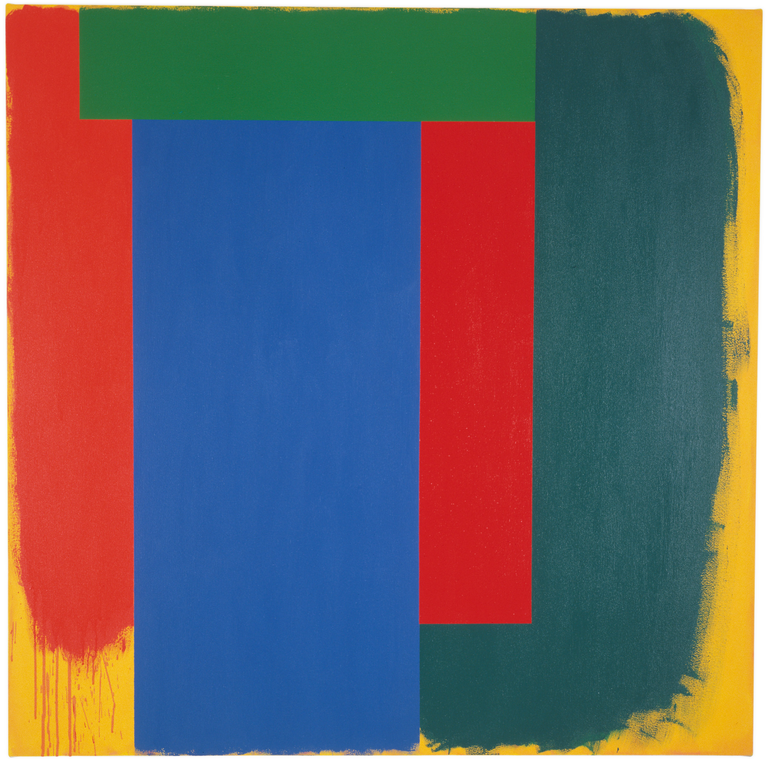
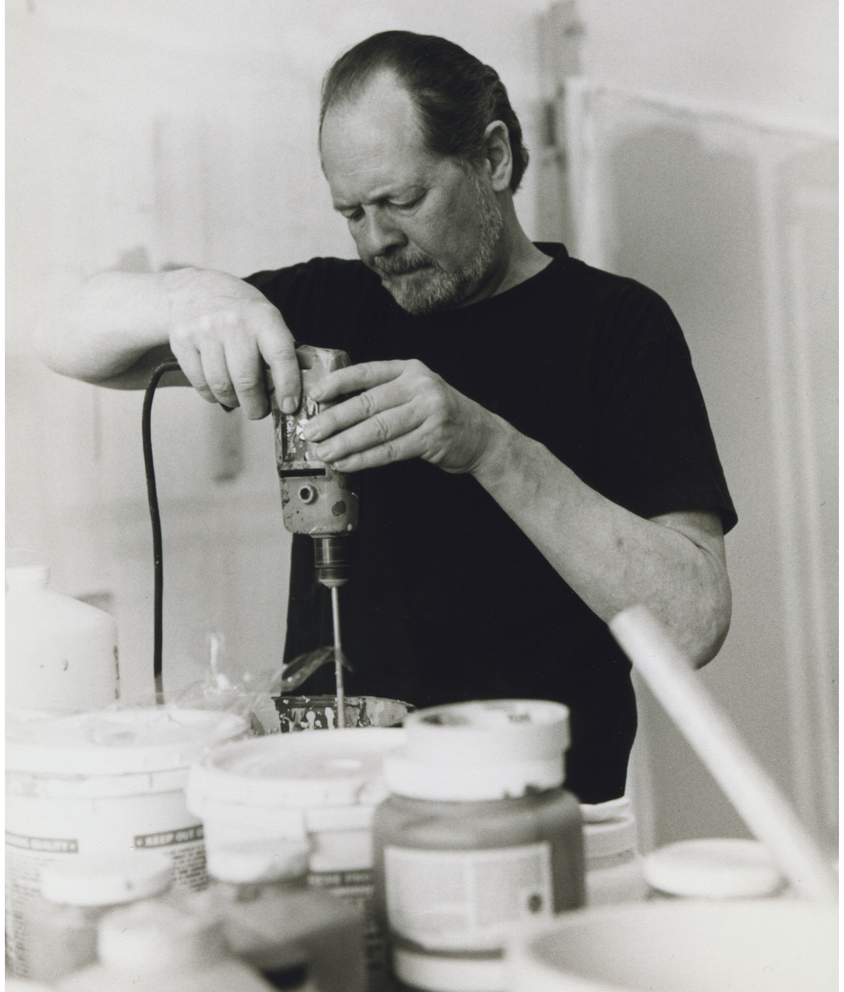
# Doug Ohlson



*Marker Regatta*, 1986. Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60"



Doug Ohlson in his Bond Street studio, NYC. Photo by Maria Arpino

# Doug Ohlson

by E.C. Goossen

## Table of Contents

E.C. Goossen at home, Buskirk, NY. Photo Nathaniel Goossen

E.C. Goossen is an internationally known art critic, historian and exhibition director. He has selected, designed and installed over 60 exhibitions across the United States and Europe, several for the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum in New York, as well as at the Tate Gallery in London, the Grand Palais in Paris and the Kunsthalle in Berlin. He has published critical essays on contemporary art from the Abstract Expressionists to the present as well as books and monographs on Stuart Davis, Helen Frankenthaler, Herbert Ferber, and Ellsworth Kelly.

Goossen chaired the Hunter College art department for 12 years and served on the Graduate Art History Faculty of the City University of New York from its beginning. He taught at Bennington College in the 1950s and organized its first exhibition program, showing such artists as Barnett Newman, David Smith, and Robert Motherwell. His exhibition, The Art of the Real, of 1968, travelled from MOMA to England, France, Switzerland, and Germany.

DOUG OHLSON
by E.C. GOOSSEN

Doug Ohlson was born in 1936 and grew up in the farming county of Cherokee, Iowa, fifty miles east of the Missouri river, a land of flatness and endless skies. His parents owned a largely self-sustaining family farm that had milk-cows, pigs, chickens, and all the usual barnyard animals fed by the produce of a few hundred acres of hay, corn, and sometimes soy beans. His father was a second-generation Swede who looked forward to the day when his three sons would follow him in farming or, at least, go into some practical occupation. The mid-1930s was the deepest period of the Great Depression. To survive was the only reasonable goal, so it is not surprising that Ohlson Sr. had little interest in encouraging any of his sons to engage in frivolous pursuits, especially such a career as art.

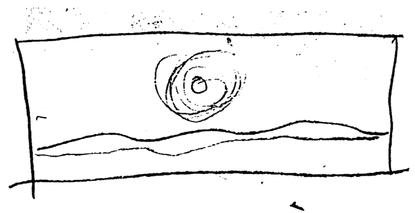
However, young Doug had a strong distaste for farming. After high school he managed to work his way in and out of four different colleges (as well as a three-year stint in the U.S. Marines) before graduating from the University of Minnesota, in 1961. His major was, of course, Art. That same year he moved to New York.

Ohlson came to the big city with virtually no money other than some small savings and a few dollars an indulgent uncle had given him for one of his paintings. Nevertheless, he was used to finding his way with odd jobs and soon went to work for a contractor in Connecticut. Ultimately he was offered a teaching position, which allowed him the freedom to continue painting.

It is possible, even probable, that Ohlson's obsession with color began during his youth on the farm in Iowa. Childhood experiences are more often than not formative, particularly in the realm of the senses. His earliest memory of an impressive "work of art" was not colorful but very relevant to some of his later works. This was a photograph that an aunt had taken on a trip to visit relatives in Sweden, which appeared on a wall in his home before he was ten years old. His recollection is illustrated by his drawing (Figure 1) of a scene of sky and flatness (land or sea?), with the midnight sun in its luminescent glow centered in a horizontal frame.

The coincidence of this memory with the reality of Ohlson's life at the time is worth noting. Every day, the work of the farm began before dawn and continued after the return of the school bus in the late afternoon. The first requirements on his time were the chores.

But there may have been compensations. One can imagine yellowish-pink and green dawns, blue noons, and red-orange sunsets that swiftly slide from purple to black, a frequent and spacious enough panorama to last a lifetime. The world of the farm may have been down to earth, but the world of the spirit was in the sky.



“The material which (painting) uses for its content and for the sensuous expression of that content is visibility as such, insofar as it is individualized, viz. specified as color…”
G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Art*

Ohlson stands at the current end of a long line of painters who have in various ways revealed that color is the music of visual art: color, like music, is abstract, sensuous, and sufficient unto itself. He has been developing his own ways and means to work with this approach for thirty-some years. Until the end of the nineteenth century color had to be used in a subterfuge of associations and as a means rather than an end. It had to support all other forms of materiality except those exceptional to itself. One of the greatest contributions of modern art in this century had been the effort to release color frankly and openly from secondary roles. Even Matisse, who made such a major contribution with his kind of color, was reluctant to abandon a modicum of illusion of nature in his pictures.

Matisse was unable to find another way to prevent his art from becoming totally decorative. It is Ohlson’s passionate preoccupation with this unfinished problem in modern art that makes post-modernism a non sequitur and his work so essential to the continuation of painting as a vital art. It is hoped that the following comments on individual paintings will make clear how Ohlson has, often adroitly, met the problem of giving color the full freedom it deserves.

1.

The two paintings, Untitled, 1959–60 (Plate 1), and Untitled, 1961 (Plate 2), were created toward the end of Ohlson’s tenure as an undergraduate art student at the University of Minnesota. Their quality, however much their style belonged to the period, is decidedly superior to what we would associate with “student” painting. It is easy to see why such a sophisticated, nationally known artist as Peter Busa, then a visiting professor at Minnesota, put an Ohlson painting in a graduate show he was organizing at the university. There was some local flak about the inclusion of an undergraduate’s work but Busa held his ground. It was also Busa who, discovering that Ohlson was contemplating going to the California School of Art in San Francisco to continue his education, said to Ohlson: “Nice climate out there, but you have to go to New York where the action is.”

These are truly lovely paintings, executed with grace and a true affection for the medium and the means. One could classify them as descendants of Watteau and Fragonard with a good dose of Monet’s color sensibility thrown in. They are also, of course, in their kind of painterliness, second-generation Abstract Expressionist trends.


[1] *Untitled*, 1960. Oil on canvas board, 24 x 18"

[2] *Untitled*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30"

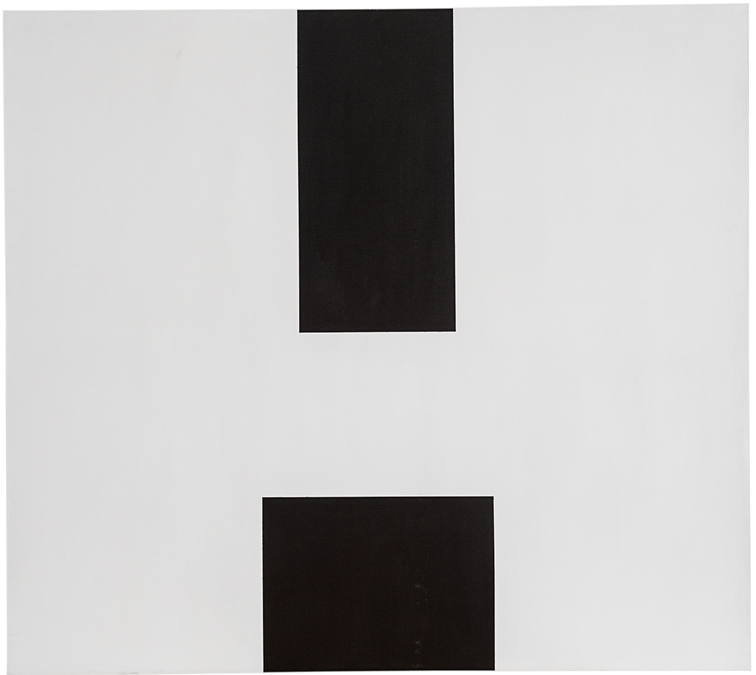
2.

Ohlson had arrived in New York with a painterly style of the sort that was prevalent among younger artists trying to find their way beyond Abstract Expressionism. His attraction to Franz Kline's powerful mannerist brushstroke and direct discovery of his black and white paintings is not surprising. Indeed, for Ohlson it was not at all difficult to produce successful works in a Klinesque style. "Idea," 1962 (Plate 3), for example, is certainly a worthy and credible representation of his talent but not of his ambition. "Idea" has that major characteristic of the best of Kline (pre-1956), where the finding of edges of forms through the intermixture of the pigments provided a visible revelation of the process that led to the final image. Even Kline, who got lost in his attempt to translate this method and fervor into color, could not have made a better Kline-type painting. But Ohlson soon realized that this approach had little to offer him other than an academic role in what had already become a vogue ("action painting").

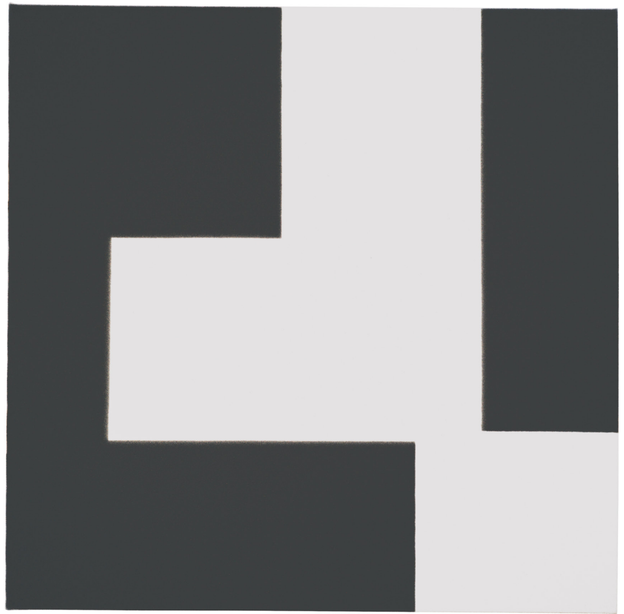
One of several things he may have got from his study of Kline, however, was that complete painting could be made with two "colors." This fact was substantially reconfirmed when, in 1963, he revisited the Art Institute of Chicago and encountered a newly acquired painting by Clyfford Still titled "PH-246," 1951-52, a 10-by-13 foot canvas. It consisted of a vast single-colored area of palette-knife-worked paint interrupted only by a crooked thin line. Dropped from the top toward the bottom of the rectangle two-thirds of the way from the left, this wiry crack was the only overt incident in the painting. Though Ohlson had no affection for Still's work he describes his reaction as "so that's what it's all about."

Meanwhile he had emerged from painterliness into strict clarification of the edges of his spatial divisions, as illustrated here by "Helen," 1963 (Plate 4), and "Crosia," 1963 (Plate 5). Initially, these might have been mistaken for descendants of early modernist geometric construction, but Ohlson would be justified in denying any such connection. Both of these paintings, when inspected closely, indicate how carefully he has designed the areas of black as contrasted with white to ensure that neither will dominate and turn the other into mere field. In this sense, he went beyond Still in assuring the unity and presence of the surface without engaging in plastic maneuvers to call it to attention.

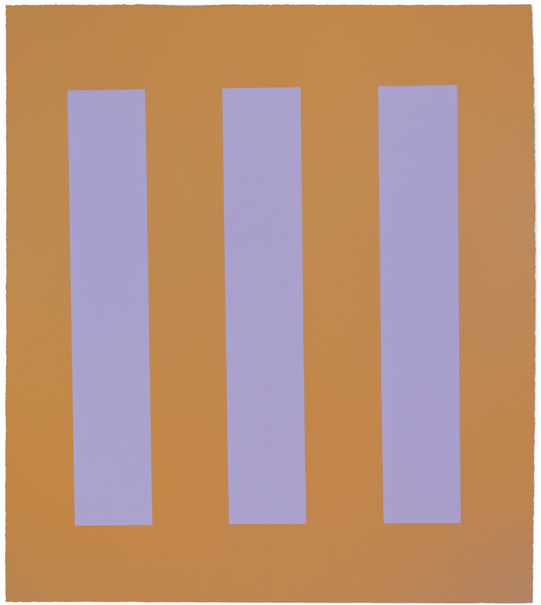
[3] *Idea*, 1962. Oil on canvas, 35 x 40"



[4] *Helen*, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 83 x 96"



[5] *Crosia*, 1963acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36”



[6] *Untitled*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60"

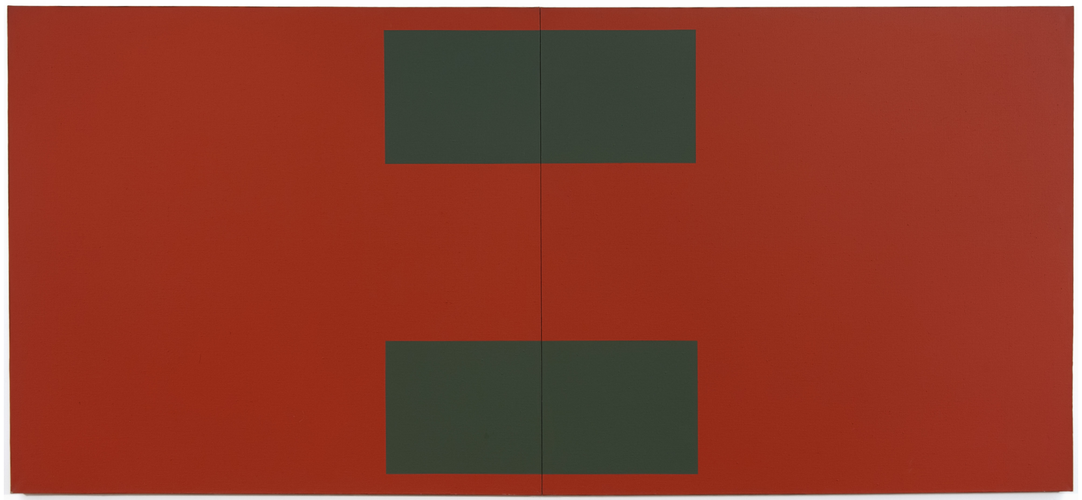
3.

Having left Kline and “action” painting behind and having experienced more thoroughly the “color field” art of Rothko and Newman, Ohlson again faced the problems and possibilities of melding the offerings of the times with his own skills and imagination. He had, in the paintings of the early ‘60s, developed a pictorial tension between black and white as occupants of distinct and opposed areas that he now wanted to translate into similar tensions between spectral colors. His first move in this effort was to replace the black (as in “Helen,” Plate 4) and embed rectangles of the purest primaries in an expanse of white. Unfortunately these pictures did appear as if they had constructivist antecedents and were so read by the public. But in late 1964, when he began to engage color more fully, it became evident he had had other ends in mind.

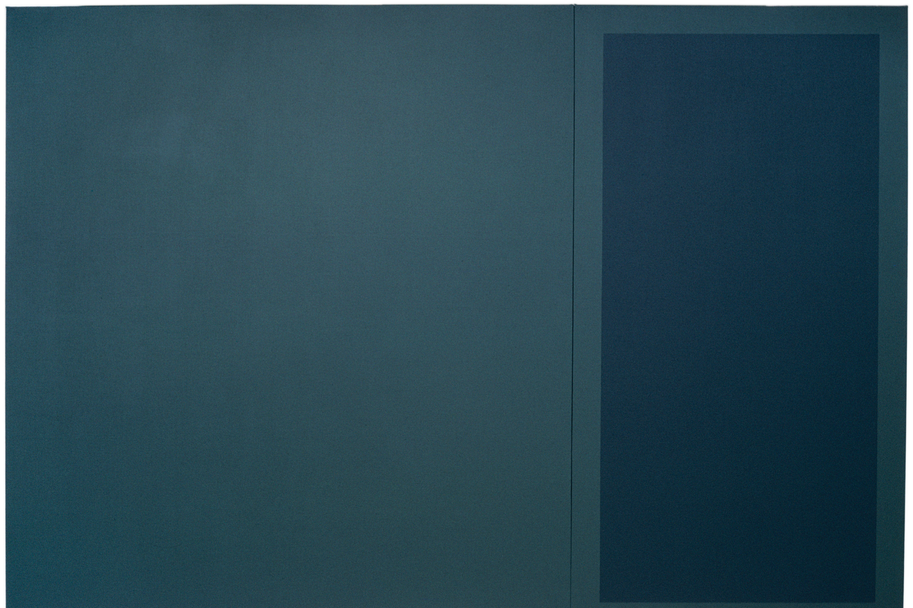
Color on a plane surface is what defines painting as such. Hegel had pointed this out before Chevreul and the Impressionists, and before modern color science. Up to the late nineteenth century, painters who were considered superior in the use of color were called “good colorists,” implying that artists filled in black and white drawings with attractive hues. The ultimate move in the modernist drive toward a pure, non-illusionistic abstraction has been to make color cling to the surface in ways that give only an inkling of naturalistic space while yet engaging our sensuous perception of its pictorial vitality. Matisse, in his great radical picture, “Red Studio” of 1911, demonstrated that a single ubiquitous color could create pictorial unity while displaying any variety of visual shapes that give hints of the illusory space of another world. The object, of course, is to make the painting of the real world.

Apparently Ohlson felt that he must now find his own way to deal with color and its ramifications in the largest sense. In “Boaz,” 1965-66 (Plate 8), and “Captain,” 1966 (Plate 10), he chose a format which would reduce to nearly zero any implications of internal incident other than the rectangular placement of one color within another. While this device was probably derived from Rothko, Ohlson uses it in a more austere manner making sure that his edges are strictly parallel to the framing edge and that his two colors, though usually close-valued, sound clear and different resonances. In addition, he joined two panels, establishing factually that the painting was unmistakenly a painting and not a depiction of something else.

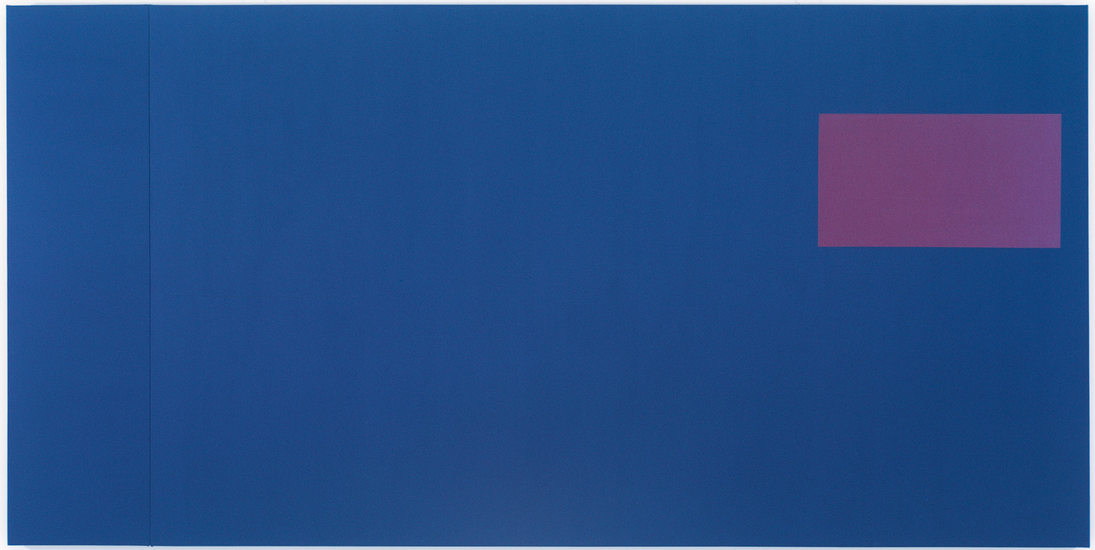
With Ohlson the process of extension never ends. The implications of each state of his art, no matter how successful, always lead to more quests. The doubled panels he used in the 1965-67 pictures became separated, and then multiplied. These rectangles, now squared, became parts of a thesis that led eye-travel across the real space of a broad area. Indeed, a painting comparable in size and content to “Vinca,” 1968 (Plate 12), was included in The Art of the Real of that year at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and travelled abroad. Begun in 1967, this type of painting, exemplified by “Seesaw” of that year (Plate 11), a rather literal balancing act, is prophetic of an underlying message in the late, subtler works of this phase.



[7] *Gemini*, 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 44 x 96"

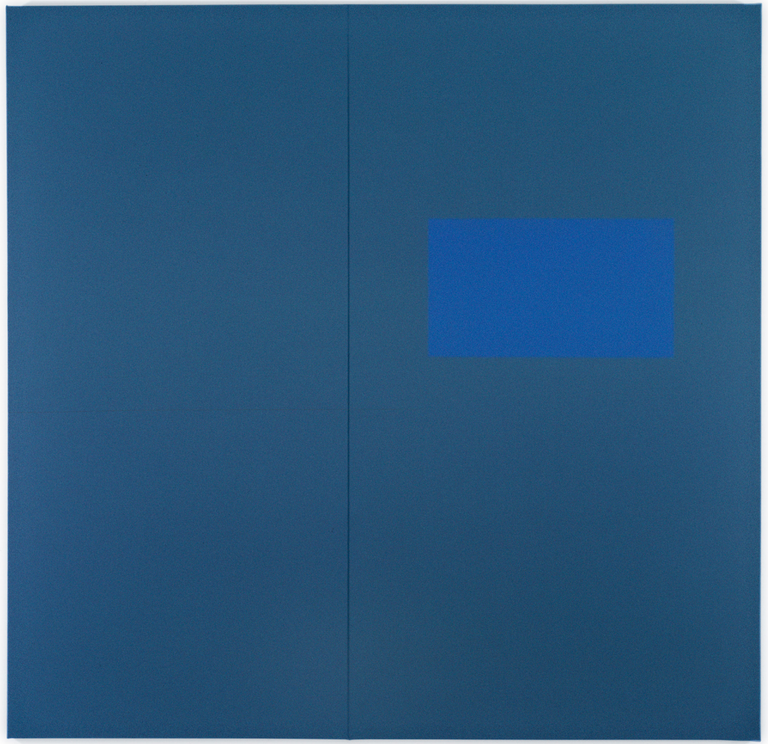


[8] *Boaz*, 1965-66. Acrylic on canvas, 65 x 108"

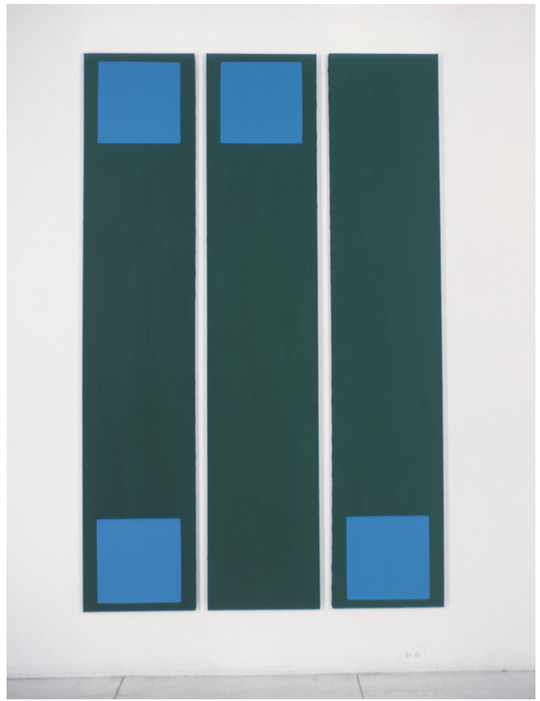


[9] *Sparrow's Red Rose*, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 68 x 130"



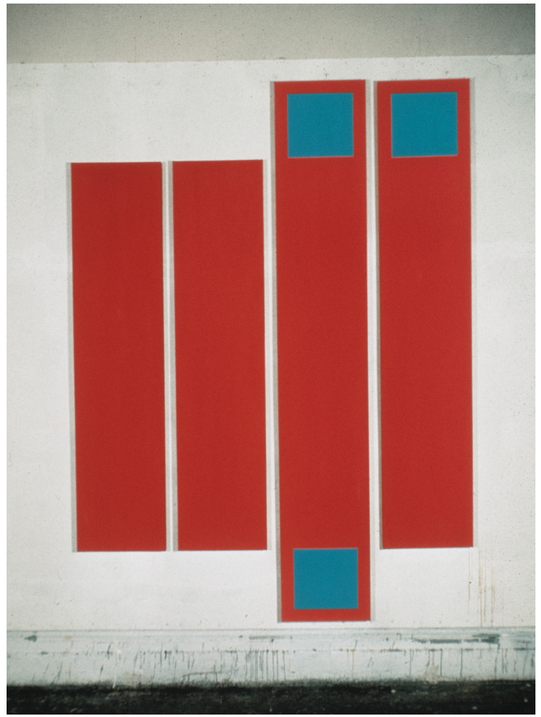


[10] *Captain*, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 86 x 90"



[11] *Seesaw*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 3 panels of 90 x 18" each





[12] *Adrian*, 1968. Acrylic on canvas, 90 x66"

[13] *Vinca*, 1968. Acrylic on canvas, 11 panels of 90 x 18" each

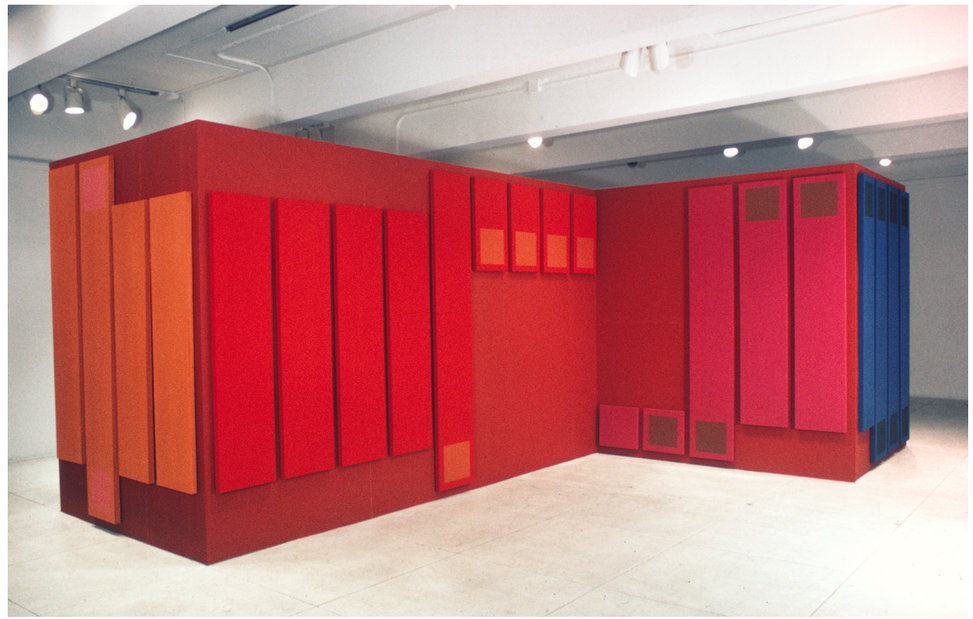
4.

In 1969 Ohlson was invited to put on an exhibition of his new panel paintings at the Fischbach Gallery in New York (Plates 14-16). The group he wanted to show as an ensemble involved versions of the primary and secondary colors. Unfortunately, the panels were too numerous and expansive for the limited wall space of the gallery. In order to show them all together he devised a standing structure upon which they could be displayed. The result was a pair of eight high boxes, one of them with eight-foot long sides and the other, six-foot sides. One of the four walls of each box was extended to the corner of the other box, creating a continuous and somewhat mysterious wall around the whole structure. There were no paintings on the walls of the gallery, which was, in a sense, turned inside out.

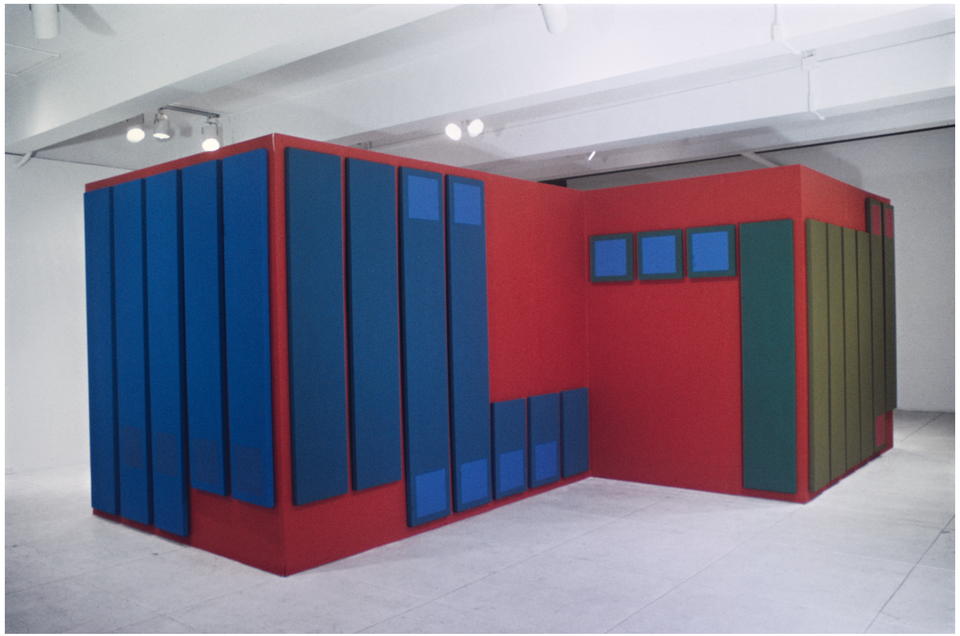
With this arrangement, the grouped panels of reds, blues, greens, yellow ochres, and violets were assembled in an unusual way. In order to see it in its entirety, one had to circumnavigate the structure and, in the process, experience the sequence of colors and shapes as collected in the mind's eye, the way music is collected in the ear. The eye-travel required in the viewing of "Seesaw" (Plate 11) and "Vinca" (Plate 13) in the Fischbach assemblage has been complemented by literal, physical movement .

In this series he also made free use of a kind of painting, which has been labeled the "shaped canvas." In this case, however, it was the result of combining sections of differing lengths as he had in "Adrian" in 1968. Pictures of this type are to be seen as gestalts, unified visually in a single image.

Despite the frequent subtlety of close-valued color exchanges these are not "intimate" paintings. They lend themselves best to carefully considered architectural environments, as public art in spaces where people are usually on the move. This is probably true of most "shaped canvas" art because the design of the format functions in direct respect to the specific wall on which it is placed.



[14] *Fischbach installation*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas on wood



[15] *Fischbach installation*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas on wood

[16] *Fischbach installation*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas on wood

5.

In 1970 Ohlson began a series of paintings that were a definitive break with the panel works of the late ‘60s. He was working then in an abandoned country church in upstate New York and had, for the first time, a virtual cathedral-sized space and did not have to produce large pictures by combining small canvases. Moreover he was living in an environment similar to the Iowa farmland where he grew up, similar at least in regard to open skies and the colors of nature.

The progression of the paintings produced over the next three years is one of the keys to Ohlson’s passion as an artist. Once he has exhausted to his satisfaction a theme, thesis or manner he posits a new one, often a seeming contradiction of its predecessors but, upon closer inspection, more likely a shift to a different angle on his central concern: color and its exposition.

“Nodes,” 1970 (Plate 17) may have arisen from studying his own gestalt-like panels with their small, neat squares of modified color sometimes bouncing through the aforementioned eye-travel. Here, of course, the neatness and geometry are gone, replaced with stained notations of colors in a random spatial order. The single field color is like that of the structure at Fischbach or perhaps even more like Matisse’s “Red Studio.” The hint of depth, the distancing of the planetary elements within the red field, as a result of the receding characteristic of some of the chosen colors, is really what brings life to the paintings.

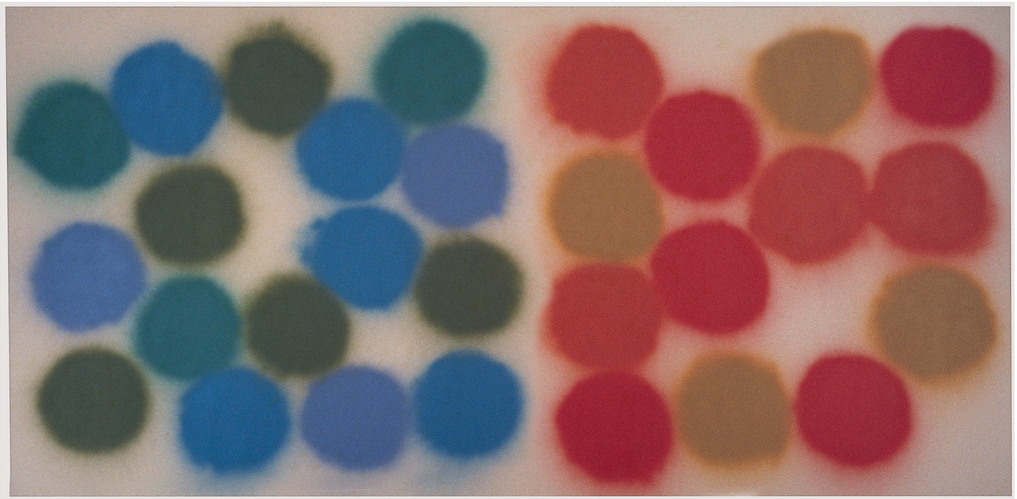
“Newcomb Pond,” 1970 (Plate 18), was one of the works done in the old church, as its 27-foot length would attest. This picture suggests that it was not just the smallness of his urban studio that forced him to create pictures in panels but that his real urge was to create broad horizontals. The fact that this painting is composed of four panel-like sections refers to, if anything, the serial altar-piece predellas of the 15th century by Giovanni di Paoli or the Master of the Osservanza, wherein successive panels of a saint’s life become color plates that cohere in the mind and in essence become one painting. There are late Ohlsons that use compositional strategies that appear directly related to these early Italian predellas.

Though Ohlson has not confined himself to it, the broad horizontal has been one of his major preoccupations ever since “Vinca” (Plate 12) and “Newcomb Pond” (Plate 18). For instance, “Duo” (Plate 19) finds him testing the possibilities of organizing a horizontal format with two distinct halves which avoid symmetry but hold their own in equilibrium through the nature of their colors. Ohlson here accepts the classic evaluation of such colors as red (aggressive) and blue (recessive). It is notable that the “nodes,” more like halos in the red half, have been growing increasingly soak-stained into the natural absorbency of raw, rather than sized, canvas.

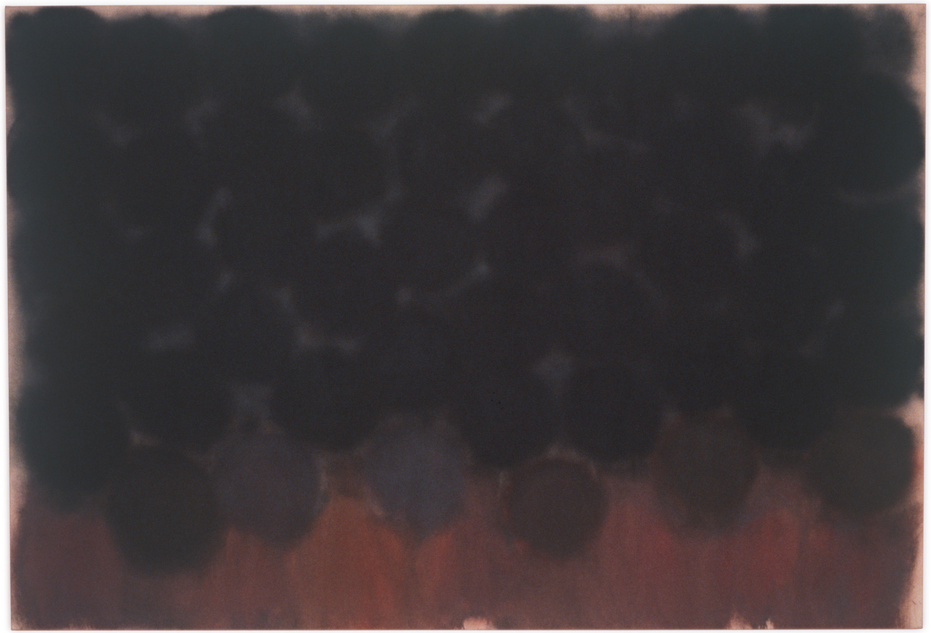
In “Djed,” 1972 (Plate 21), and “Melt,” 1973 (Plate 22), the circular stains begin to flow into each other in earnest, reducing themselves into subliminal traces of forms until with “Davy’s,” 1973 (Plate 23), the mist of tints takes over completely. At this point Ohlson makes a grand and bold gesture. Almost doubling the size of his canvas, he virtually expunges the circles and lets the canvas play its own role as part and parcel of the presentation. “Yellow,” 1974 (Plate 25), was the last major work in this sequence, probably because, as always, Ohlson felt that he had exhausted that territory and was ready to search for new grounds.

[17] *Nodes*, 1970. Enamel and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 110"

[18] *Newcomb Pond*, 1970. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 6 x 27'



[19] *Duo*, 1971. Oil on canvas, 66x138"



[20] *Called Well*, 1972. Oil on canvas, 90 x 132”

[21] *Djed*, 1972. Oil on canvas, 66 x 138”

[22] *Melt*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 84 x 90”

[23] *Davy's*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 72 x 157"

[24] *Big Slate*, 1974. Oil on canvas, 90 x 116". Collection Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Museum Purchase Fund (NEA) with matching funds from Mr. & Mrs. Miles Q. Fiterman

[25] *Yellow*, 1974. Oil on canvas, 7'6 x 21'5"

6.

Ohlson started a new phase more or less in the way he had before, with a refreshed look at the properties of color and the medium in which they are made. In “Rose” and “Flamingo,” both 1975 (Plates 26 and 27), he had simply worked a single tone into the canvas the same way he had applied the medium in “Yellow” (Plate 25), thinly and canvas-revealing. Handsome and almost fragrant in their appeal. But identifying one’s colors by a name projected an overly limited future.

One must assume that Ohlson was seeking something other than competition with Barnett Newman’s large, mostly single color works of the early 1950s. Newman had sought to identify each basic, full-field color by a relatively simple means. His huge vertical “Day Before One” was a midnight blue with slightly darker blue borders on top and bottom, and his “Day One” was a sunlight orange vertical with yellow edges. In his horizontal masterpiece, “Vir Heroicus Sublimis,” he used very narrow stripes of the primaries, each mixed with the basic vermillion plus a pure white. Newman was giving his color field an exact identity by playing it off against admixtures of itself. Ohlson, of course, knew all this (as well as Newman personally), and so moved on quickly to solve the problem in another way.

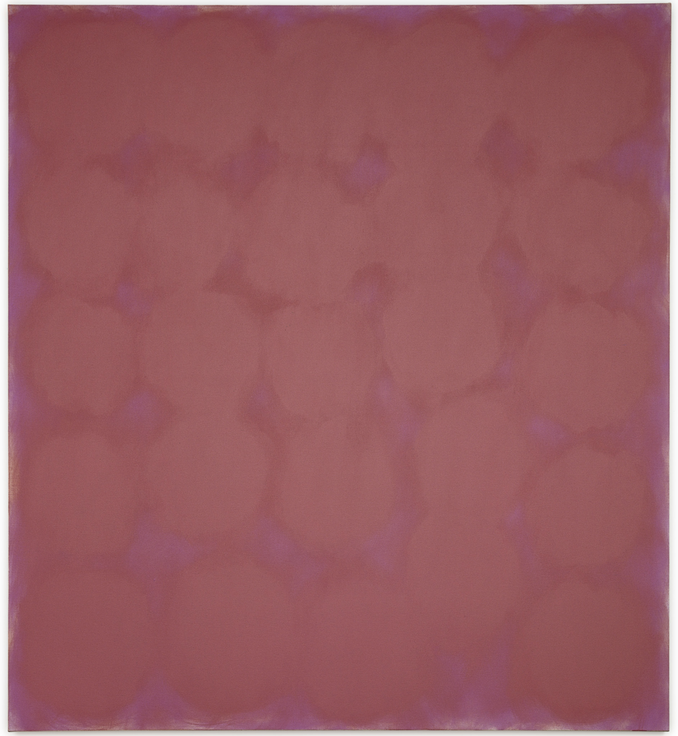
The patchy perimeters of “High/Low,” 1976 (Plate 28), tell the Ohlson story in the matter of color identification. Colors, he now begins to say, are not identified by names but only by what they are, colors. Colors precede language. “High/Low” starts with a warm ochre that establishes its desire to be recognized in the realm of sensuous experience. But what is this particular ochre’s precise projection of the artist’s mood at the time? In the vocabulary of color only his

choices of other colors can tell us. On the other hand, this Ohlson painting is no color chart. Every choice of subsequent colors, as Matisse so firmly pointed out, will change not only the initial ochre but also the whole succession of tones as others are added. What makes “High/Low” so sensuously affective is Ohlson’s decision to stick to low-key close values as surround the ochre with pale blues, violets, and orangey red, and even a slight touch of weak green. Now, though the ochre initiated the succession of tones, it is no longer just an ochre but a specifically identified ochre. It is the remarkable flow between the colors as they deliver their individual messages that makes “High/Low” such a pleasure to contemplate.

Over the next year or two the swatches of color in the perimeter are elongated and, especially in the horizontal paintings, are more area-defining and consequently more self-defining, achieving an equal role in the composition of the final character of the painting. From “Open Hand,” 1976-77 (Plate 29), to “Untitled, P-112” 1977 (Plate 32), the shift from a base color (like the ochre in “High/Low”) to a featured central light mauve is notable, but the painting is still held together by an underlying tone of a rosier mauve that stretches behind all the others. This affirmation at the perimeter of the wholeness of the canvas image is carried forward into the ‘80s. In “Four Corners”, 1978 (Plate 33), it is again the perimeter area that ties the image together, but now the job has been assigned to more than one color and the inner/outer depth of the field is totally dependent on color alone. Curiously, there is a connection to early cubist drawing in the way some of the juxtaposed tones thrust opposite sides of the square panels backward or forward, activating an indeterminate space.

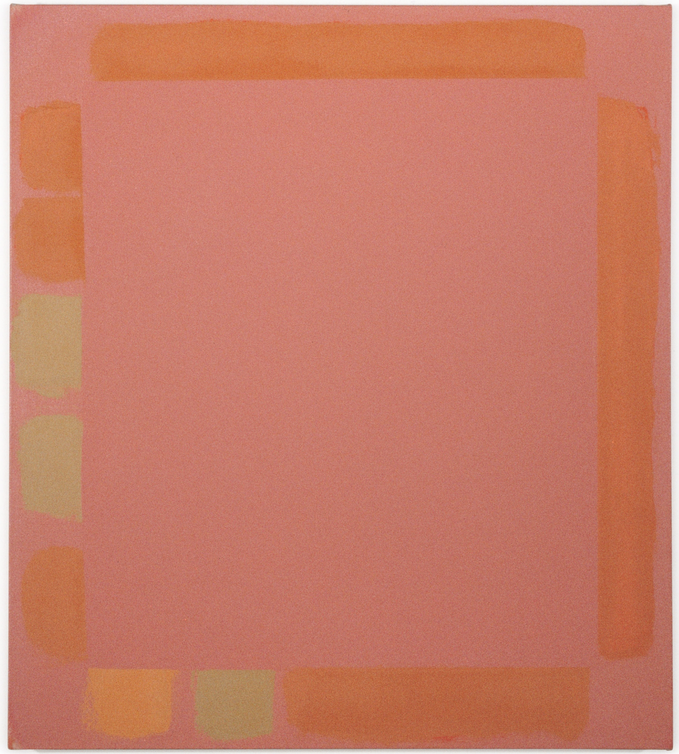
The same kind of opening and closing of space, á la Stuart Davis in “Colonial Cubism,” for example, appears again in “Cadence,” 1978-79 (Plate 34), in “Joseph’s Painting,” 1980 ( Plate 36), and in “Ice Blue,” 1981 (Plate 38). In these latter instances Ohlson has also introduced verticals that serve as internal binding units as well as elements of color. In “Cadence” these are used in partnership with the perimeter binding units. Indeed, the division of this picture into equal halves is hardly perceptible. “Cadence” also suggests that Ohlson has had memories of the paintings in the Villa of Mysteries at Pompeii where a single vermillion background together with overlapping figures sharply defined pictorial partitions, holding a whole, lengthy wall together.

[26] *Rose*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 56 x 54”

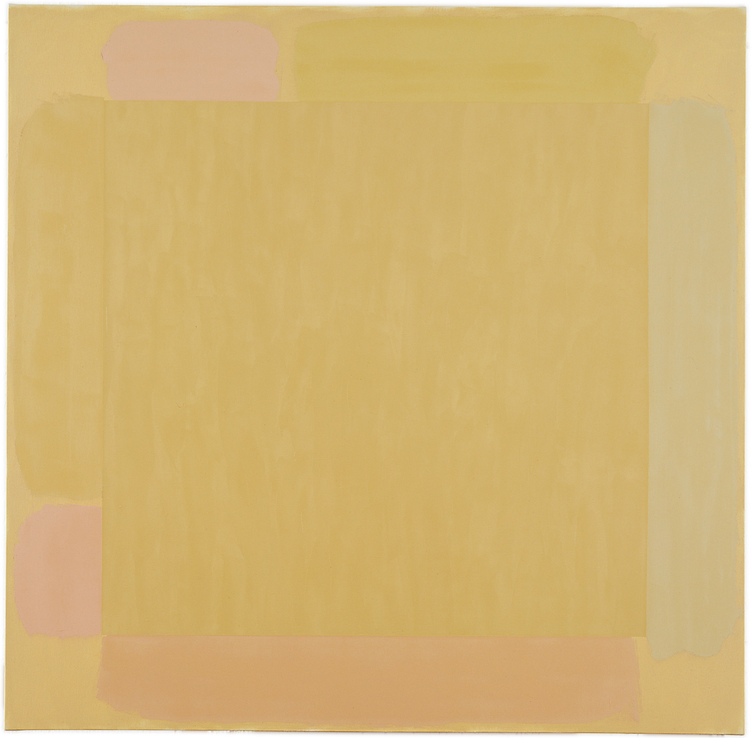


[27] *Flamingo*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 79 x 72”

[28] *High/Low*, 1976. Oil on canvas, 32 x 28"

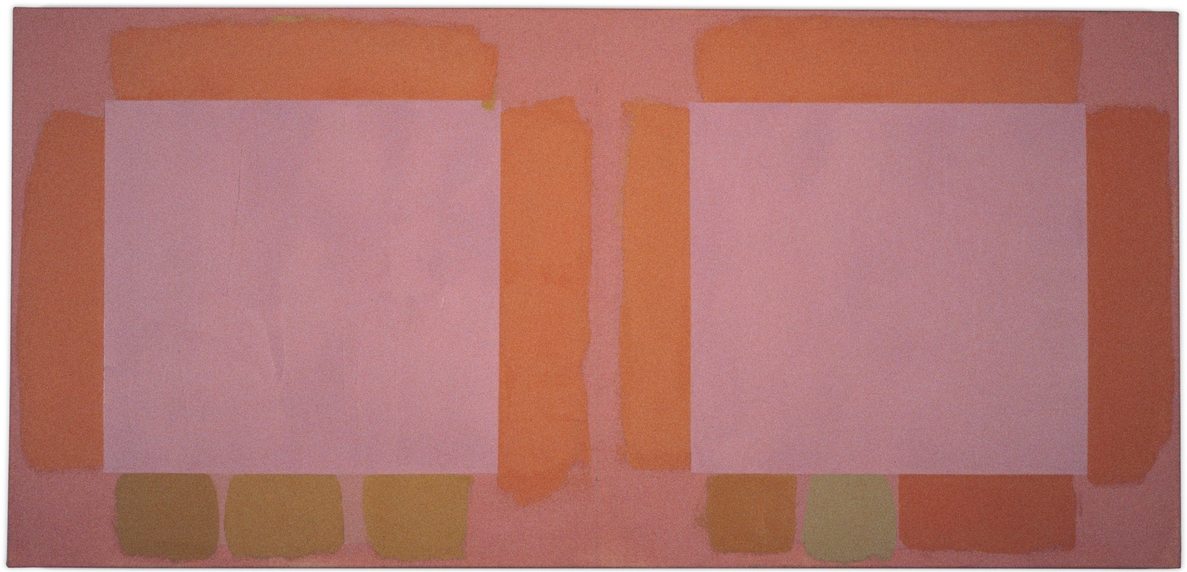


[29] *Open Hand*, 1976-77. Oil on canvas, 36 x 32"

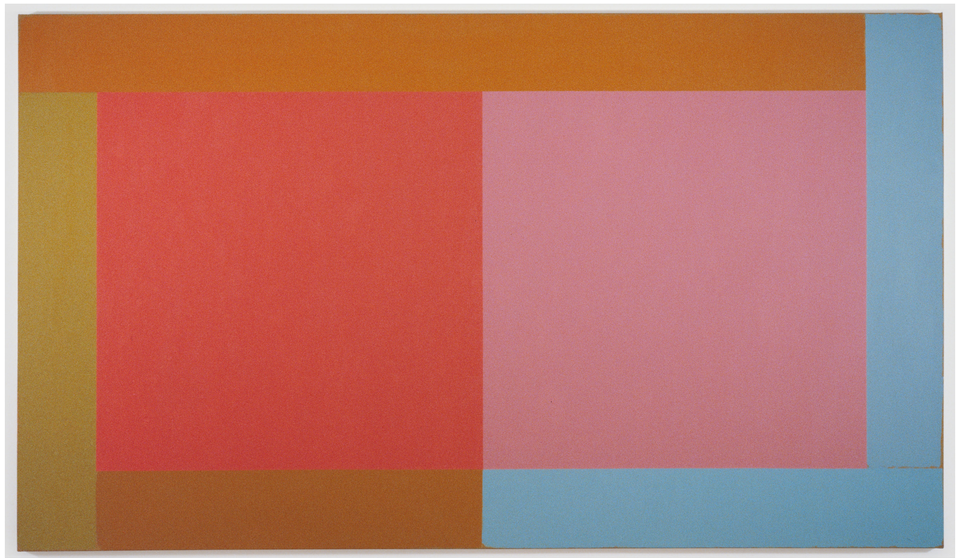


[30] *Abydos*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 69 x 69"

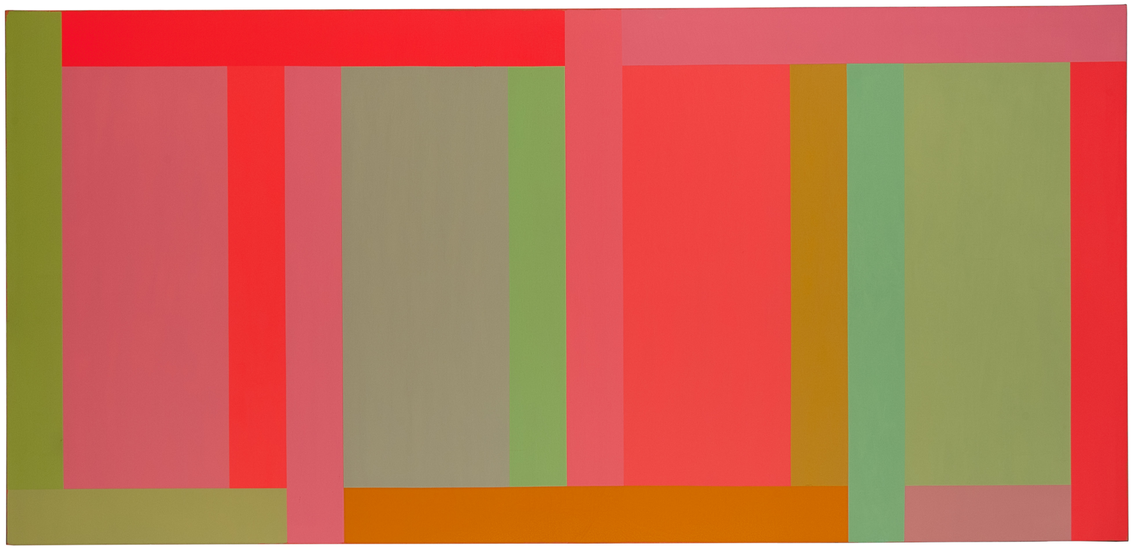
[31] *Again Helen*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 6 x 5'10'



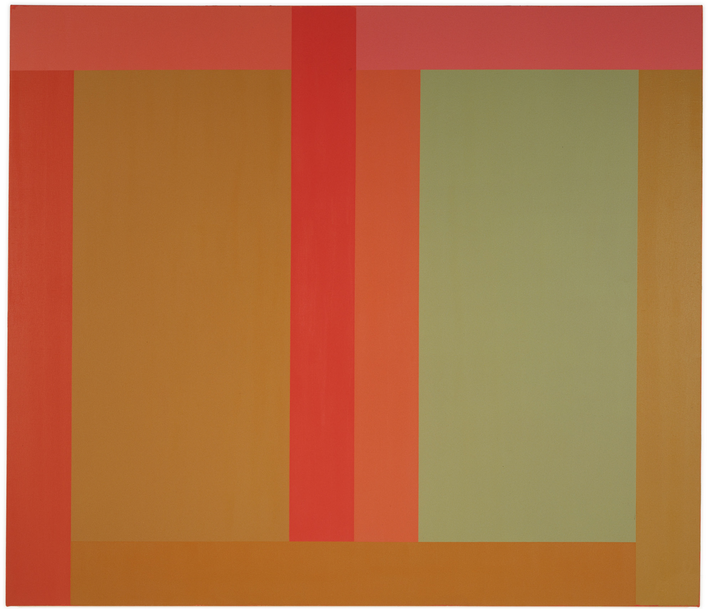
[32] *Untitled P-112*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 21 x 44”



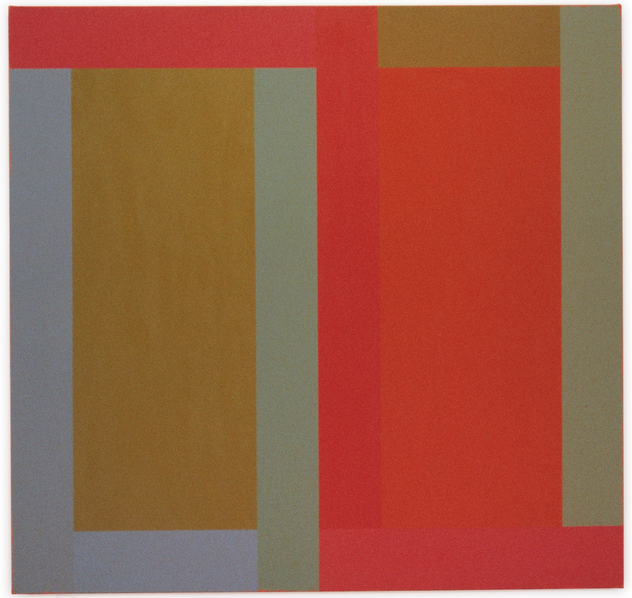
[33] *Four Corners*, 1978. Oil on canvas, 21 x 44”



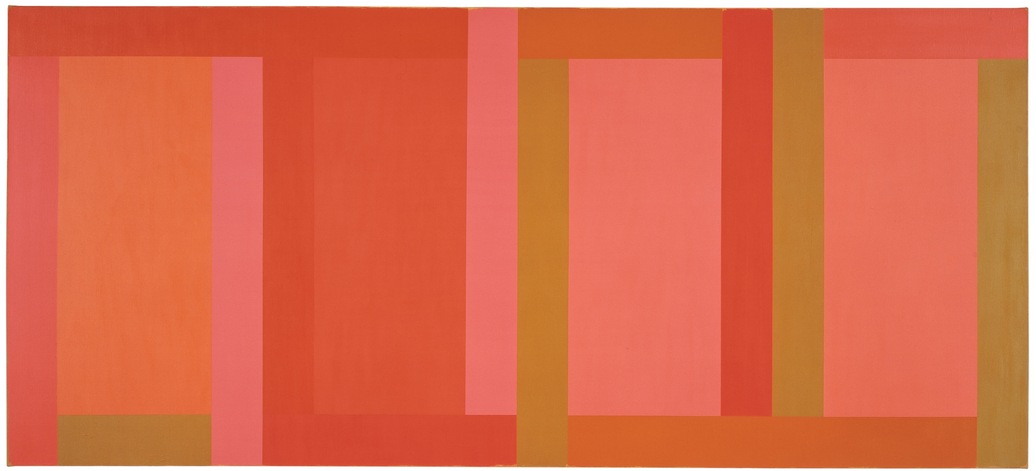
[34] *Cadence*, 1978-79. Oil on canvas, 66 x 138"



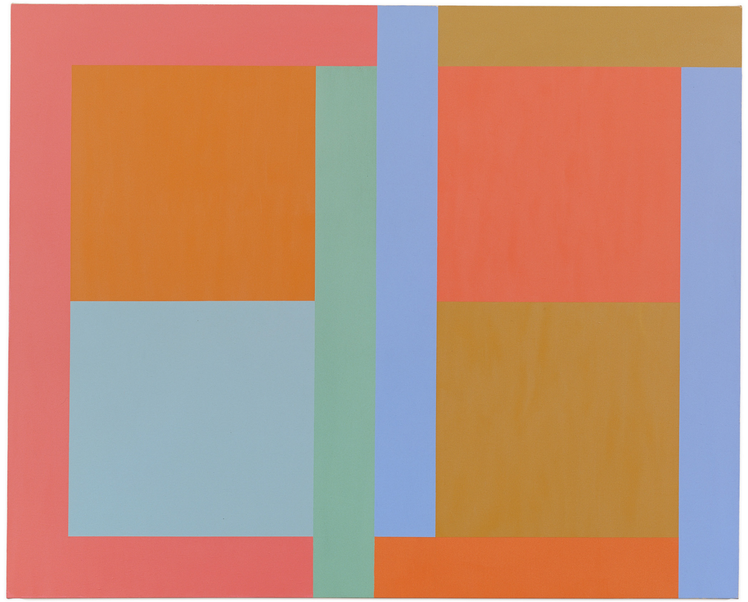
[35] *Hand Trembler*, 1978-9. Oil on canvas, 65 x 75"



[36] *Joseph's Painting*, 1980. Oil on canvas, 66 x 69"



[37] *Quartet*, 1980. Oil on canvas, 72 x 160"



[38] *Ice Blue*, 1981. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 69"

7.

## OHLSON AND CARAVAGGIO

"The story of modern painting is not that of a flight as such from the imitation of nature, but rather of the growing rejection of an illusion of the third dimension"
Clement Greenberg

The critic, Clement Greenberg, carried a great deal of weight with the painters of his day, the Abstract Expressionists. His concept that non-illusionistic “flatness” was the essential characteristic of advanced painting became the challenge and the burden of his period (1940-1960). For younger artists coming on in the ‘60s, the shadow of the previous generation lay heavy on them. To create pictures to serve “flatness is all,” the older painters had each devised a personal solution for making a picture that conformed to Greenberg’s dictum and yet avoided the purely decorative. The “second generation” followed suit: Frankenthaler identified the canvas surface by soaking her drawing and colors into it; Ellsworth Kelly placed emphasis on the distinctive shapes of his single-area colors; Jasper Johns chose flags, maps, and other flat subjects. But the catalogue of devices grew thinner and options harder to find. Many artists moved back to neo-realism or toward sculpture. A few others, like Ohlson, were determined to keep the art of painting alive.

Until 1981 Ohlson had not used black as a color among colors. In that year he made a trip to Rome where he came into contact with a number of paintings by Caravaggio that proved to be a revelation for him.

Caravaggio is considered by many to be the father of Naturalism and thus a revolutionary in his departure from the Classicism and the Mannerism of the preceding dominant styles. Caravaggio painted mainly scenes from the New Testament, but he converted the conventional gradient modeling of figures and objects to sharp transitions from light to dark. And he chose ordinary Italians as models. For these latter practices he was vilified by some, ignored by others, but later imitated by many and so changed the stylistic history of art.

Treating all things in his pictures as real, including color, Caravaggio’s black was more than a symbol of shadow and darkness. But to match its power as a color he had to create an equally powerful selection of simple, basic hues: red, green, blue, yellow, ochre, and brown. And although he used white occasionally as light reflecting off metallic surfaces, it appears as a true color in tablecloths and shirt-stuffs. Caravaggio’s strong contrasts of light and dark and of colors to each other are a major part of the success of his Naturalism, making it sing loud and clear.

Ohlson, always alert for keys to his problems, was drawn to Caravaggio’s "color and facture.” He especially recalls “The Conversion of St. Paul,” c. 1601, in Santa Maria del Popolo, a picture of extraordinary boldness in both treatment and composition. It looks like a modern news photo of an event that happened last night. This shift into a new use of space, one beginning at the forefront of the canvas and extending only a few believable feet into an illusion of depth,

is the Italian's signature. By this means Caravaggio created a sense of immediacy and reality far more convincing than the conventional deep and infinite spaces of Renaissance practice.

Work done after his trip to Italy in 1981 shows there was an even deeper reading of Caravaggio's painting than perhaps Ohlson realized at the time. This has to do with the Italian's "box of space," which occurs in most of his later works and is perhaps best demonstrated in his "Supper at Emmaus," 1602 now in the National Gallery in London.

The setting of the "Supper" is at a dinner table where the resurrected Christ has appeared but is not yet recognized by Peter and his fellow disciples. The conversation is animated; two figures reach arms straight out at the spectator, far enough to touch an invisible plane coincident with the back of the forward figure. The area behind the active scene purposely challenges the plane of the canvas by avoiding deeper perspectival illusions. In other pictures, such as "The Calling of St. Matthew," Caravaggio used extended arm gestures horizontally to control the dimension of the "box" without invoking single-point perspective or an interior wall. And a great part of this control lay in the scenic action itself.

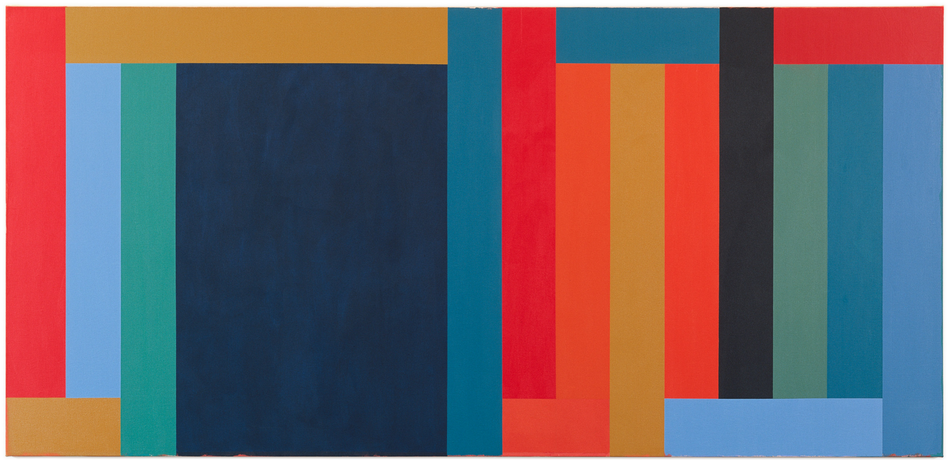
Until 1981, Ohlson had controlled the implied space in his work through the forward and backward optical effects of colors and the overlapping of differing color planes, the subtleties of which were often at risk of the decorative. That Caravaggio the Naturalist should have given Ohlson the Abstractionist a suggestion as to how the latter might pursue his goal to further enrich his painting indicates how much the underlying tradition in art is effective. Art inches forward by making new connections with its past, not by breaking with it. Indeed there are no revolutions in art, but there is evolution. What appear to be revolutions are simply recompositions of previous practices.

*The Conversion of St. Paul*, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Caravaggio, 1600

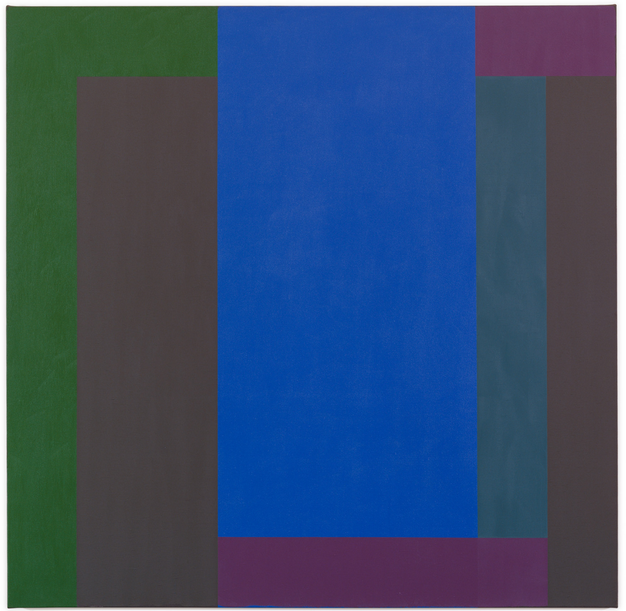
8.

Ohlson's first response to his Caravaggio experience, as noted prior, was to the colors, especially to the Italian's use of black. In his "Deep Pocket," 1981 (Plate 39), a dark, near-black blue holds the left side of the painting in a midnight mood while a true black appears on the right in a group of reds, yellows, and lighter blues, stabilizing the horizontal surface, which is bonded by the overlapping repeats of the richness of black. Darkness opens up a whole new range of possibilities for Ohlson.

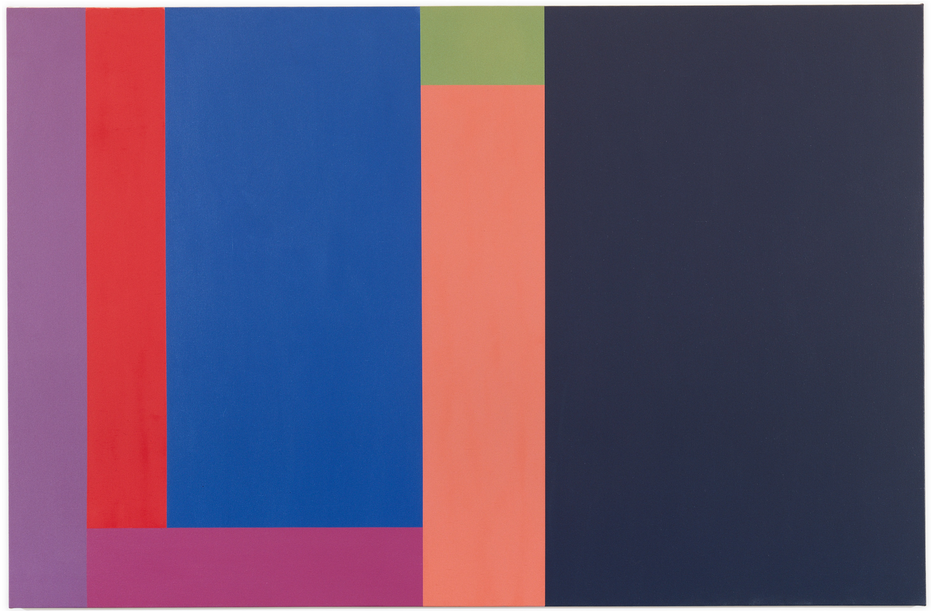
"Double Future," 1982 (Plate 41), is a bolder integration of pure black into a simple opposition of it to other colors. By "Cadman's Blue," 1982 (Plate 44), he has truly begun to push out into new territory. After absorbing the broad and brooding nighttime colors, one notices the brushed, light-revealing edges of the vertical rectangles and the broken horizontal bonds across the top. This picture is no casual "painterly" expressionistic effort, however; it is emotion-packed, certainly, but constructed with the accumulated taste and discipline of a seasoned hand and eye.



[39] *Deep Pocket*, 1981. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 138"

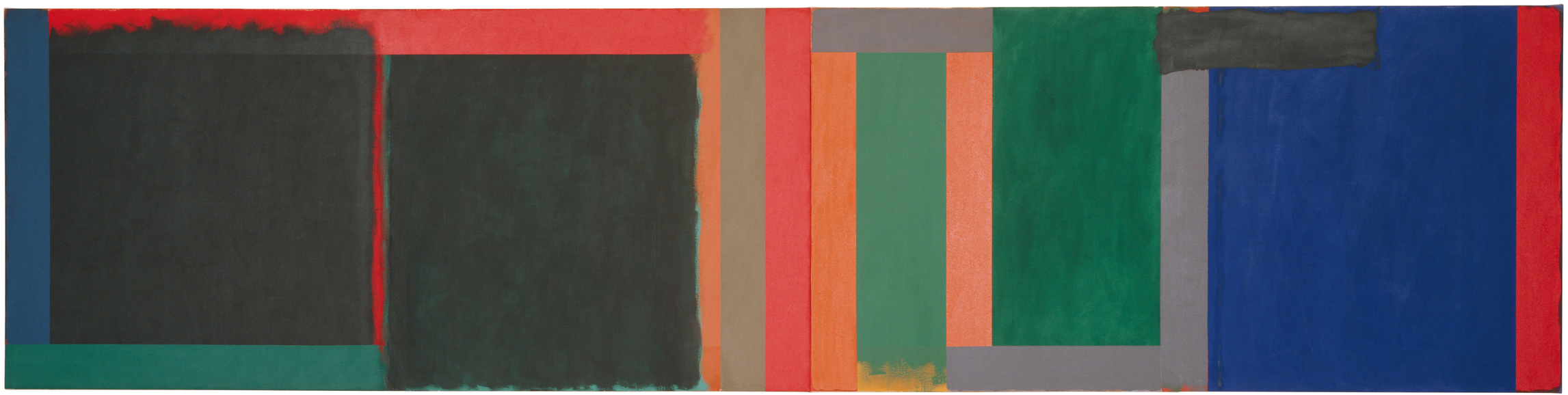


[40] *Middle Zone*, 1981-82. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 65 x 65"



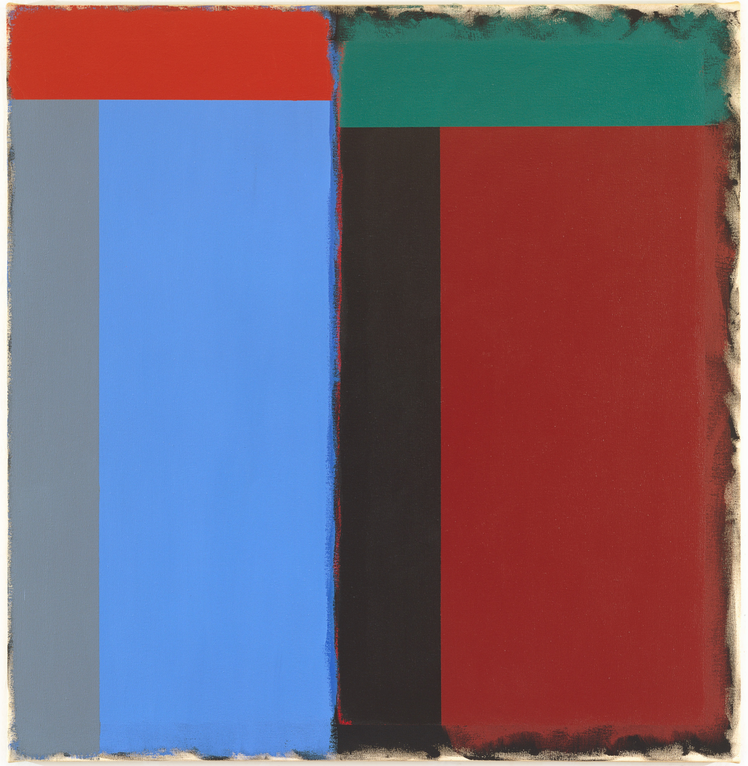
[41] *Double Future*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 7 x 14’8”

[42] *Thought Pocket*, 1982. Acrylic on canvas, 5’6” x 8’6”



*Second Wind*, 1982. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 68 x 276”

[44] *Cadman's Blue*, 1982. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 7 x 14'8"



[45] *Stem*, 1984. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60"

9.

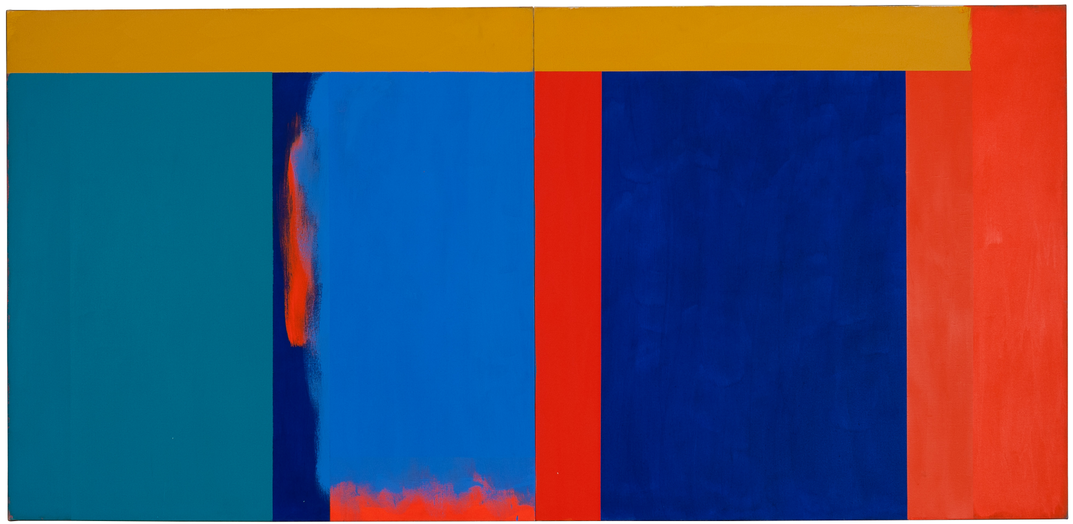
Ohlson had long since mastered opaque hues as such. Now he opened the seams between them letting air into some of them by manipulating the density of the surface. In “Toucan,” (Plate 46) 1982, he not only pits the worked panels of color against the opaque ones but also develops an overlap of brushed blue and a free-flying dash of crimson into a neat vertical of black. This new spatial excursion is not deep. Things float in an area defined by the forward layers of bright color and the somber colors behind. He has thus subtly created his own “box of space” and a whole new context for his kind of color painting.

Ohlson’s transition from a cool, flat, hard-edged style to a denser, space-enriched approach was more than fortuitous. The years of coping with the presentation of colors dependent mainly on their optical qualities to differentiate their spatial relations to each other now paid off in many ways. As he introduced a dialogue between the optical and the sensual it enabled him to reach a kind of authentic space for color painting, which was more than the symbolism of, say, the paired neat and fuzzy strips in Barnett Newman’s works of the early ‘50s.

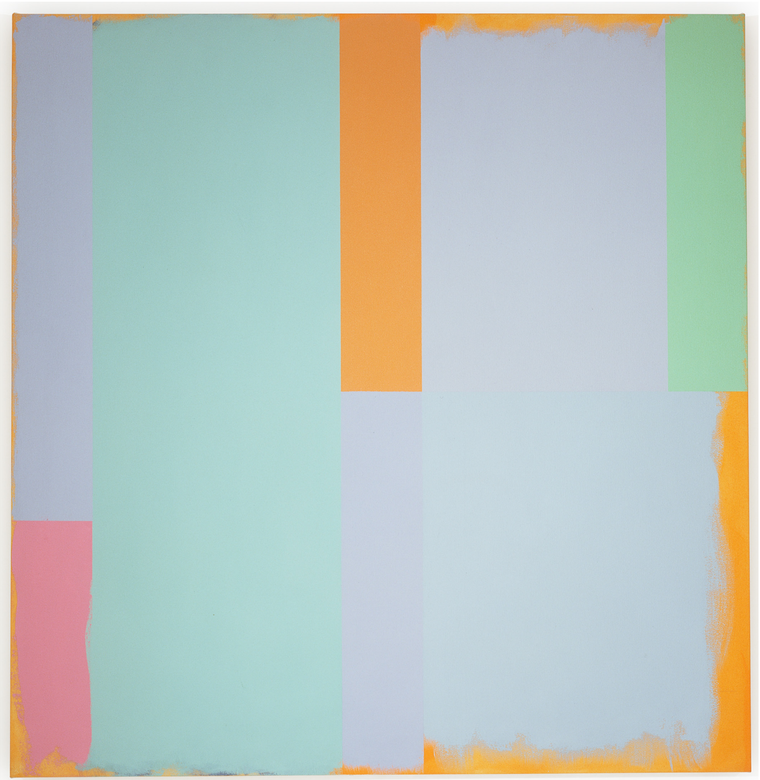
Ohlson was, indeed, escaping from Minimalism and reviving the larger volume of experiences available in the amplitude of 17th–century art. He was building for himself another room to work in rather than, as Newman had, creating final statements. Ohlson is closer to Rubens and Caravaggio than to most of his contemporaries; he is a painter, not a theoretician.

After “Toucan,” large geometric panels of opaque color are rarer and eventually disappear altogether, replaced by more painterly sections. Elongated solid color panels remain, however, since they are necessary to the spatial dialogue. They are, of course, the secret to the most forward affirmation of the canvas plane in physical rather than optical terms.

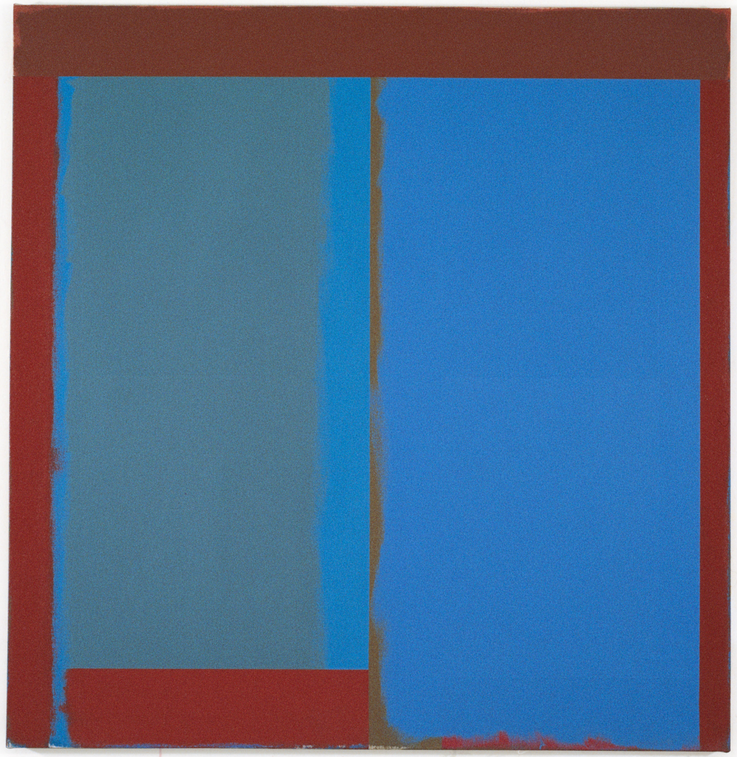
With “Kingfisher,” 1984 (Plate 48), Ohlson confirms that he has truly entered a new phase. In this painting the uneven scumbling at the center, where the brighter blue is broken into by an underlying ochre and the same blue is picked up again at far left produces the exact amount of space that allows the picture to quietly breathe. And while the blue areas seem to jut forward from the surrounding red, a flat rectangle of the same red at the bottom left pushes everything behind it and keeps it all under control, very much like the back of the figure in Caravaggio’s “Supper at Emmaus.” In “Gilt,” 1984 (Plate 49), a counterpart to “Kingfisher,” similar means are used to give and yet control depth and surface.



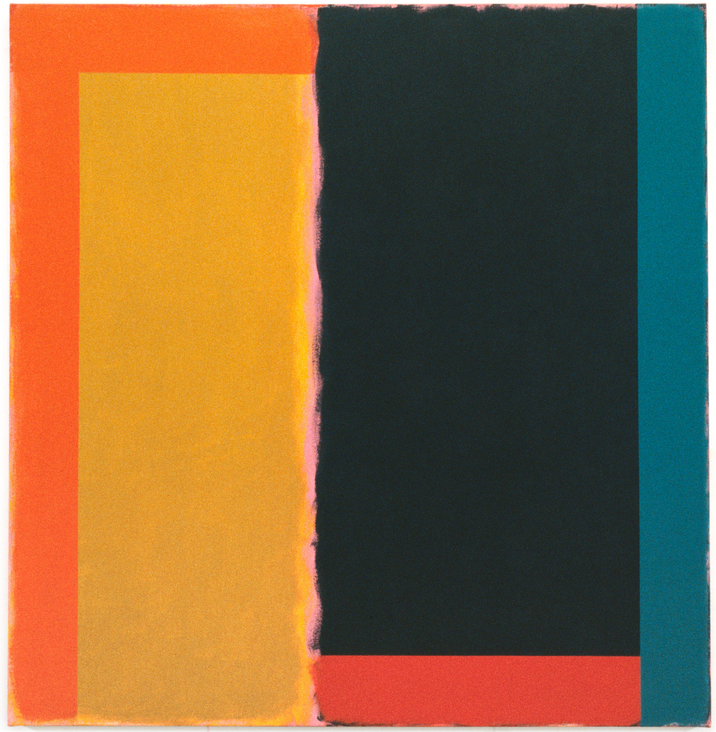
[46] *Toucan*, 1982. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 5 x 10'4''



[47] *Untilted*, 1983. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 69''



[48] *Kingfisher*, 1984. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60”



[49] *Gilt*, 1984. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60”

10.

A large number of Ohlson paintings are horizontals, a format he has made peculiarly his own. They are, nevertheless, related less to their usual association with landscape than they are to his frequent predilection for the square. It is the play-off from one side to the other that seems to attract him, to energize and challenge his talent. Of course, none of the basic formats conform slavishly to the square as such, and small variants here and there abide. And though he does not indulge the overlapping human figure as the Pompeiian artists did in their break-up of the long wall into rectangular units with pictured black columns, there is a similarity in terms of interwoven elements.

The usefulness of an underlying order against which he plays his colors in their variable verticals and horizontals brings a satisfying animation to our experience. There is a normal optical response to a horizontal painting which is to divide it in two equal halves corresponding, perhaps, to our eyes and arms. In his "New Mexico," 1986 (Plate 52), Ohlson meets that expectancy head on and uses it to reinforce the weight of a huge black with five other brilliant colors. In "Bridgehampton," 1988, (Plate 54), several pastel colors quite differently meld themselves into one harmonic field and allay our tendency to divide them.

"Spirit Lake," 1990 (Plate 59), transcends the more overt solutions of the two preceding pictures, adding a mood and drama that in recent years Ohlson has begun to reach for (and succeed in getting). His binding of the unequal parts with the opaque red vertical makes sure the picture does not sag inward at the center. The far left introduction of a pale translucent green illuminating the beneficent blue's edge prevents it from fading into meaningless space.

At the same time that he was producing a good number of horizontals, he also made some compact, squarish pictures in which he used a brushed staining technique over the whole surface. Upon this spatially ambiguous and amorphous beginning, where raw canvas is left at certain edges, he laid his flatly painted rectangles in discreet positions to establish the foremost plane and thus the space within which the “action” occurs. “Round Robin,” 1987 (Plate 53), “Falcon,” and “Raven,’” both of 1988 (Plates 56 and 57), all fall into this technical category, each presenting its own characteristics and mood.

“Med,” 1989 (Plate 58), shows the degree to which Ohlson can create space, activate, and complicate it with his simple units of color. Who might have guessed that by floating four flat pieces of red, blue, and orange, perfectly scaled and distributed, such a three-dimensional result could and would occur? This, of course, happening in conjunction with a highly charged back-drop of golden light shifting to forest darkness. A similar process is at work in “Untitled,” 1988 (Plate 55), where languid pink and blue are made to respond with gumption to an intense black.

The remarkable range Ohlson has developed has become even more evident in the ‘90s. One has only to look quickly at “Sentinels,” 1991 (Plate 60), and “Brothers,” 1992 (Plate 62), two serious pictures but each in its own way, where the role of black is constituent in the first and dominant in the second. And again in two versions of a theme, reminding us of the columnar interruptions in the Villa of Mysteries murals, “Cat Eyes” and “Black Cat,” both 1993 (Plates 63 and 65). Significantly, the green edging is brushed, lighter in the horizontal treatment but in both instances responsible for a shaped-canvas effect at the left base. Here one can make a choice in preference.

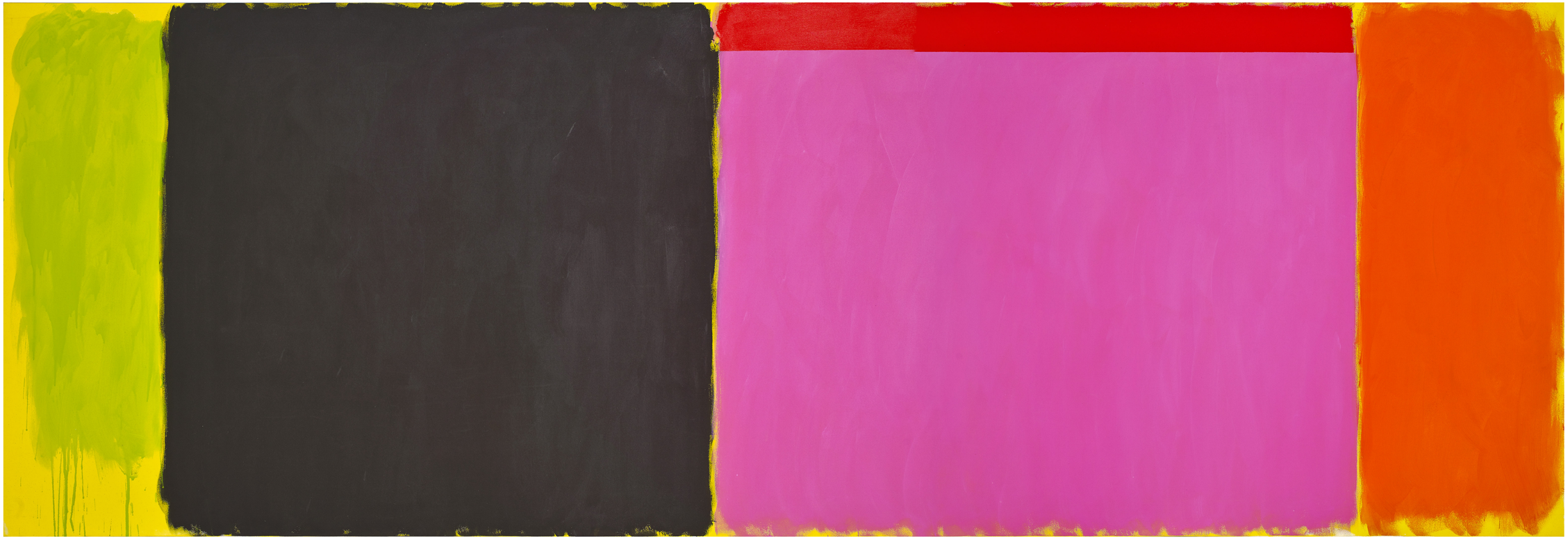
Another comparison allows a different kind of choice if one cares to make it. “Peep Show,” 1993 (Plate 64), and “5-/50,” 1993 (Plate 66), comparable in size but not in kind, demonstrate the vast gap between one sensibility and another. “Peep Show,” as its name implies, plays with quickly perceived spaces, while “50/50” uses its spatial references only as low-key visual referrals across the field; the flat, hard-edged red rectangle meets the challenge of the forceful black area, unrelentingly putting it in its place, while the gray is gently limned by brushed red. Meanwhile, the gray superimposed on black and the black superimposed on gray at the bottom state strongly the spatial ambiguity of each.

By 1994 Ohlson had again stretched the possibilities of his accumulated knowledge of how to bind colors to the surface and at the same time move them quietly back and forth within an acceptable but limited space. “Way of All Flesh,” 1994 (Plate 67), is a horizontal divided into three vertical plots that play paled hues against slightly stronger versions of themselves or their complementaries. The slenderness of these vertical areas, which appear also in “Nemesis,” 1995 (Plate 68), is a new rhythm in his horizontals that began with “Sentinels,” 1991, (Plate 60), though there are certainly precedents in the separated panel pictures of 1969-70. Here, of course, there is a broad rectangle within which the divisions function like the figures in the Byzantine mosaics of the 6th century, where the eye sees both the group and the distinctive individual portraits of Theodora and her attendants.

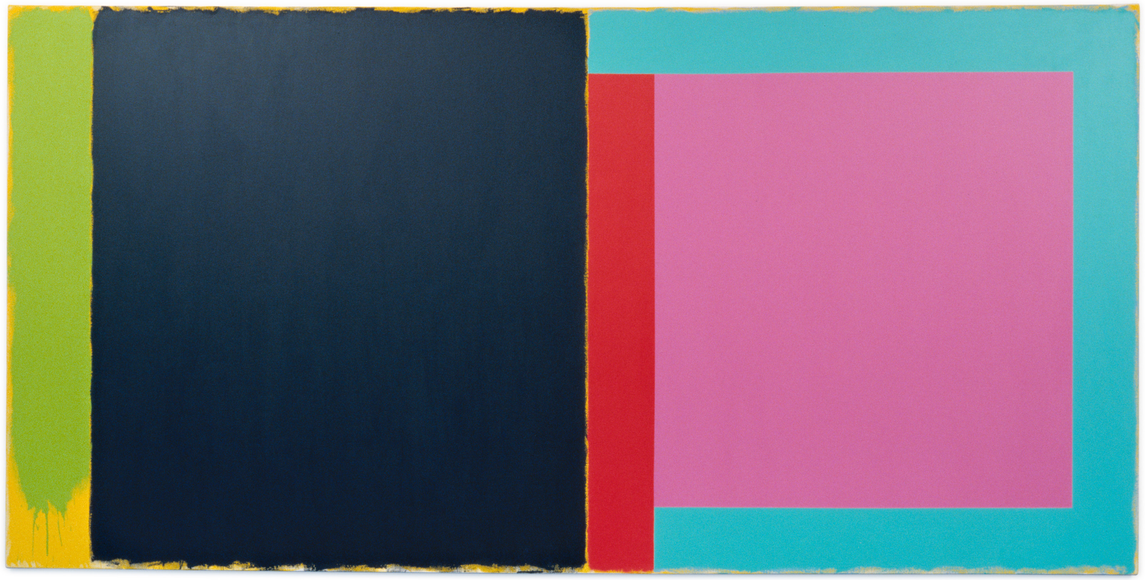
“Medley,” 1995 (Plate 69), shows how Ohlson can take a new and ambiguous structural approach and enlarge it by changing his sensual and emotional projections through color. This painting may have an additional vertical section than its predecessor, but it expands the format from a trinity to a divisible field. Three cannot split in half without self-destruction, while four elements can easily break into two equal parts, Ohlson seems to like this balancing act and usually pulls it off. Here he is trusting the viewer’s visual memory to follow the plentiful green left of center and see it stand for itself as an equalizing force in two slim stripes on the right. The bright, light blues that give the work its zing, like the green and yellows, are actually picked up and out of the background, where they are nearly obscured, and laid open in the foreground. The most amazing (and intriguing) thing about this work is that the non-aggressive green “panel” becomes a main feature and carries the whole painting despite the piquant hues.

In “Nemesis,” 1994-95 (Plate 68), also with four vertical divisions, he is revamping earlier and recent uses of truly powerful colors. Taken as a statement without closer inspection one might feel that the two blacks and the hot red are too much for the pink, but when he puts one black in its place with the hard-edged pink verticals and the other with a piece of the red across its top, the hard-edged pink verticals stand out like dawn after a difficult night. Indeed, Ohlson’s strategies often give colors meanings they perhaps have never had.

[50] *Germantown Red*, 1984. Acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60”

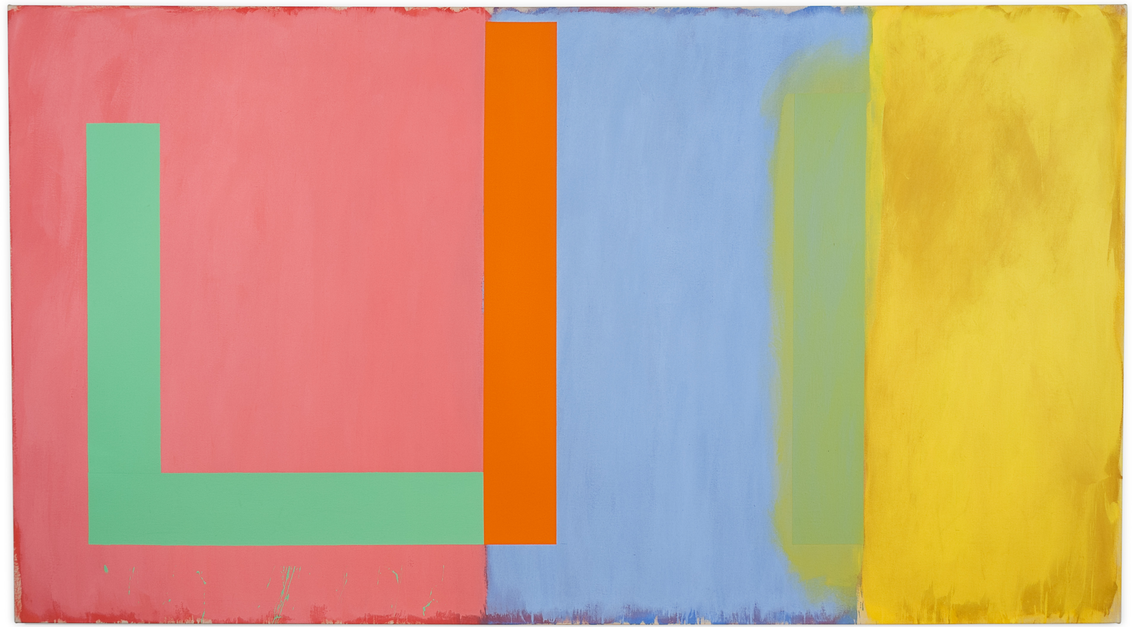


[51] *Mexico Set*, 1985. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 108”



[52] *New Mexico*, 1986. Acrylic on canvas, 60x120”

[53] *Round Robin*, 1987. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60”



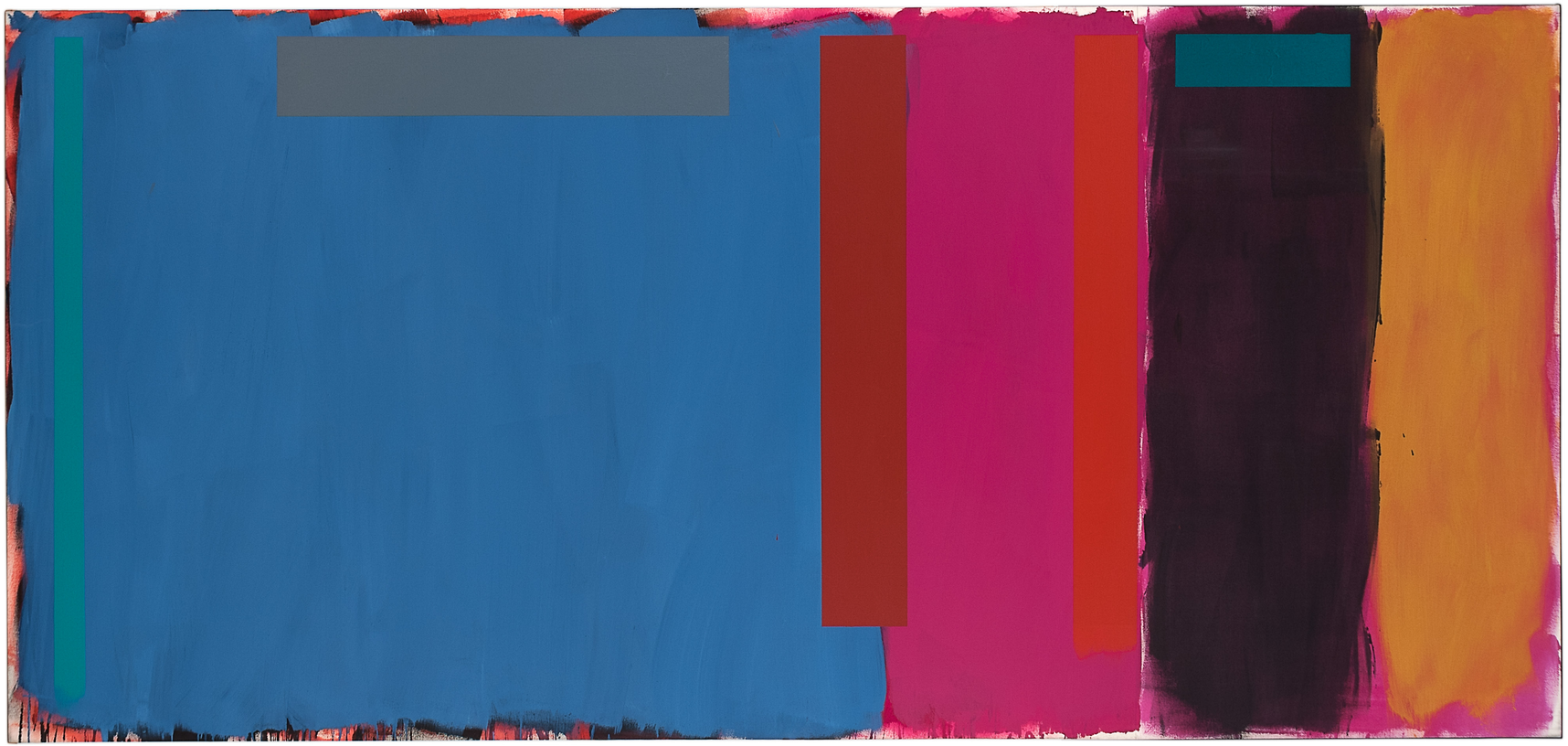
[54] *Bridgehampton*, 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 108”

[55] *St Bart's Type*, 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 36”

[56] *Falcon*, 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 64"

[57] *Raven*, 1988. Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 64"

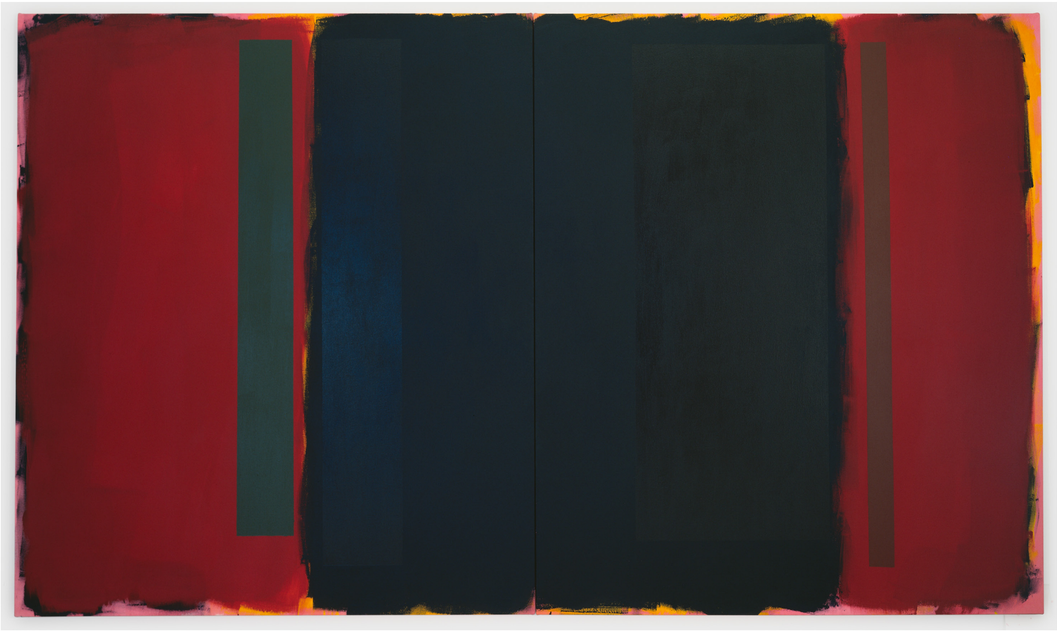
[58] *Med*, 1989. Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 78"



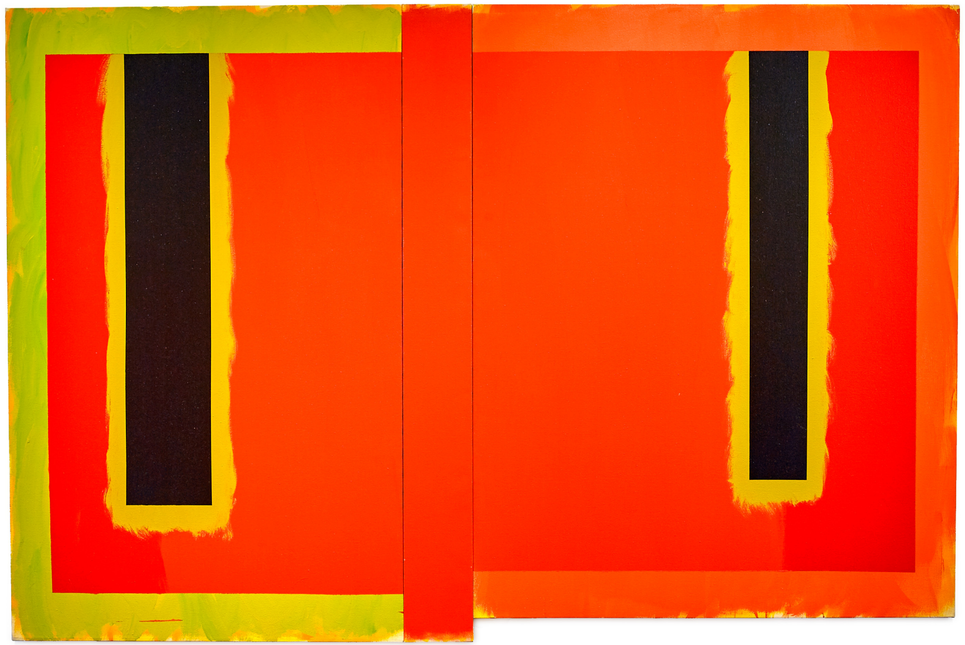
[59] *Spirit Lake*, 1990. Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 140”

[60] *Sentinels*, 1991. Acrylic on canvas, 74 x 108”

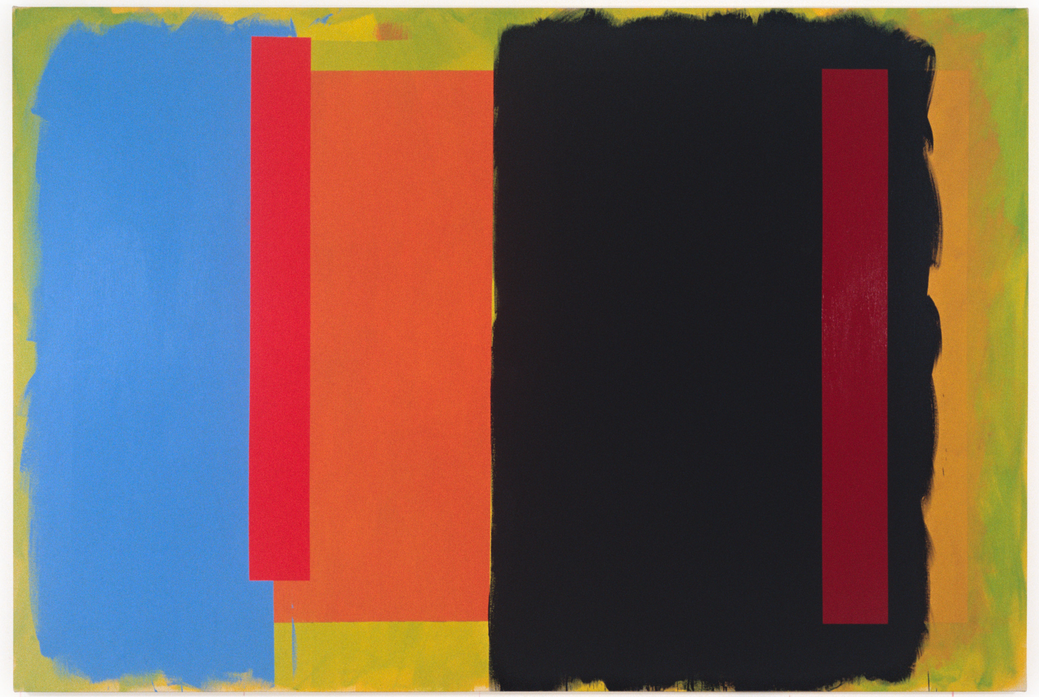
[61] *Ghost*, 1991. Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 76”



[62] *Brothers*, 1992. Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 134”

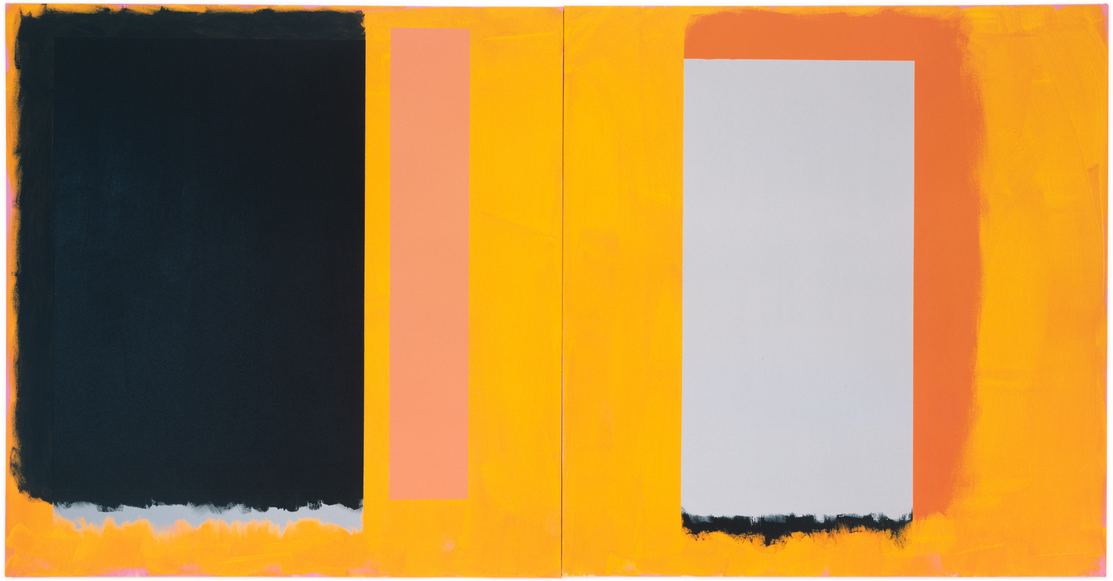


[63] *Cat Eyes*, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 110”

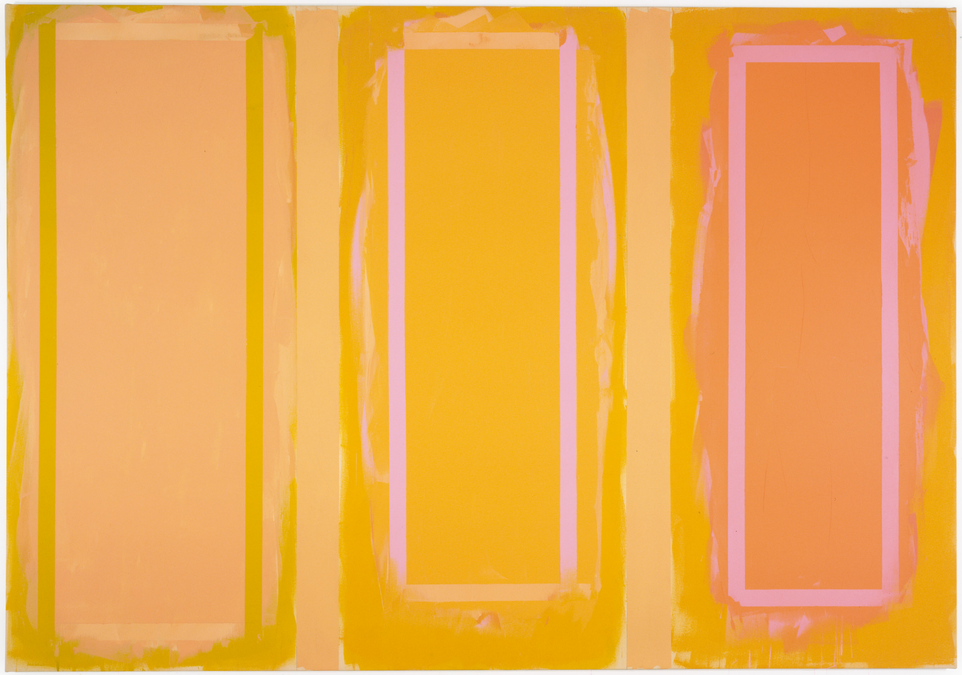


[64] *Peep Show*, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 76 x 114”

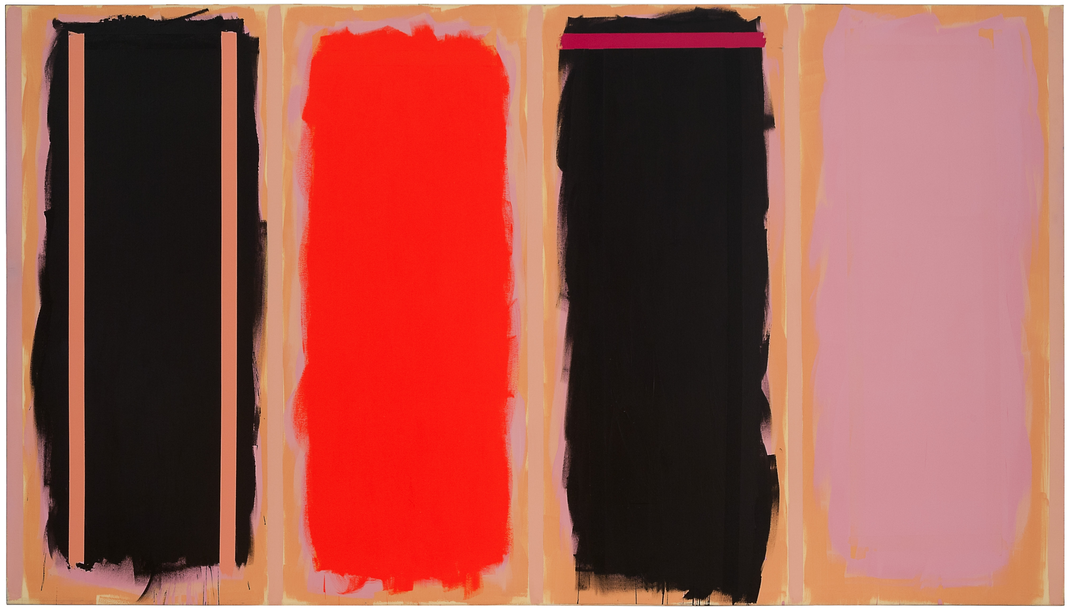
[65] *Black cat*, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 58"



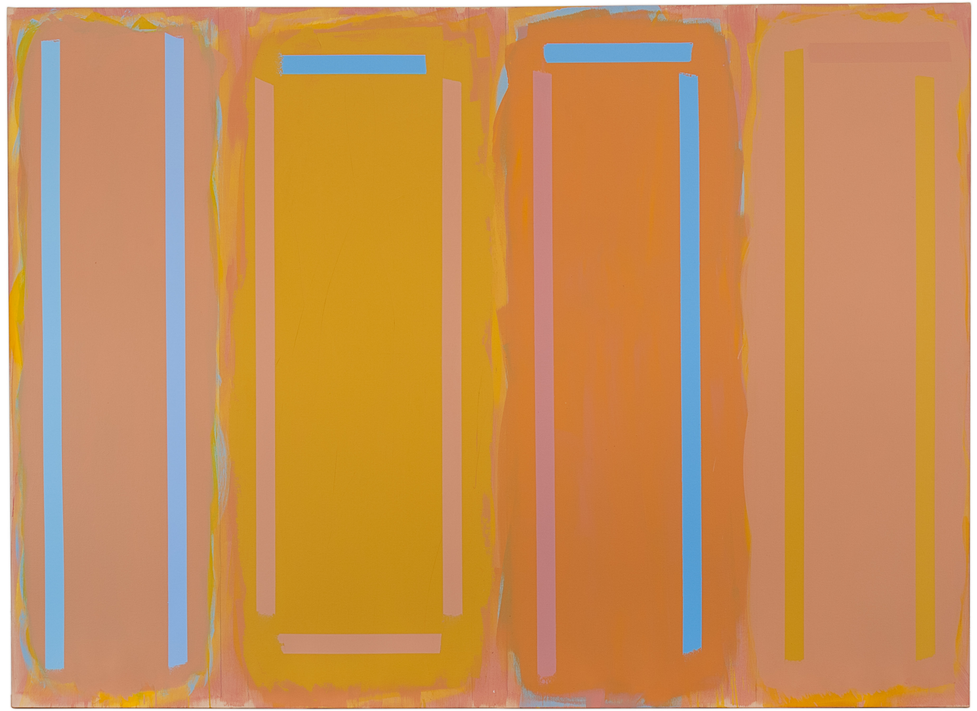
[66] *50/50*, 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 128”



[67 *Way of All Flesh*, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 112”



[68] *Nemesis*, 1994-95. Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 138”



[69] *Medley*, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 76 x 104”

11.
CONCLUSION

“We see cotton-ball clouds, violet clouds and clouds the setting sun has given the color of honey. Sometimes the sky overhead is radiant blue, the horizon inky. In front of a low and seething black cloud we see a line of trees sunlit to radioactive brilliance.”
Richard Wolkomir, on Great Plains Skies, Smithsonian Magazine October 1994

It may have been his discovery of Caravaggio’s black as a working color that brought a psychological third dimension to Ohlson’s work but it was the mastery resulting from three decades of perfecting the means that made it possible. And though there is no question of his sensitivity to all aspects of art and art history, there may be more self-distinguishing things that have given rise to his preoccupation with color as the core of his painting. While, for example, Caravaggio may have given him permission to use black, and the Modernists in general to indulge color as such, there is still his early life on the farm in Iowa to be considered.

No matter how much the above discussions of his progress may have delved into his methods and his means. Ohlson is not an intellectual artist. He is much more like Matisse: dedicated to making color come alive and speak for itself. He has accomplished this through his sensuous eye, trained in nature and nurtured in art.

**Catalogue of the Plates**

1 *Untitled*, 1959
acrylic on canvas, 36 x 30"
Private collection

2 *Untitled*, 1960
acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18"
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Halstrom, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

3 *Idea*, 1962
oil on canvas, 35 x 40"
Collection of the artist

4 *Helen*, 1963
acrylic on canvas, 83 x 96”
Collection of the artist

5 *Crosia*, 1963
acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36"

6 *Untitled*, 1964
acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60"
Albert Stadler, New York City

7 *Gemini*, 1965
acrylic on canvas, 44 x 96"
Collection of the artist

8 *Boaz*, 1965-66
acrylic on canvas, 65 x 108
Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C.

9 *Sparrow’s red rose*, 1966
acrylic on canvas, 68x 130
Collection of the artist

10 *Captain*,1966
acrylic on canvas, 86 x 90
Collection of the artist

11 *Seesaw*,1967
acrylic on canvas, 3 panels of 90 x 18 each
National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

12 *Vinca*, 1968
acrylic on canvas, 11 panels of 90 x 18 each
Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Chicago, Ill

13 *Adrian*, 1968
acrylic on canvas, 90 x 66
Mrs. Bayard T. Storey, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

14 *Fischbach installation*, 1969
acrylic on canvas on wood
Collection of the artist

15 *Fischbach installation*, 1969
acrylic on canvas on wood
Collection of the artist

16 *Fischbach installation*, 1969
acrylic on canvas on wood
Collection of the artist

17 *Nodes*,1970
enamel and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 110”
Patricia Johanson, Buskirk, New York

18 *Newcomb Pond*, 1970
oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 324”
Collection of the artist

19 *Duo*, 1971
oil on canvas, 66 x 138”
Collection of the artist

20 *Called Well*, 1972
oil on canvas, 90 x 132”
Susan Caldwell, New York City

21 *Djed*,1972
oil on canvas, 66 x 138”
University of Iowa

22 *Melt*, 1973
oil on canvas, 84 x 90”
Collection of the artist

23 *Davy’s*, 1973
oil on canvas, 72 x 157”
Private collection

24 *Big Slate*, 1974
oil on canvas 90 x 116”
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota

25 *Yellow*, 1974
oil on canvas, 90 x 257”
Collection of the artist

26 *Rose*, 1975
oil on canvas, 56 x 54”
Collection of the artist

27 *Flamingo*, 1975
oil on canvas, 79 x 72”
Collection of the artist

28 *High/Low*, 1976
oil on canvas, 32 x 28”
Collection of the artist

29 *Open Hand*, 1976-77
oil on canvas, 36 x 32”
Private collection

30 *Abydos*, 1977
oil on canvas, 69 x 69”
Richard Stapleford and Judith Herron, New York city

31 *Again Helen*, 1977
oil on canvas, 72 x 70”
Michael M. Thomsa, New York City

32 *Untitled P-112*, 1977
oil on canvas, 21 x 44”
Carter Ratcliff and Phyllis Derfner, New York

33 *Four Corners*, 1978
oil on canvas board, 21 x 44”
Mr. and Mrs. Seth Rosenberg, New York City

34 *Cadence*, 1978-79
oil on canvas board, 66 x 138”
Collection of the artist

35 *Hand trembler*, 1978-79
oil on canvas, 65 x 75”
Chase Manhattan Bank, New York City

36 *Joseph’s Painting*, 1980
oil on canvas, 66 x 69”
Private collection

37 *Quartet*, 1980
oil on canvas, 72 x 160”
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

38 *Ice Blue*, 1981
oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 69”
Brooklyn Museum, New York

39 *Deep pocket*, 1981
oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 138”
David Workman, Stamford, Connecticut

40 *Middle Zone*, 1981-82
oil and acrylic on canvas, 65 x 65”
Henry B. Cortesi, New York City

41 *Double Future*, 1982
oil on canvas, 84 x 176”
Museum of Modern Art Frankfurt, Germany

42 *Thought Pocket*, 1982
acrylic on canvas, 66 x 102”
Albright-knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York

43 *Second Wind*, 1982
oil and acrylic on canvas, 68 x 276"
IBM Corporation

44 *Cadman’s Blue*, 1982
oil and acrylic on canvas, 84 x 176"
Collection of the artist

45 *Stem*, 1984
oil and acrylic on canvas, 84 x 176"
Private collection

46 *Toucan*, 1982
oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 124”
Collection of the artist

47 *Untitled*, 1983
oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 69”
Ruth and Jerome Siegel, New York City

48 *Kingfischer*, 1984
oil and acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60”
Kate and Jim Lehrer, Washington D.C.

49 *Gilt*, 1984
oil and acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60”
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Sullivan, New York City

50 *Germantown Red*, 1984
acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60”
Collection of the artist

51 *Mexico Set*, 1985
acrylic on canvas, 60 x 108”
Collection of the artist

52 *New Mexico*, 1986
acrylic on canvas, 60x120"
Dr. Norman and Ann Jaffee

53 *Round Robin*, 1987
acrylic on canvas on wood, 60 x 60”
Private collection

54 *Bridgehampton*, 1988
oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 108”
Susan Caldwell, New York City

55 *St Bart’s Type*, 1988
acrylic on canvas, 66 x 36”
Private collection

56 *Falcon*, 1988
acrylic on canvas, 66 x 64”
Collection of the artist

57 *Raven*, 1988
acrylic on canvas, 66 x 64”
Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City

58 *Med*, 1989
acrylic on canvas, 78 x 78”
Collection of the artist

59 *Spirit Lake*, 1990
acrylic on canvas, 66 x 140"
Collection of the artist

60 *Sentinels*, 1991
acrylic on canvas, 74 x 108”
Collection of the artist

61 *Ghost*, 1991
acrylic on canvas, 78 x 76”
Collection of the artist

62 *Brothers*, 1992
acrylic on canvas, 78 x 134”
Collection of the artist

63 *Cat Eyes*, 1993
acrylic on canvas, 72 x 110”
Collection of the artist

64 *Peep Show*, 1993
acrylic on canvas, 76 x 114”
Bruce McCarthy

65 *Black Cat*, 1993
acrylic on canvas, 72 x 58”
Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City

66 *50/50*, 1993
acrylic on canvas, 66 x 128”
Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City

67 *Way of All Flesh*, 1994
acrylic on canvas, 78 x 112”
Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City

68 *Nemesis*, 1994-95
acrylic on canvas, 78 x 138”
Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City

69 *Medley*, 1995
acrylic on canvas, 76 x 104”
Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City

## DOUG OHLSON

18 November 1936; Cherokee, Iowa

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, B.A, 1961

## SOLO EXHBITIONS:

Doug Ohlson, Paintings, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 13 October-7 November 1964

Doug Ohlson, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 8-26 March 1966

Doug Ohlson, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 24 January-11 February 1967

Doug Ohlson, New Paintings, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 11 May-8 June 1968

Doug Ohlson, New Paintings, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 15 March-3 April 1969

Doug Ohlson, The Florence Wilcox Gallery, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania;1970 (no records exist of the exhibition's exact dates)

Doug Ohlson, New Paintings, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 21 November-17 December 1970

Doug Ohlson, New Paintings, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 11-30 March 1972

Doug Ohlson, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 16 November-4 December 1974

Doug Ohlson, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 3-28 April 1976

Doug Ohlson, Paintings 1964-77, Nell Gifford Stern, New York City (exhibition scheduled for 1-26 November 1977; it was destroyed by a fire between the installation and its opening)

Doug Ohlson, Recent Paintings, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 2-26 November 1977

Doug Ohlson, Recent Paintings, Portland Center for the Visual Arts, Portland, Oregon; 15 December 1977 - 15 January 1978

Doug Ohlson, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 6-27 October 1979

Doug Ohlson, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 10-31 January 1981

Doug Ohlson, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 6-27 March 1982

Doug Ohlson, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 10-31 January 1981

Doug Ohlson at Bennington: Two Decades, 1962-1982, Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery, Bennington College,Bennington, Vermont; 9-28 May 1982: curated by E.C. Goossen

Doug Ohlson, Paintings, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 8-29 January 1983

Doug Ohlson, Works on Paper, 1980-1985, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City; 12 October - 9 November 1985

Doug Ohlson, Paintings, 1984 - 1985, Ruth Siegel Ltd, New York City; 23 October - 9 November 1985

Dough Ohlson, Galerie 99, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 10-31 January 1986

Dough Ohlson, Paintings, Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 17 May - 18 June 1986

Four Painters in New York - Four Solo Exhibitions: Leon Polk Smith, Doug Ohlson, Katherine Porter, Willy Heeks"; Ruth Siegel Ltd., New York City, 28 January - 21 February, 1987

Doug Ohlson, New Paintings, Ann Jaffe Gallery, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 3 November to 25 November 1989

Doug Ohlson, New Paintings, Jaffe Baker Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida, 1 July to 28 July 1990

Doug Ohlson, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 16 October to 15 November, 1990

Doug Ohlson, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 31 March to 2 May, 1992

Dough Ohlson, Recent Paintings, Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA, 11 September to 4 October, 1992; Curated by Richard Waller

Doug Ohlson, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 2 Nov. ember - 4 December, 1993.

Doug Ohlson, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 6 November - 16 December, 1995.

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

The Second Minnesota Biennial", The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota; 5 October - 5 November 1961; travelled to The Rochester Art Center, Winona State College, and St. John's University (all in Minnesota); juried by Hilton Kramer

Directions 1964, Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York; 4-31 May 1964; curated by Linda Nochlin

Museum Purchase Fund Collection", a travelling exhibition organized by American Federation of Arts, New York City; installed at State University College, Potsdam, New York, 24 September - 15 October 1964; travelled through July 1972

8 Young Artists, The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York; 11-25 October 1964; travelled to Bennington College, Bennington Vermont;with Carl Andre, Walter Darby Bannard, Robert Barry, Robert Huot, Patricia Johanson, Antoni Milkowski, and Terrence Syverson; curated by E. C. Goossen

Hard/Op, Daniels Gallery, New York City; 22 December 1964 - 23 January 1965; curated by David Herbert

A Spring Festival of Contemporary Painting", Andrew Dickson White Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; 13 April - 16 May 1965; curated by Inez Garson

Art Festival, presented by Galerie Muller, Stuttgart in Cologne; 1967

Color, Image and Form", The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan; 11 April - 21 May 1967; curated by Gene Baro

Rejective Art", a travelling exhibition curated by Lucy Lippard and organized by American Federation of Arts:installed at University of Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska, 9-30 November 1967 and at two other institutions

Listening to Pictures, The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York; an installation during 1968; organized by Arlene Jacobowitz

The Art Of The Real, USA 1948 - 1968, The Museum of Modern Art, New York City; 3 July - 8 September 1968; travelled to Kunsthaus Zurich, 18 January - 16 February 1969;Tate Gallery, 24 April - 1 June 1969; GrandPalais, Paris, 14 November - 23 December 1969; curated by E.C. Goossen

The Pure and Clear: American Innovations", Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 13 November 1968 - 21 january 1969; curated by Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd, Mrs. Bayard T. Storey, and Ms. Anne d'Harnoncourt

The Weatherspoon Annual Exhibition/Art On Paper 1968", Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro; 17 November - 18 December 1968; works selected by Gilbert F. Carpenter

A Collector's Choice, A Sales Exhibition to Benefit The City Art Museum of St. Louis", The City Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri; 1-16 March 1969

Concept, Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York; 30 April - 11 June 1969

Highlights of the 1968 - 1969 Art Season", The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut; 22 June - 14 September 1969

American Painting; the 1960's", a travelling exhibition selected by Samuel Adams Green and co-sponsored by Georgia Museum of Art, The University of Georgia, Athens and American Federation of Arts, New York City; installed in Athens, Georgia from 22 September - 8 November 1969

Prospect 69, Stadtische Kunsthalle Dusseldorf; 30 September - 12 October 1969; organized by Konrad Fischer and Hans Strelow

One Man's Choice", Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas; 14 December 1969 - 18 January 1970; selected by Merrill C. Rueppel

1969 Annual Exhibition, Contemporary American Painting", Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; 16 December 1969 - 1 February 1970

Painting & Sculpture Today", Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana; April 1970

Modular Painting, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; 21 April - 24 May 1970; curated by Robert Murdock

American Art Since 1960", The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey; 6 - 27 May 1070; organized by Sam Hunter

The Structure of Color, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; 25 February - 18 April 1971; curated by Marcia Tucker

Highlights of the 1970-1971 Art Season", The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut; 27 June - 19 September 1971

Inside Philadelphia, Selections from Private Collections, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; 11 November - 19 December 1972

The Way of Color, Thirty-third Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting", The Corcoran Gallery of Art,Washington, D.C.; 24 February - 8 April 1973; works selected by Gene Baro

Abstract Painters, Fischbach Gallery, New York City; 1973

Doug Ohlson, Ray Parker, Ulfert Wilke, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 19 May - 2 June 1973

Inaugural Exhibition, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 23 February - 20 March 1974; with Jake Berthot, James Bishop, Vincent Longo, Brice Marden,David Novros, Robert Swain, and Sanford Wurmfeld; (this was the inaugural exhibition of the gallery's SoHo space)

Seven New York Artists, Nielson Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts;7 December - 11 January 1975; with Frances Barth, Jake Berthot, Gerald Horn, Harvey Quaytman, David Reed, and Paul Rotterdam

3 Painters from Iowa Living in New York: Kyle Morris, Doug Ohlson, Ray Parker, The

University of Iowa Museum of Art,Iowa City, Iowa; 18 December 1974-29 January 1975; curated by Ulfert Wilke

Fourteen Abstract Painters, Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles; 25 March - 25 May 1975; organized by Gerald Nordland

Unique Works on Paper, An exhibition of drawings, van Straaten Gallery, Chicago, Illinois; 26 April - 23 May 1975

Contemporary Paintings: A Review of the New York Gallery Season, 1974-75, Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery,Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York; 21 January -(unannouced closing)1976; curated by Stanton Catlin

24 x 24, Sarah Lawrence College Gallery, Bronxville, New York; 24 February - 14 March 1976; curated by Garry Rich

Rooms P.S. 1", The Insitiute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc. Project Studies One, Long Island City, New York; 9 - 26 June 1976

Project Rebuild: An exhibition to aid earthquake damaged Udine", Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University,New York City; 11-27 August 1976; organized by Thomas B. Hess

Alternatives, Significant painting and sculpture of the 60, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 7 January- (unannouced closing) 1977; works selected by Gene Baro

Collection In Progress, 200 or so selections from the collection of Milton Brutten and Helen Herrick, Moore College of Art Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 14 January - 11 February 1977

The Geometry of Color, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City; 1 December 1977 - 7 January 1978

Generation: Twenty Abstract Painters Born In The United States Between 1929 And 1946, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City; 2 February - 3 March 1979; with Jo Baer, Frances Barth, Jake Berthot, Jerry Buchanan, William Conlon, Stuart Diamond, Porfirio DiDonna, Ron Gorchov,Tom Holland, Ralph Humphrey Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Elizabeth Murray, Katherine Porter, Robert Ryman, Joan Snyder, Frank Stella, Robert Swain, and Joan Thorne; organized by Michael Walls

The Implicit Image: Abstraction in the 70's", Nielson Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts; 1979

24 x 24, Max Hutchinson Gallery, New York City; 8-29 September 1979

Transitions I, An exhibition about the process of change, Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, State University of New York, College at Old Westbury; 1-30 November 1979; with Adrienne Bordes, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, and Robert Mangold; organized by Harriet Senie

Arte Americana Contemporanea, Civici Musei e Gallerie di Storia e Arte, Udine, Italy; 20 September - 16 November 1980

Dark Thoughts: Black Paintings, Pratt Manhattan Center Gallery, New York City; also installed at Pratt Institute Gallery,Brooklyn, New York; 16 December 1981 - 22 January 1982; curated by Ellen Schwartz

Abstract Painting: 1960-69, The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc., Project Studios One, Long Island City, New York; 16 January - 13 March 1983;with Joe Baer, James Bishop, Sally Hazelet Drummond, Marcia Hafif, Al Held, Ralph Humphrey, Will Insley, Lee Lozano,Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, David Novros, Robert Ryman, and Tony Smith; curated by Donald Droll and Jane Necol

24 x 24 x 24, An invitational exhibition, Ruth Siegel Ltd, New York City; 28 November - 29 December 1984; curated by Ruth Siegel

Bilder fur Frankfurt, Museum fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany; 8 February - 14 April 1985

The Severe and the Romantic: Geometric Humanism in American Painting, the 1950's and the 1980's", Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York City

Harvest, Ruth Siegel Ltd, New York City; 2 to 19 October 1986

The Severe and the Romantic: Geometric Humanism in American Painting, the 1950's and the 1980's, Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York City; 10 December 1985 - 4 January 1986

Drawings, Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, New York; 1 March to 2 April 1986

The Homecoming: An exhibition of work by Iowa-born artists, Gallery of Art, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls;(touring to Des Moines Art Center and other Iowa museums through September 1987)

Square and ..., Ruth Siegel Ltd, New York City; 25 November to 24 December 1986

Ten Artists, Ruth Siegel Ltd at The International Contemporary Art Fair, Los Angeles, California; 4 December - 7 December 1986

Review / Preview, Ruth Siegel Ltd, New York City; 27 May - 20 June 1987

Color Now, 55 Mercer Street, New York City; 9 June – 27 June 1987

Four Painters: Doug Ohlson, Frances Barth, Michael Boyd, Elena Bornstein, Andre Zarre Gallery: 3 February – 18 March, 1988

The Christmas Exhibition., Michael Walls Gallery, New York, New Yor: 2 December - 7 January 1988

More Than Color., Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, New York: 18 June – 30 July, 1988

20th Anniversary Group Exhibition, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York City: 6 September - 28 September, 1988

A Debate on Abstraction: The Persistence of Painting, The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, New York City, 1 February - 10 March, 1989

Small Paintings, Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, New York: 25 March - 19 April, 1989

Second Anniversary Exhibition, Michael Walls Gallery, New York City, 6 September to 30 September 1989

Autumn on West Broadway, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 12 September to 10 October 1989

25th Anniversary Exhibition, Ann Jaffe Gallery, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 1 December to 23 December 1989

New Yorkers and Outsiders", Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 15 September to 13 October 1990

8 Young Artists, Then (1964) & Now (1991), The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, New York City, 9 April to 10 May 1991; with Carl Andre, Walter Darby Bannard, Robert Barry, Robert Huot, Patricia Johanson, Antoni Milkowski, Douglas Ohlson, Terrence Syverson; curated by E.C. Goossen

Amerikansk Kunst Efter 1960, Gl. Holtegaard, Copenhagen, Denmark, 23 March to 28 April, 1991
Confluences, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 23 April to 17 May, 1991

27th Anniversary Group Exhibition, Ann Jaffe Gallery, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 10 January to 29 January 1992

Invitational Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York City, 2 March to 29 March 1992

1X7, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 16 June to 18 July 1992

Four Abstract Painters, Ann Jaffe Gallery, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 6 November to 9 December 1992: with Ronnie Landfield, Richard Saba, Doug Ohlson, Larry Zox

Combinations, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 4 April - 1 May, 1993

Thru Thick and Thin, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 7 December 1993-29 January 1994.

Invitational Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York City, 28 February - 27 March, 1994.

The Exuberant 80's, Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City, 17 May to 11 June, 1994

## SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ashton, Dore. "Esempi recenti di pittura non oggettiva negli Stati Uniti", L'Arte Moderna, Milan, Italy,No. III, Vol. XIII, 1968; with color reproduction on page 105 and black-and-white reproduction on page 120

Battcock, Gregory (editor), Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, E. P. Dutton, New York City, 1968; page 165;with black-and-white reproduction on page 438

Battcock, Gregory, "The Art of the Real, The Development of a Style: 1948-68", Arts Magazine, New York City,June/ Summer 1968; pages 44-47; with black-and-white reproduction on page 47

Battcock, Gregory (editor). The New Art, A Critical Anthology, E.P. Dutton, New York City, 1973; pages 231 and 232

Berkson, William. "In The Galleries", Arts Magazine, New York City, May 1966; page 66

Burton, Scott. "Reviews", Art News, New York City, April 1966, page 18

Burton, Scott. "Doug Ohlson", 57th Street Review, New York City, 16 February 1967; pages 4 and 5

Burton, Scott. "Doug Ohlson: In the Wind", Art News, New York City, May 1968; pages 38-39 and 67-70;with black-and-white reproduction on page 38, black-and-white portrait of the artist on page 38,and color reproduction on page 39

Burton, Scott. "Reviews and Previews", Art News, New York City, April 1969; page 22

Campbell, Lawrence. "Review of Exhibitions", Art in America, New York City, May 1983; page 169;with color reproduction (printed upside down) on page 169

Canaday, John. The New York Times, New York City, 4 February 1967; page L 23

Domingo, Willis. "Galleries". Arts Magazine, New York City, 4 February 1971; page 55

Failing, Patricia. "Doug Ohlson: In Classic Abstract", Sunday Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, 18 December 1977;with black-and-white portrait of the artist

Forgey, Benjamin. "The Biennial: Color as Poetry", The Sunday Star and The Washington Daily News,Washington, D.C., 25 February 1973; pages G and G 8

Forgey, Benjamin. "The National Scene", Art News, New York City, April 1973; pages 56 and 57

Frackman, Noel, "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, September 1975; page 11

Frank, Peter, "On Art", The SoHo Weekly News, New York City, 14 March 1974; page 20

Genauer, Emily. New York Herald Tribune, New York City, 11 February 1967

Glueck, Grace. "Trends Down, Sales Up", Art in America, New York City, March/April 1969;pages 114-119; with color reproduction on page 116

Glueck, Grace. "Art in Review", The New York Times, New York City, November 8, 2002; page E37
Goossen, Eugene C. Bennington College exhibition catalog, Bennington, Vermont
Goossen, Eugene C. "Doug Ohlson's Painting", ArtNet Magazine, www.artnet.com

Gruen, John. New York Herald Tribune, New York City, 24 October 1964

Gruen, John. New York Herald Tribune, New York City, 24 October 1964

Gruen, John. "Art in New York", New York Magazine, New York City, 10 June 1968; page 21

Henry, Gerrit. "New York Letter", Art International, Lugano, Switzerland, 20 January 1971; pages 40 and 41;with black-and-white reproduction on page 41

Hutton, Jon. "Dialogue; Conversations With Ray Parker and Doug Ohlson", Arts Magazine, New York City, April 1982;pages 127-133; with black-and-white reproduction on page 127 and color reproductions on pages 130 and 131

Iden, Peter with Lauter, Rolf. Bilder fur Frankfurt, Bestandskatalog des Museums fur Moderne Kunst, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, Federal Republic of Germany, 1985; page 108; with color reproduction on page 109

Katz,Vincent. "Doug Ohlson at Andre Zarre", Art in America, New York City, July 2001, page 100,color reproduction on page 102 (Ghost Light,2000)

Kelly, Mary Lou. "Two holiday firsts for Boston: Sculpture from Rome, paintings from New York City, on view here", The Christian Science Monitor, Boston, Massachusetts, 31 December 1974

Klein, Ellen Lee. "Square and . . .", Arts Magazine, New York City; February 1987, pages 108 - 109

Klein, Ellen Lee. "Doug Ohlson", Arts Magazine, New York City; April 1987, page 111

Kramer, Hilton. "Art...", The New York Times, New York City, 12 March 1966; page L 23

Kulterman, Udo. The New Painting, Frederick A. Praeger, New York City, 1969; page 54;with black-and-white reproduction on page 131

Levin Kim. "Reviews and previews: New names this month", Art News, New York City, November 1964; page 53

Lippard, Lucy R. "New York Letter:, Art International, Lugano, Switzerland, Summer 1966; page 114

Littlefield, T.H. "Two Decades of Artists Who Care About the Real", Times-Union, Albany, New York, 7 July 1968;page E 3; with black-and-white reproduction on page E 3

Littlefield, T.H. "When Walls Matter", Times-Union, Albany, New York, 8 September 1968; pages F 1 and F 3;with black-and-white reproductions on page F 1 and F 3

Lubell, Ellen. "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, February 1978; page 35

Madoff, Steven Henry. Doug Ohlson Paintings, 1984 - 1985, catalogue of the exhibition, Ruth Siegel Ltd, New York City, October 1986

Mellow, James R. "New York Letter", Art International, Lugano, Switzerland, 20 September 1968; pages 62 and 63

Naves, Mario. "Currently Hanging", The New York Observer, New York City, November 4, 2002; page 19

Necol, Jane with Poirier, Maurice. "The 60s in Abstract: 13 statements and an essay", Art in America, New York City,October 1983; pages 122-137; with color reproduction on page 128 and black-and-white portrait of the artist on page 129

Perreault, John. "Art Notes", The Village Voice, New York City, 31 October 1968

Perreault, John. The Village Voice, New York City, 23 March 1972; page 72

Perreault, John. The SoHo Weekly News, New York City, 8 April 1976; page 19

Perreault, John. The SoHo Weekly News, New York City, 3 February 1977; page 18

Pincus-Witten, Robert. "New York", Artforum, New York City, April 1971; page 74

Preston, Stuart. "Art . . .", The New York Times, New York City, 17 October 1964; page L 26

Ratcliff, Carter. "Reviews and Previews", Art News, New York City, January 1971; page 56

Ratcliff, Carter. "New York Letter", Art International, Lugano, Switzerland, 20 May 1972; pages 47 and 48;with black-and-white reproduction on page 50

Ratcliff, Carter. "New York", Art Spectrum, Lugano, Switzerland, February 1975; page 43;with black-and-white reproduction on page 43

Ratcliff, Carter. "New York Letter", Art International, Lugano, Switzerland, Summer 1976; page 54

Ratcliff, Carter. "Doug Ohlson's Color Condensations", Art in America, New York City, May/June 1978;pages 100 and 101; with color reproduction on page 101

Ratcliff, Carter. "A Prejudiced Guide to the Art Market", New York Magazine, New York City, 27 November 1978;with black-and-white portrait of the artist on page 68 and color reproduction on page 69

Ratcliff, Carter. "Doug Ohlson at Andre Zarre", Art in America, New York City, June 1996; Page 99,color reproduction on page 100 (Steel Guitar, 1995)

Ratcliff, Carter. "Doug Ohlson's Fields of Meaning", Art in America, New York City, March 2003;Pages 106 - 109 and 151; color reproductions on pages 106, 107 108 109

Reeves, Jean. Buffalo Evening News, Buffalo, New York, 21 April 1970

Richard, Paul."A Visual Feast of Luscious Color", The Washington Post, Washington, D.C., 24 February 1973; pages D 1 and D 3

Ries, Martin. "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, May 1974; page 66

Robins, Corinne. The SoHo Weekly News, New York City, 22 April 1976; page 19

Rose, Barbara. "New York Letter", Art International, Lugano, Switzerland, December 1964; page 50

Rose, Barbara. "Art", New York Magazine, New York City, 3 April 1972; page 63

Rosenstein, Harris. "Reviews and Previews", Art News, New York City, May 1972; page 53

Russell, David. "Art Abroad: London, Art of the Real and Avant-Garde", Arts Magazine, New York City, Summer 1969;pages 51 and 52

Russell, John. The New York Times, New York City, 7 January 1977; page C 15

Russell, John. The New York Times, New York City, 23 January 1981; page C 20

Russell, John. The New York Times, New York City, 19 March 1982; page C 24

Russell, John. "Doug Ohlson", The New York Times, New York City, 8 November 1985, page C 23

Schjeldahl, Peter. "New York Letter", Art International,

Lugano, Switzerland, 20 May 1969; page 39;with black-and-white reproduction on page 39

Schjeldahl, Peter. "Review of Exhibitions", Art in America, New York City, September/October 1976; page 111;with color reproduction on page 113

Shirey, David L. The New York Times, New York City, 25 March 1972; page 27

Smith, Roberta Pancoast. "Reviews", Artforum, New York City, May 1973; page 84

Smith, Roberta. "Reviews", Artforum, New York City, February 1975; page 65;with black-and-white reproduction on page 65

Thompson, Walter. "Doug Ohlson at Andre Zarre", Art in America, New York City, January 1991;pages 130 and 131; with a color reproduction on page 131 (Spirit Lake, 1990)

Thompson, Walter. "Doug Ohlson at Ruth Siegel," Art in America, New York City, May 1987; page 183 and 184;with a color reproduction on page 182 ( Marker/Regatta, 1986)

Thorp, Charlotte. Arts Magazine, New York City, June 1976; page 33

Waldman, Diane. "Reviews and Previews", Art News, New York City, March 1967; page 16

Waller, Richard. Catalogue for the exhibition, Doug Ohlson Recent Paintings, Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond,Richmond, Virginia, 1992

Walls, Michael. "Doug Ohlson", brochure for the exhibition, Doug Ohlson Recent Paintings, Portland Center For The Visual Arts, Portland, Oregon 1977

Wasserman, Emily. "New York", Artforum, New York City, September 1968; page 62; with black-and-white reproduction on page 62

Wei, Lilly. "Doug Ohlson at Andre Zarre", Art in America, New York City, April 1994, Page 118;color reproduction on page 118 (50/50, 1993)

Wolmer, Denise. "In the Galleries", Arts Magazine, New York City, May 1977; page 66

Yoskowitz, Robert. "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, December 1979; page 21

Yoskowitz, Robert. "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, March 1981; page 25

Yoskowitz, Robert. "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, September 1982; page 35

Zimmer, William, "Arts Reviews", Arts Magazine, New York City, September 1975; page 14

## AWARDS

Fellowship, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 1968

Summer Research Grant, City University of New York, 1968 Grant, Creative Artists Public Service (a fellowship program funded by New York State Council on the Arts), 1974

Grant, National Endowment for the Arts, 1976

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Public:

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine

The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachussetts

Museum fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City

Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City

Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Albright - Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York

Lowe Art Museum, Miami, Florida

Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum, Hagen Germany

Harvard Art Museums,Cambridge, Mass.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City

Sioux City Art Center, Sioux City Iowa

Corporate:

American Telephone & Telegraph Company, New York City

Chase Manhattan Bank, New York City

Coudert Brothers, New York City

Isham, Lincoln & Beale, Chicago, Illinois

Security Pacific National Bank, Los Angeles, California

Smith Kline Beckman, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

IBM Atlanta, Georgia

IBM Somers, New York