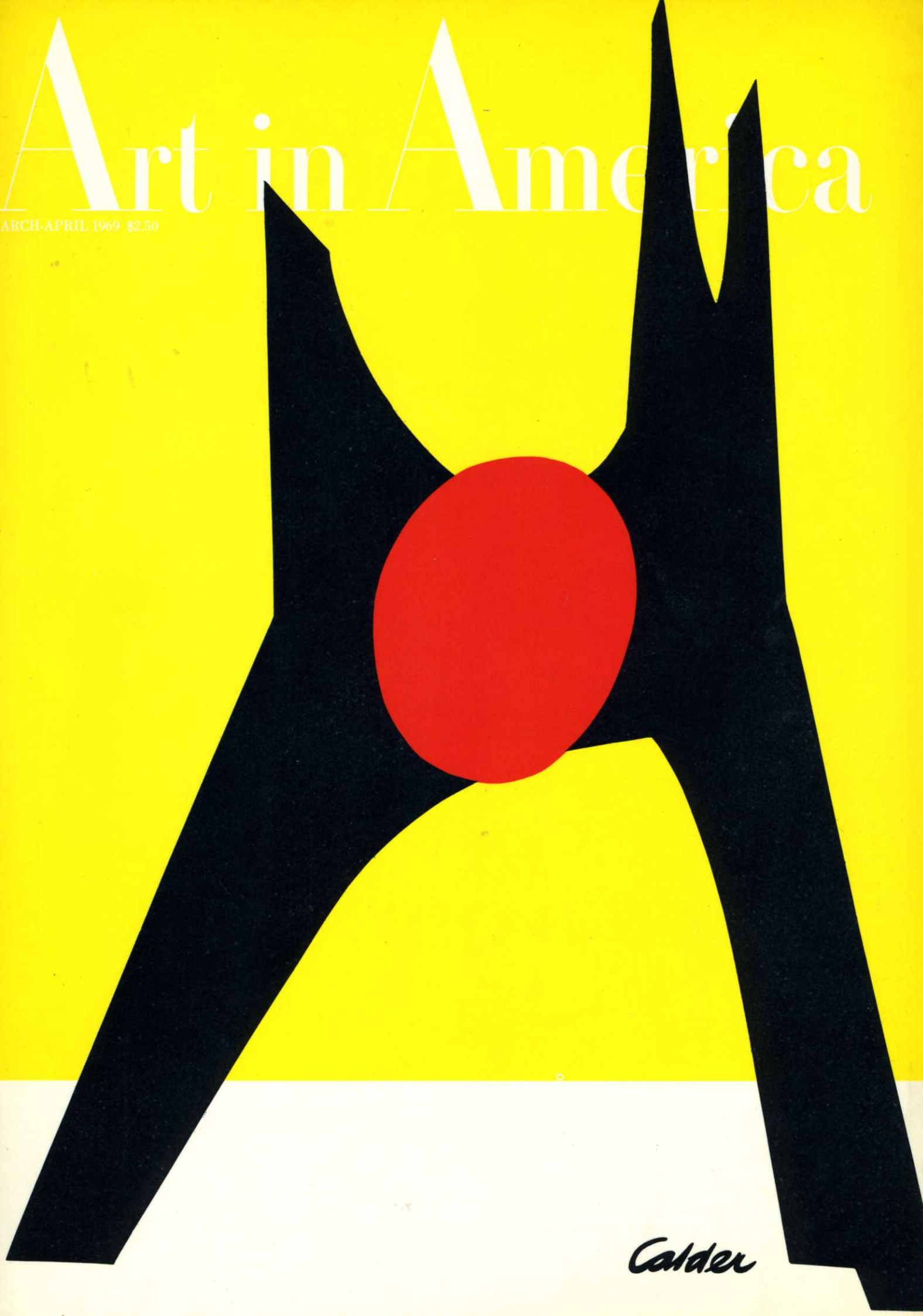


Art in America

MARCH-APRIL 1969 \$2.50



Calder

his latest oeuvre, small boats, trees and figures may be found. Okada is a quiet, poetic painter who never deals in violent color contrasts, and his show will provide a welcome duck-in from 57th's flash and jiggle.

Across the road, at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, Neil Welliver will shine during March. He paints Nudes in Nature—but ah, ah, ah, don't touch that dial. There's witty and complex observation in his lush Arcadian fantasies, peopled mainly by unclad damsels cavorting in greenly sylvan landscapes (very often, they are accompanied by fully dressed young men, who seem to act as both mascots and chaperons). Voluptuously, fluidly brushed, they carry on a figurative tradition that persists unswamped by tides of fashion.

Though Welliver is often associated with the "new realist" school, he differs from the breed in that the action of his paintings does not take place at the edge of his delineated forms, but through the forms themselves. His aim, he has said, "is to make a 'natural' painting as fluid as De Kooning."

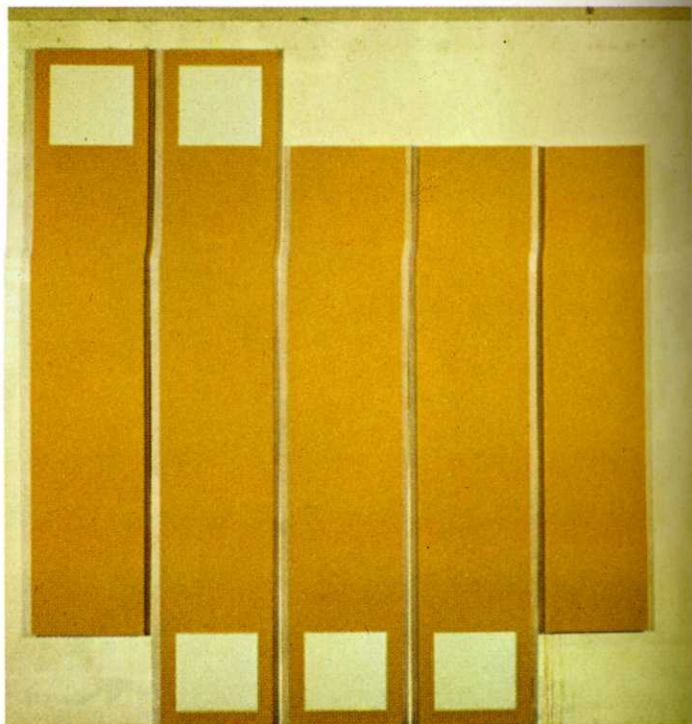
Now take a giant step, to the nearby Fischbach Gallery. Though Doug Ohlson's modular panel paintings, on view March 8-27, were born to bloom in a cool climate, don't mistake them for garden-variety minimal. They break out of that category by virtue of the subtle tension between the sensuous colors and the quiet, slatlike panels that contain them. "It's important to me," says Ohlson, "to get as much color into my paintings as possible by using a minimum of means."

Well, no one can accuse the thirty-two-year-old, Minnesota-born artist of extravagance. The only accents to his tall, narrow monochrome panels, lined up in horizontal continuums of five, six or even ten units, are squares of close-valued or contrasting colors—blue on green, red on blue, yellow on orange, turquoise on violet. (The effect is that of a gay modern building facade inflected by a single window.) When Ohlson truncates some of the panels—that is, trims off their contrasting squares—the lineup at top or bottom is engagingly disrupted. The "unity" of his paintings is also broken by the

interstices between the panels. Remaining the same width (two to three inches) and painted in variant colors, they both separate and unite the panels, to the viewer's confusion and ambivalence. But in the end, the whole wins out over all its parts. The *tightly organized format asserts itself as a unity*, with the unpredictable squares serving as an energetic pulse.

Everyone knows that nationalism in art is dead, but purely phenomenologically, we'll mention here that work by a trio of artists—two painters and a sculptor—from south of the border will appear in three separate exhibitions during March and April. One painter, the late Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949), a Uruguayan who spent time in Paris and New York, will be honored by a show in April at the Royal Marks Gallery. His pictographic paintings and constructions will be accompanied by a selection of Oceanic sculpture, with the viewer invited to discern certain parallels. Of Picasso's generation (and like him, artistically shaped in fin-de-siècle Barcelona, where he went in his adolescence to study mural painting), Torres-García never followed the Latin American convention of pressing art into the service of social and political ideas. He made straight for the sophisticated milieu of Paris, where he got to know the leading artists of his day, and helped to found the review *Cercle et Carré*. His paintings, composed of simple signs, anthropological symbols and folk images sophisticatedly set into geometric grids, seem to adumbrate the early work of Adolph Gottlieb and even (in their compartmentalization) the sculpture of Louise Nevelson. Well before his death (at the age of seventy-five), he returned to Montevideo, where he painted and turned out a number of books and essays on esthetics. Sample *pensée*: "The goal of art is beyond the creation of beauty. Shall we do something fine only because it may be beautiful? Art responds to the same concept of deep seriousness as that of ethics and of life; like these, it should have absolute sincerity as its standard."

On the other hand, the powerful grotesqueries of José Luis Cuevas do follow the footsteps



Doug Ohlson: No. 58, "SCORPIO"
acrylic on canvas, 1968.
Fischbach Gallery, New York.

Joaquín Torres-García: Estructura
Constructiva con Línea Blanca,
gouache on board, 1933.
Royal S. Marks Gallery, New York.

