in Germany include Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's *The Rise of Cubism*, Fritz Burger's *Cézanne and Hodler: An Introduction to the Problems of Contemporary Painting*, Helmud Kolle's *Henri Rousseau*, and H.V. Wedderkop's *Paul Klee*, all in their original German editions, published between 1920 and 1922. Several of these are annotated in Gottlieb's hand, suggesting that he had learned enough German to read and comment on them. His library included an equal number of German monographs on Old Masters such as Michelangelo, Tintoretto, El Greco, Grunewald, and Rembrandt. Other books on modern art were probably bought after his return to New York, such as Roger Fry's *Vision and Design* (1920) and Katherine Dreier's *Western Art and the New Era* (1923).

<sup>9</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, *New York Times*, January 24, 1929, review of "Opportunity Gallery" show of new artists, selected by Max Weber.

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<sup>10</sup> From John Johns interview with Adolph Gottlieb, 11/3/65, typescript, pg. 5: **AG**: “I was very much interested in Elliot and Pound and I did some painting that were, at that time, somewhat – well, for the period Expressionist. And I used some of the titles of the poems that I was fascinated by, like ‘The Wasteland’ and others. **JJ**: “How exactly did they relate – could you describe “The Wasteland” – did they illustrate it possibly or were they sort of running parallel to it?” **AG**: “Oh, they were parallel all right. Basically the idea was that they were lonely figures in a desolate landscape.”

<sup>11</sup> Anon., “Esther Gottlieb is Dead; Art Fund Head was 81,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1988.

<sup>12</sup> For Gottlieb’s occasional jobs, see Martin Friedman interview, tape 1B, typescript p. TK.

<sup>13</sup> MacNaughton 1981, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Snyder, *Against the Stream* cat. *Adolph Gottlieb on Cape Ann*, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> The Gottlieb Foundation files contain reviews by Godsoe of Gottlieb’s solo show at the Uptown Gallery and another solo show at the Kohn Gallery, published on February 8, 1934 and May 5, 1934, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> Isabelle Dervaux, “City Boys: Avery, Gottlieb, Rothko and the Culture of the Depression,” in Jill Snyder, ed., *Against the Stream: Milton Avery, Adolph Gottlieb, and Mark Rothko in the 1930s*, exh. cat. (Katonah: Katonah Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 19-20.

Dervaux article on “the Ten,” MacN 1981 p. 18; see Solman 1972, pp. 122-128

<sup>18</sup> The Russian government sold a large chunk of the Hermitage collection to Andrew Mellon, who donated it to the National Gallery when he was threatened with prosecution for tax evasion; see Robert C. Williams, *Russian Art and American Money, 1900-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 147-190.

<sup>19</sup> Alfred M. Frankfurter, “The Cubists Go ‘Round and ‘Round: Two Abstract Shows,” *Art News*, vol. 34, no. 23, March 7, 1936, p. 5

<sup>20</sup> Dore Ashton interview with Adolph Gottlieb, February 4, 1972, typescript, p. 2; cited in MacNaughton 1981, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Adolph Gottlieb, unpublished “Notes for a Talk,” n.d., in the files of the Gottlieb Foundation.

<sup>22</sup> Jewell’s review, in the *New York Times*, is dated to May 6, 1934 in the Gottlieb Foundation files, but in fact appears to review to Gottlieb’s February 1934 show at the Uptown Gallery. (Jewell writes that Gottlieb “has filled two floors with his paintings in a first one-man show at the Uptown Gallery, 249 West End Avenue.”)

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous reviewer, *New York World Telegram*, December 21, 1935; anonymous reviewer, “The Ten,” *Art News*, vol. 34, no. 12, December 21, 1935, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Isabelle Dervaux, “City Boys: Avery, Gottlieb, Rothko and the Culture of the Depression,” in Jill Snyder, ed., *Against the Stream: Milton Avery, Adolph Gottlieb, and Mark Rothko in the 1930s*, exh. cat. (Katonah: Katonah Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 19-

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20. The term “expressionism” went back in English at least to 1912, when Roger Fry, introducing an exhibition of French Post-Impressionists, acknowledged that “A public which had come to admire above everything in a picture the skill with which the artist produced illusion...resented an art in which such skill was completely subordinated to the direct expression of feeling.” The Post-Impressionists, he argued, aimed not to reproduce appearances but “to express by pictorial and plastic form certain spiritual experiences.” Roger Fry, “The French Post-Impressionists,” 1912; reprinted in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), p. 166. Gottlieb owned a copy of this volume. J.B. Bullen, the editor of the 1981 reprint edition (New York: Oxford University Press), notes that Fry had originally intended to call the artists in his ground-breaking exhibition “Expressionists,” but decided on “Post-Impressionists” instead (p. 235, n. 8). Hamilton Easter Field, an influential American critic and patron, wrote in 1919 that artists such as El Greco and Picasso exemplified “the expression of emotion through the deformation of natural forms.” Hamilton Easter Field, “Man Ray at the Daniel Gallery,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 30, 1919, p. 4; cited in Doreen Bolger, “Hamilton Easter Field and His Contribution to American Modernism,” *The American Art Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1988), p. 87 and n. 34. In Germany, *Expressionismus* was introduced as a general label for modern art, but became associated with the expression of extreme or even pathological emotions; and this meaning trickled into American criticism in the 1920s. Hermann Bahr, *Expressionismus*, 1916, was translated as *Expressionism* (London: Frank Henderson, 1925); Oskar Pfister, *Der psychologische und biologische Untergrund expressionistischer Bilder*, 1920, as *Expressionism in Art: Its Psychological and Biological Basis* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922). Cheney notes (on p. 72) that Helen Gardner, in the first (1926) edition of her textbook, *Art through the Ages*, had used “Expressionism” to describe “the chief movements that have grown out of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.” His book sums up much of the earlier literature on Expressionism, and adds an analysis of spatial organization as expressive device, based on the teachings of Hans Hofmann (see pp. ix and 119-241).

<sup>25</sup> Review of exhibition by “The Ten” at the Montross Gallery, *New York Times*, December 22, 1935.

<sup>26</sup>The anonymous critic for *Art News* pointed out that: “‘The Ten,’ characterizing themselves as ‘an independent group’...are presenting pictures which will be difficult for the public to swallow...It would be a simple matter...to point out the borrowings of one painter from African art, of another from the art of Matisse and Picasso, of the echoes of Chirico or Chagall or of Rouault and Cubism, but...all of these artists are consciously borrowing from contemporary sources in an effort to express through some other method than that of photographic realism, their feelings about the life around them.” Anon., “The Ten,” *Art News*, vol. 34, no. 12, December 21, 1935, p. 8. The 1936 Paris exhibition by “The Ten” garnered a similar response from French critics, one of whom wrote: “These ten painters have been profoundly influenced by the masters of the School of Paris, especially by Picasso and Rouault. However, there is something attractive and original about this group...One has to praise the painters of ‘The Ten’ for avoiding the risk of mere decorativeness that often threatens painters attracted to abstraction. There is some kind of trauma or disquiet in their work, expressed by a sober, silently luminous harmony, created by scales of colors that are sonorous but opaque and heavy in their

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facture.” Gottlieb’s paintings were praised for their “fine, grey-pearl tonalities,” Rothko’s for their “authentic coloristic value.” Chil Aronson, “‘Le Ten’ de New-York,” *Les Arts*, November 1936. Another critic described Gottlieb as “expressing melancholy fantasies.” Jankel Kufeld, “Les Dix,” *Beaux-Arts*, November 20, 1936.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Davis MacNaughton notes that the group’s November 1938 was entitled “The Ten: Whitney Dissenters,” to express their contempt for the American Scene painting then favored by the Whitney Museum of American Art. (MacNaughton 1981, p. 19)

<sup>28</sup> William S. Rubin, “Adolph Gottlieb,” *Art International*, Vol. 3, March 1959, p. TK.

<sup>29</sup> Friedman interview, August 1962, tape 1B, typescript p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> MacNaughton 1981, pp. 21 and 23, proposes Salvador Dalí as a model for the uncanny juxtaposition of near and far in *Symbols and the Desert*, while noting that Gottlieb “never adopted a *trompe l’oeil* style” like Dalí’s. Certain works by Pierre Roy are closer in theme and composition (see, for instance, his *Musique N. 3*, reproduced in *Pierre Roy, 1880-1950* [Paris: Galerie André Francois Petit, 1967]), and might have seen these in Paris or New York in the 1930s. He unquestionably saw Roy’s *Electrification of the Country*, included in the Museum of Modern Art’s 1936 exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (cat. #574). However, the same stylistic disparity discourages one from thinking that Gottlieb would have taken Roy as a model. My own candidate would be the Italian painter Filippo de Pisis, whose striking “near-and-far” views of giant conch shells, loaves of bread, and gloves posed in front of vast empty beaches are yet closer to Gottlieb’s composition, and are also executed in a similar painterly style. (See the works reproduced in Giuliano Briganti, *De Pisis, gli anni di Parigi, 1925-1939* [Verona: Galleria dello Scudo, and Milan: Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, 1987], pp. 96-103, 120-127. During Gottlieb’s July 1935 visit to Paris, he would certainly have visited the exhibition of *L’Art Italien des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> Siècles* at the Musée des Écoles Étrangères Contemporaines in the Jeu de Paume, which included five works by de Pisis, one of them (cat. #52) a *Nature morte devant la mer*. MacNaughton, p. 23, notes that Gottlieb cites Giorgio de Chirico’s mannequin figures in a painting, *Picnic (Box and Figure)* of 1939-40. Indeed, de Chirico’s still lifes of the late teens are the common source for the near-and-far paintings by Dalí, Roy, and de Pisis, as well as Gottlieb.

<sup>31</sup> [Cite Gottlieb remarks (from Friedman interview?) about the equivalence of desert and sea.]

<sup>32</sup> See Patrick Mauries, *Cabinets of Curiosities* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Friedman interview, Tape 1B, typescript p. TK.

<sup>34</sup> See Stephen Polcari, “Adolph Gottlieb’s Allegorical Epic of World War II,” *Art Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3, autumn 1988, pp. 202-207; reprinted in revised form in Polcari, *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 166-173. See also Charlotta Kotik, “The Legacy of Signs: Reflections on Adolph Gottlieb’s Pictographs,” in Sanford Hirsch, ed., *The Pictographs of Adolph Gottlieb* (New York: Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation with Hudson Hills Press, 1994), pp. 61-62.

<sup>35</sup> In his review of Gottlieb’s double retrospective of 1968, Hilton Kramer concisely summed up his relationship to Klee, writing that, “The Pictographs of the forties, with their increasingly larger and more graphic grids and their alternation of symbolic and abstract shapes, are essentially a projection of Klee onto a monumental scale.” (“Art:

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Two Periods of Adolph Gottlieb,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 1968, p. 48: cited in MacNaughton 1981, p. 46.) It is evident, however, that Klee’s influence on the Pictographs was already a critical cliché, if only because we find Gottlieb protesting against it in his 1962 interview with Martin Friedman, where he says: “There was so much diversity in Klee’s work that one could see Klee in almost anything, in anyone; and I think the Europeans, the French in particular made a big business out of the influence of Klee on American painting, because I think it was part of their efforts to denigrate American painting.” (Friedman interview, tape 2B, typescript p. TK)

<sup>36</sup> The Gottliebs owned a superb Chilkat blanket with faces distributed symmetrically within a grid, as well as Pliny Earle Goddard’s handbook on *Indians of the Northwest Coast*, published in 1934 by the American Museum of Natural History. It seems likely that Gottlieb was also familiar with Franz Boas’ groundbreaking volume on *Primitive Art* (1927), which focuses on Northwest Indian art. Boas (pp. 102-109) observed that the symbolic motifs of “primitive” art were often highly ambiguous, bearing no fixed meaning even among the peoples who create them. Gottlieb might have taken this as supporting the Eliotian idea of expressive unintelligibility, discussed below. Gottlieb and Newman’s interest in Native American art was shared with the “Indian Space” painters, a group including Peter Busa, Steve Wheeler, and Gertrude Barrer, who saw in the strongly patterned designs of Indian art a way to reconcile abstraction and symbolism, and a specifically American model for modern art. See Sandra Kraskin, *The Indian Space Painters: native American sources for American abstract art* (New York: Sidney Mishkin Gallery, 1991); and the discussion of Gottlieb’s work in relation to this group in Charlotta Kotik, “The Legacy of Signs,” pp. 61-62.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Jung, *The Integration of the Personality* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939); chapter 3 of this volume is devoted to archetypes; chapter 4 to dream symbols; chapter 5 to alchemy, which plays an important role in some of the later Pictographs.

<sup>38</sup> Polcari, “Adolph Gottlieb’s Allegorical Epic of World War II,” p. 203.

<sup>39</sup> Harry Cooper (in 1994 Pace catalogue) links “free association of images” in Pictographs to example of T.S. Eliot’s method in *The Wasteland*.

<sup>40</sup> [Find interview where Gottlieb refutes idea that the Pictographs can be decoded.]

<sup>41</sup> Polcari, “Adolph Gottlieb’s Allegorical Epic of World War II,” pp. 205-206.

<sup>42</sup> Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko, “The Portrait and the Modern Artist,” transcript of a broadcast on “Art in New York,” Radio WNYC, October 13, 1943, typescript p. 3; cited in MacNaughton 1981, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>44</sup> A.Z. Kruse, “Artists Gallery,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 3, 1943; Kruse, “Wakefield Gallery,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, February 13, 1944.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, “Modern Painters Open Show Today; 55 Members of the Federation Represented in Third Annual Exhibition at Wildenstein’s,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1943, p. 28. The Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors was an organization that Gottlieb had helped found after leaving the American Artists’ Congress.

<sup>46</sup> Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko (with the assistance of Barnett Newman), Letter to Edward Alden Jewell, Art Editor, *The New York Times*, June 7, 1943. The full text of the letter is reproduced in [1981 cat.], p. 169. MacNaughton 1981, p. 40, explains that the paragraph beginning “We favor the simple expression...” was drafted by Gottlieb.

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Although the explication of *The Rape of Persephone* appears in the section of the letter that MacNaughton credits to Newman, it seems safe to assume that it reflects Gottlieb's own view of his painting.

<sup>47</sup> Maude Riley, "Gottlieb's Enigmas," *The Art Digest*, April 1, 1945; Anon., "Adolph Gottlieb," *Art News*, April 1945.

<sup>48</sup> April J. Paul, "Introduction à la peinture moderne américaine: Six Young American Painters of the Samuel Kootz Gallery: An Inferiority Complex in Paris," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 60, no. 6, February 1986, pp. 65-71, esp. 65-67.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., "Peintres français, gare à vous! Gottlieb est là !," *Tribune de Lausanne*, April 12, 1959. The occasion for the interview was Gottlieb's April 1959 exhibition at the Galerie Rive Droite, Paris.

<sup>50</sup> Kimberly J. Elman and Angela Giral, eds., *Percival Goodman: architect, planner, teacher, painter* (New York: Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2001), section on "Synagogue Architecture," pp. 53-110.

<sup>51</sup> A more extended discussion of Gottlieb's crown motif would note its afterlife in the paintings of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Although Basquiat came to fame in the 1980s as a "street" or "graffiti" artist, his actual paintings had nothing in common with graffiti art. As Adam Gopnik pointed out in an iconoclastic review ("Madison Avenue Primitive," *The New Yorker*, November 9, 1992, pp. 133), Basquiat's style was a concatenation of styles and images he had studied in New York museums and galleries, enhanced with references from African-American culture. The crowns that often appear in Basquiat's paintings may be symbols of his own art-world success, but they are also quotations from Gottlieb; indeed, the typical format of Basquiat's work—a loose grid populated by masks, symbols and cryptic phrases—is a deliberately sloppy version of the Pictographs.

<sup>52</sup> Emily Genauer, "U.S. Abstractionists Execute Fine Décor for a New Jersey Synagogue," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 14 [?], 1951. See also the review by Aline B. Louchheim, *New York Herald Tribune*, October 7, 1951; and the photo feature in *Time*, November 1951.

<sup>53</sup> For contemporary coverage of Gottlieb's façade, see "The Milton Steinberg Memorial: Magnificent stained glass window recalls the traditions of Israel and honor's Rabbi's memory," *Sunday News*, January 16, 1955, pp. 38 ff.; "A New Luster in Churches: Modern Designs Enliven Ancient Stained-Glass Art," *Life Magazine*, April 11, 1955; and "Architecture's New Dimension: Vivid Color," *Architectural Forum*, November 1955. Regarding the design process, see Gottlieb's interview of [TK]. Paul Goldberger, "Architecture: Abandoning Orthodox Modernism," *New York Times*, July 11, 1981, discusses the design of the new community center without discussing the destruction of the old one.

<sup>54</sup> Parker Tyler, "Jackson Pollock: The Infinite Labyrinth," *Magazine of Art*, vol. 43, no. 3, March 1950, pp. 92-93; reprinted in Karmel, ed., *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*, pp. 65-67. It should be noted that the cosmological metaphor of Tyler's essay was probably inspired by the titles of certain 1947 paintings by Pollock, such as "Galaxy" and "Comet." This in turn derived from Miró's *Constellation* paintings of 1941, and from Picasso's earlier dot-and-line paintings, which were often described as "constellations." The widespread influence of the dot-and-line motif and the

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constellation metaphor are visible in works such as David Smith's *Steel Drawing I*, of 1945.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Rosenblum, "Adolph Gottlieb: New Murals," *The Art Digest*, April 15, 1954.

<sup>56</sup> FOH [Frank O'Hara], "Adolph Gottlieb," *Art News*, April 1954.

<sup>57</sup> S. Lane Faison, "Art," *The Nation*, May 15. Faison was the extraordinary teacher who made the Williams' art history department into the incubator for a series of major curators and museum directors (Michael Govan, Thomas Krens, Glenn Lowry, Earl Powell, Kirk Varnedoe, James Wood, and other members of the "Williams Mafia").

<sup>58</sup> Martin Friedman interview with AG, August 1962, Tape 2B, typescript p. TK.

<sup>59</sup> James Fitzsimmons, "Gottlieb on Land and Sea," *The Art Digest*, January 1, 1953; Belle Krasne, "No More Prison Bars," *Art Digest*, January 15, 1952. Fairfield Porter ("FP"), in the January 1953 *Art News*, had a surprisingly negative response to Gottlieb's new work: "Gottlieb... has turned to Surrealist abstraction in order to show science fiction subjects, where cosmic forces act. In *Nadir* the ground is strewn like a battlefield with death and destruction. The imbalance of *Sea and Tide* [fig. 27] is caused by enormous pressures of gravity between two red ellipses and a black circle... To this reviewer it seems that this year Gottlieb has given up art in favor of expressing again a strange idea that came to him a year ago. It seems further that he fails in the purpose, as if by stepping outside of himself to hold tight to something, he had irretrievably lost this very thing."

<sup>60</sup> William Rubin, "Adolph Gottlieb," *Art International*, Vol. 3, March 1959; M.S.

[Martica Sawin], "Adolph Gottlieb," *Arts Magazine*, February 1959.

<sup>61</sup> Hubert Crehan, "Adolph Gottlieb," *Art News*, December 1960.

<sup>62</sup> "*Adolph Gottlieb: Paintings 1949–1959*" was on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, from June 4 through July 4, 1959. In April, the Galerie Rive Droite in Paris held an exhibition entitled, "*Gottlieb: École de New York*." The title of the review by P.G., "Ecole de New York," in *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh), issue of July 6, 1959, appears to allude to both exhibitions.

<sup>63</sup> John Russell, "New Types of Ambiguity," *London Times*, June 14, 1959.

<sup>64</sup> Anon., "Gottlieb Pinta Explosoes," *Ultima Hora La* (Sao Paulo), September 27, 1963.

<sup>65</sup> Emily Genauer review, *New York Herald Tribune*, Feb. 20, 1966.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas B. Hess, "The Artist as a Pro," *New York Magazine*, November 1972.

Gottlieb's passion for sailing was mentioned occasionally by earlier critics. Reviewing Howard Putzels' 1945 exhibition, "A Problem for Critics," Maude Riley wrote that: "Gottlieb... has come slowly and painstakingly to his present style after many years of painting (and building and sailing his own boats)." (*The Art Digest*, June 1, 1945) An anonymous review of the "Gottlieb Exhibit at Kootz Gallery [the last leg of the Bennington retrospective organized by Clement Greenberg]," *Provincetown*, August 5, 1954, noted that: "For many years, the Gottliebs have made their summer home in Provincetown, where they have been active members both of its art and its yachting communities. The blue-sailed 'Ballerina', Captain Gottlieb at the helm, has won its share of laurels in the local as well as the Wellfleet races." A few years after Gottlieb's death, Everett Rattray, in his "Fifth Column," *East Hampton Star*, Feb. 17, 1977, recalled Gottlieb's activity as a sailor after he bought a house in Southampton in the early 1960s: "Thomas B. Hess, writing recently in New York magazine, said that the late Adolph



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Gottlieb's 'great subject was the sea.' Perhaps it was; I am not qualified to say. But I do know that he loved the sea; he was a skilled racing sailor... A bunch of us raced... on Three Mile Harbor in the mid-1960s, and Adolph often joined us... [His boat] would slide up and pass the fleet. Adolph would have a hint of a smile on his face, no more... We all, soon enough, realized that it wasn't the boat that was faster, it was Adolph... Winning racing, even in dinghies (perhaps even more so in dinghies) requires complete concentration. It seems to have been part of Adolph Gottlieb's genius to be able to focus on the task at hand, sailing his boat, while registering those maritime images with what Hess called 'a pilot's understanding.'" Lawrence Alloway summarizes this line of interpretation, writing, "Gottlieb, incidentally, was an accomplished sailor, and the spatial effect of the Imaginary Landscapes is akin to the low eye-level for a small boat." ("Adolph Gottlieb and Abstract Painting," in Sanford Hirsch and Mary Davis MacNaughton, eds., *Adolph Gottlieb: A Retrospective* [New York: Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation, with The Arts Publisher, 1981], p. 60)

<sup>67</sup> John I.H. Baur, *Nature in Abstraction: The Relation of Abstract Painting and Sculpture to Nature in Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1958), p. 10. Reviewing Baur's exhibition in *Art News*, vol. 56, no. 10, February 1958, Thomas Hess cited Gottlieb's comments, adding, "What 'Nature in Abstraction' proves, in spite of itself, is that an art that was created out of individual despair and protest has been exploited by mannerists and imitators" who had trivialized the style of Abstract Expressionism by applying it to landscape painting (p. 43).

<sup>68</sup> Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* [check for Gottlieb ref.]

<sup>69</sup> Jung, *Integration of the Personality*, pp. 66 and 68. In the later Jung literature, this process becomes known as the canonical "night sea journey."

<sup>70</sup> Finley Eversole, "Blast I: Image of Renewal," *Art Directions* no. 4 (Foundation for the Arts, Religion, and Culture), summer 1967, p. 7. Eversole was the editor of *Art Directions*, and had previously assembled the volume, *Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts* (New York: Abingdon, 1962).

<sup>71</sup> Finley Eversole, "The Regenerative Art of Adolph Gottlieb," *Theology Today*, vol. XXV, No. 2, July 1968, p. 222.

<sup>72</sup> Clement Greenberg, "The Situation at the Moment," *Partisan Review*, January 1948; reprinted in John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 2: Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 193-194.

<sup>73</sup> Adolf Gottlieb, "The Artist and the Public," a paper read at the College Art Association in January 1954, published in *Art in America*, vol. 42, no. 4, December 1954, pp. 267-271; a different version of this lecture was published as "Artist and Society: A Brief Case History," *College Art Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, Winter 1955, pp. 96-101.

<sup>74</sup> B.H. Friedman, "'The Irascibles': A Split Second in Art History," *Arts Magazine*, September 1978, pp. 96-102; also Collins, "Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-51: A Historiographic Study of a Late Bohemian Enterprise," pp. 292-299.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Friedman interview with AG, August 1962, typescript, Tape 2B

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<sup>76</sup> David L. Shirey, "Gottlieb's 'Vital Images,'" *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1972; Jeanne Siegel, "Adolph Gottlieb at 70 [interview]," *Art News*, December 1973, p. 59.

<sup>77</sup> Anon., "Boom on Canvas," *Time* magazine, April 7, 1958. Statistics on 1958 incomes from "Current Population Reports: Consumer Income," Series P-60, no. 33, published by the U.S. Department of Commerce on January 15, 1960 (available online at <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-033.pdf>).

<sup>78</sup> Marvin Elkoff, "The American Painter as a Blue Chip," *Esquire*, January 1965, p. 39; Felix Kessler, "Art as a Business," *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 31, 1968, pp. 1 and 10.

<sup>79</sup> Elkoff, "The American Painter as a Blue Chip," p. 39. See also Grace Glueck, "Artists Follow Sun to the Hamptons and Followers Follow Artists," *New York Times*, August 16, 1965, p. 24: "A more recent arrival is Adolph Gottlieb, an immigrant from Provincetown, who has acquired the big white house on Apoquogue Road that once belonged to Mrs. John F. Kennedy's father."

<sup>80</sup> When the exhibition was shown at the Metropolitan Museum in September 1946, before leaving for its international tour, right-wing critics assailed it for including "Communitic"—that is, avant-garde—art. After the exhibition's first few European stops, it was recalled and dispersed. The collection was shown again in New York, this time at the Whitney, before being sold off. See Saunders, TK; and also Robert M. Coates, "The Art Galleries: The State Department Collection," *The New Yorker*, June 5, 1948, published at the time of the Whitney exhibition.

<sup>81</sup> Funding was provided by the CIA through front organizations, not in order to keep its source secret from the Soviet Union, but to conceal it from the American press and from the American congressmen who had attacked the Metropolitan show. Kozloff, Cockcroft, Guilbaut, Kimmelman, chapter from Pollock symposium, Saunders; confirm whether "New American Painting" also received CIA funding.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Friedman, "Walker Art Center Organizes American Exhibition at Sao Paulo Bienal," *The Art Gallery*, October 1963, 8-10:

"Every two years, Sao Paulo becomes the capitol of world art for a three month period. The seventh Bienal de Sao Paulo, which alternates with and rivals in scope the Venice Biennale, has invited over fifty countries to present exhibitions of painting and sculpture in the Sao Paul Museum of Modern Art. The Walker Art Center, at the request of the United States Information Agency, organized this year's American exhibition which consists of a one-man show of forty-five paintings by Adolph Gottlieb and an exhibition of three to five works by each of ten sculptors." (8)

[Sculptors include Lyman Kipp, David Weinrib, George Sugarman, Chryssa (p. 10).]

Anon, "American Painter Wins Sao Paulo Competition," *Washington Post*, 9/27/63:

"A painter from the United States has won the highest award in the seventh Sao Paulo Biennial, one of the top international art competitions...Gottlieb was chosen the grand winner by 23 representatives of participating nations. He is the first artist from either North or South America to win the award since the Biennial was started."

<sup>83</sup> Anon, "Honored U.S. Artist Is Irked by Homeland," *Washington Post*, Oct 31, 1963: "Gottlieb made it clear that he feels much like an artist without honor in his own

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country...It was the first time an artist from either North or South America has won the top award. The feat, Gottlieb complained, barely got mention in the American press.” [See similar complaints in Gordon Brown, “A New York Interview with Adolph Gottlieb: American Triumph Unnoticed by [Press?] or Television,” *Art Voices*, February 1964]

<sup>84</sup> Anon., “Versatile Adman...Alfred Auerbach,” *Advertising Age*, May 13, 1953; Anon., “From Patio to Playroom, Five Interior Designers Create a House Full of Plastics,” *Look* magazine, April 15, 1958; Anon., “Modern Living,” *Time* magazine, April 13, 1962, pp. 58-67, Weitzman apartment with Gottlieb on p. 66.

<sup>85</sup> Annette Michelson, “An Art Scholar’s Loft: ‘Light, Silence, and Space,’” *Vogue*, March 15, 1967, pp. 136-143, 154-155. As discussed below, Michelson’s review of Gottlieb’s 1959 exhibition in Paris was one of the most important critical discussions of his work. It is also interesting to note that Michelson, who was writing for *Vogue* in 1967, would in 1976 become one of the founding editors of *October*, a critical journal resolutely opposed to any kind of linkage between the avant-garde and the worlds of commerce and fashion.

<sup>86</sup> Anon (?) review, *The Nation*, January 24, 1959. On Cecil Beaton’s 1950 use of Pollock’s paintings as the backdrop for a fashion shoot, see T.J. Clark, “In Defense of Abstract Expressionism,” TK.

<sup>87</sup> Medaglia d’Oro ad in November 2, 1963 issue of *The New Yorker* and November 3, 1963 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. A legal agreement of December 20, 1963, in the Gottlieb Foundation’s files, specifies that the ad could be reprinted, but only with caption saying, “Paintings by, and photographed in the studio of, Adolph Gottlieb, winner of the grand prix at the 1963 Sao Paulo Biennial of Painting and Sculpture.” The file also includes tear sheet of ad as it appeared (with this caption) in *The New Yorker* on February 8, [1964].

<sup>88</sup> [Reviews of 1968 shows]

<sup>89</sup> *Gottlieb: École de New York*, Galerie Rive Droit, Paris, 4/3–4/30/59. Press release quotes him as saying: “I paint in a state of being amazed and overwhelmed, as if an invisible hand held my brush and I had no control over it. My painting is subjective. My goal is the instantaneous perception of forms on the canvas.” “Nouvelle Peinture Americaine,” *Republicaine au Sud Genet*, June 10, 1959. Gottlieb quoted: “I am neither a pure expressionist nor a pure abstractionist. I am a subjective. My subjects are purely subjective, but on the plane of subjectivity they really exist. I paint an interior state that belong to me alone, an emotion that is unique because it’s mine, transposed onto an esthetic plane and projected into an image which I make myself reproduce as I saw it, without any modification.” [Is this just from the newspaper or from the MoMA catalogue?]

<sup>90</sup> Emily Genauer, “Abstract Art with Meaning,” *New York Herald Tribune*, January [date TK], 1959.

<sup>91</sup> Annette Michelson, “Gottlieb Exhibition,” *Herald Tribune* (Paris), April 8, 1959.

<sup>92</sup> Martin Friedman interview with AG, August 1962,, Tape 2A, typescript p. TK. [Re: instantaneity in Noland and Louis, see Leo Steinberg on “The Corporate Model,” 1968, and Stuart Davis remark in EdK profile, 1957]

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<sup>93</sup> Martin Friedman, "Adolph Gottlieb: Private symbols in public statements," *Art News*, May 1963, pp. 52 and 33.

<sup>94</sup> Martin Friedman, "Adolph Gottlieb: Private symbols in public statements," p. 33.

<sup>95</sup> [Robbe-Grillet and Barthes translations, Wylie Sypher, Sontag, Sandler on "The New Cool Art"]

<sup>96</sup> Martin Friedman, "Walker Art Center Organizes American Exhibition at Sao Paulo Bienal," *The Art Gallery*, October 1963, pp. 8-10.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Friedman, "Adolph Gottlieb: Private symbols in public statements," p. 33.