

The End of Post-Modernism

Neo-Expressionism, 'Bad' Painting and New Image Painting 1962–1985

'Reciprocal Depiction' does not lead to just print sampling in Post-Modernism. It also leads to a more radical compression of 'layout', 'traction' and 'interruption' and to an emphasis upon allegory that samples (reciprocally) poor or 'bad' depiction. This style is known as Neo-Expressionism. Initially it offers a less decisive break with 'Reciprocal Depiction' of Late Modernism, struggles for recognition against the pervasive cool of print sampling but gains impetus as print sampling fades and later similarly dissipates in the mid eighties as it draws Post-Modernism to a close. There is the temptation to label this phase Late Post-Modernism since it flourishes as print sampling fades, but it is rejected since both styles also share a considerable overlap in practice and chronology. This chapter concentrates upon this competing and closing style to Post-Modernism, which starts in Germany, and so also signals a shift in place for the period and contrasts it with brief parallel styles in New York, in 'Bad' Painting and New Image Painting.

It is useful to firstly note Neo-Expressionism's relation to print sampling and for this we return to the work of Polke. In Chapter Fifteen his sampling of photographic printing in works such as *The Tennis Player* (1967) (Figure 58) was noted. But Polke's range of print samples extends beyond photography, indeed beyond painting. For he also incorporates printed fabrics, usually as a support to painting or as a substitute for canvas and the fabrics offer either fully abstract patterns such as *Bohnen* (1965) (Figure 70), or patterns of pictures, such as *Negerplastik* (1968) (Figure 71). Elsewhere in his work the print may only be a tone screen of an architect's basic line drawing as in *Haüserfront* (1967) or, foregoing tone screens, adopts mere tracings such as *Tibersprung* (1971) and spray stencils, as in *Lucky Luke* (1971-5). Then again, works may combine printed fabrics and tracings,

as in *Alice in Wonderland* (1970) (Figure 72) featuring its loose white lined projector-tracing of Tenniel's noted etching, while later works sample older and more familiar sources, such as the etchings of Goya and the woodcuts of Dürer, and more complex combinations, such as a tone screen of an antique etching, as in *Jeux d'enfants* (1985) (Figure 73) as well as including more unusual materials as pigment and support.

Polke's print samples thus arrive at a 'layout' of pictures as well as a diffusion of sample, through tracing and stencils to less certain derivations. Indeed it is a feature of his work that it progressively includes rather than simply exchanges these variations. Yet as the samples back away from prints, so to speak, they also back into painting and Modernism. For the more remote the print sample, the more pressing the stylistic questions for painting become. The quality of the outline to the tracing or stencil immediately present options; the width and uniformity of the line – to take only two of its most obvious properties – determining the fidelity to or simplification of the source. Source and style of line in turn suggest further categories of painting, further conditions to the picture plane. For Polke, the source in some cases dwindles to no more than the decorative cliché of a pair of heron, as in the series of *Reiberbild* (1969) where the treatment swells to an exuberant set of outlines and fills, as in *Reiberbild IV* (1969) (Figure 74). Yet such works by necessity resist projection to fuller abstraction and 'simultaneous and successive' depiction; instead teeter on the cusp of Modernism, in a kind of parody or Neo-Expressionism²⁵⁵. Polke's work incorporates this feature but is rarely dominated by it (even in *Reiberbild IV*, printed fabric features as the support).²⁵⁶ However for other artists at this time Neo-Expressionism arises for quite the opposite reason, not because they back away from print sampling in painting, but because they back away from Late Modernism.

For some artists and works, metaphors prompted by 'layout' in 'Reciprocal Depiction' are fused into a single picture, and properly amount to allegory. 'Interruption', as a cross section and incompleteness of style, is there compressed

²⁵⁵ However works such as Polke's *Sonnenuntergang mit Reihern* (1969) certainly press for a fuller abstraction, but are perhaps less successful for it.

²⁵⁶ On Polke, see Martin Hentschel, et al., *Sigmar Polke, the Three Lies of Painting*, (catalogue), Munich, 1997 and *Currentartpics* 99.

into a single, awkward hybrid of styles and 'traction' in materials deals in just these constraints. The result is not quite as drastic in revision of attitude as print sampling, but distinctive nonetheless. Work now exhibits a reckless disregard for technique, a seeming indifference to style and a conspicuous preference for allegory.

Allegory obtains where what is depicted serves as a metaphor for typically, more abstract objects and/or non-spatial relations. For example a river or a door may stand for Life or Death, a ladder or stairs for Experience or Knowledge, a dove for The Soul, and apt personifications for various virtues or vices. Metaphor in depiction, or allegory, is to be distinguished from metaphor in materials, or material exemplification as expression, which of course may accompany allegory. Allegory channels the depiction of the literal in certain ways and alerts us to a transfer to a remote but receptive realm. Where the metaphorical realm is familiar, greater liberty is often extended to the literal, and vice versa.

What is striking in much of Neo-Expressionism is the way allegory becomes just such a way of nailing down its literal objects in the face of lax or conflicting stylistic features and of using just this untidiness as a way of highlighting or sampling allegory and enabling bolder or novel realms for transfer. Hence Neo-Expressionism is rarely simply a stylistic revival. The pictures are generally too wild or inconsistent, too poor or 'bad' for that.²⁵⁷ The effect more often is of a riotous or punk amalgam of styles. Nor is it comfortably accommodated as a hybrid, in the manner of 'Interstyle' works, discussed in Chapter Twelve. The work 'backs away' from Late Modernism, seeking ever-murkier hybrids, but can go no further than the cusp of Modernism, without embracing a greater conservatism, and so teeters there, between styles. It counts as Post-Modernism because it cuts right across Modernism in this way.

What is 'bad' in such work is strictly speaking, its ineffectiveness as sample. The bad sample may be only the cliché, that tells us nothing new, or the muddled or confused sample that does not tell us enough. No qualities or properties are clearly

²⁵⁷ The name 'Bad' Painting was first given to a slightly different trend in American painting in an exhibition at the New Museum of Art in New York in 1978. It is often bracketed with Neo-Expressionism for its contemporary, provocative spirit. See New Museum of Art (Marcia Tucker) *Bad Painting* (catalogue) New York, 1978.

exemplified over others in ‘bad’ work or usefully exemplified for our categories of style. It is a badness of sample as much as a sample of badness. Yet in Neo-Expressionism some badness is all to the good. The badness of the depiction here serves as a way of pointing to an allegoric function, while picking out the necessary and nugatory literalness of objects. The impression is often of the pictures dashed off ‘any old how’ preserving only a stark metaphoric scheme. And the effect is not always comic or derisory, as one might suppose, on the contrary, it often adds poignancy. For example, in the work of A. R. Penck, alias Rolf Winkler (b.1939) one of the earliest of the Neo-Expressionists, the allegory to *Systembild* (1963) (Figure 75) is easily grasped: ‘the system’ of deception practised upon the little worker with his barrow. But the work is rarely taken as an amusing travesty of Socialist Realism and Modernism, a farcical marriage of say, late Paul Klee and Agitprop, but rather as a more sincere version of both, the clumsiness of the stick figures reinforcing the brutal simplification of the allegorical ‘system’.²⁵⁸

Penck’s work does not always rely upon such obvious allegories, but rarely strays far or long from the stick figures and silhouettes of his Modernist heritage. The work of his colleague from this time, Jörg Immendorff (b.1945) however, ventures farther a field. Like Penck, Immendorff is drawn to socialist issues, even to Socialist Realism, although his mastery or commitment remains at arm’s length. But neither does he engage more fully in the standard Expressionism of say a Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) or Georg Grosz (1893-1959) much less a CoBrA artist, so that the results are left closer to the average newspaper cartoon or protest poster, for example *Selbstbildnis im Atelier* (Self-portrait in Studio)(1974) or *Kan man damit etwas verändern?* (Can one change anything with these?) (1972), that is, as a typical print ‘layout’. Yet the perfunctory means of the political cartoon receive a different scrutiny when used thus in painting. The results generally appear weak or ‘bad’, given the extended resources of painting, yet this badness can be curiously effective where some allegory is concerned. Immendorff’s work culminates in a series of elaborate allegories titled *Café Deutschland*, commencing in 1977 with *Café Deutschland I* (Figure 76). Here the lumbering composition hardly adds to the gravity of the scene. Rather, it adds to the fun and serves to ridicule. Accordingly, the metaphor

²⁵⁸ On Penck, see Lucius Grisebach, (ed.) *A R Penck*, Berlin/Munich, 1988, John Yau, *A R Penck*, New York, 1993.

acquires a certain half-hearted and indulgent quality. Germany, as one big crazy nightclub, appropriately struggles as an allegory.²⁵⁹

The work of Anselm Kiefer (b.1945) by contrast deals in more obscure literary, historical, mythical and theological metaphors. But Kiefer too relies upon a 'bad' or messy version of depiction, derived not directly from 'layout' and Late Modernism, but via the ritualistic diagrams and drawings of Joseph Beuys (1921-86). Beuys is considered more fully in Chapter Eighteen. Kiefer's pictures typically feature an unpopulated setting, either landscape or architecture, in perspective and offering a grand recession of plane. Captions, diagrams and objects are arranged in and against this, sometimes unlikely, obscure or fictive, or else familiar to traditional allegory. In any case, metaphor is prompted by the contrast between a literal location and a 'layout' of text upon or within it. Kiefer's style is also distinctive for its expanded materials and techniques, for 'traction' for the picture plane.²⁶⁰ Here the 'bad' sample extends to material exemplification and gives expression a troubling ambiguity; the work is at once expansive and adventurous, yet sloppy and dithering, offers shambolic grandeur as well as comic pretension²⁶¹. The materials cannot really be brought into focus as a sample because their depiction and two-dimensionality are equally evasive. This expressive diffusion is matched by the radical nature of many of the allegories.

Initially his works locate lofty matters literally in a loft or attic, as in *Quaternity* (1973) (Figure 77) where a snake and three small fires form a neat diamond upon the hatch, a mystic relation often interpreted as the confrontation of sin or evil with the holy trinity (hence the clumsy portmanteau in the title)²⁶². It would be merely obtuse to allow the snake and fires are there on a more quotidian basis. But since so much of the picture is devoted to the setting, the point is also, perhaps firstly, for the

²⁵⁹ On Immendorff, see Carl Haelein et al., *Jörg Immendorff: Bilder und Zeichnungen - Paintings and Drawings*, Hanover, 2000, Jörg Immendorff, *Immendorff's Handbuch der Akademie für Adler*, Cologne, 1989, Thomas Krens et al. (eds.) *Refigured Painting: The German Image 1960-88*, (catalogue) New York/ Munich, 1988 and *Currentartpics* 40.

²⁶⁰ Predictably, Kiefer's work also includes sculpture and installations, as well as books and photographs, initially included performance.

²⁶¹ For contrasting views on the tone of Kiefer's work see Peter Schjeldahl, 'Our Kiefer' in *Art in America*, March 1988 pp. 116-126, Daniel Arasse, *Anselm Kiefer* London/ New York, 2001 and *Currentartpics* 26.

²⁶² Details to this interpretation, and those of following works by Kiefer, draw on the footnotes by Jürgen Harten in Rudi Fuchs et al., *Anselm Kiefer* (catalogue) Düsseldorf/ Paris, 1984.

location of these mystic issues. The relentlessly linear treatment of the room, where the 'bad' or clumsy wood-grain all but confuses the perspective (particularly in the foreground) and competes with the quartet, finally stresses the bare and prosaic nature of attic and picture, their sturdy if modest virtues. Giving some clean, spare little space over to fundamental issues of metaphysics or faith becomes the issue, in more ways than one. Finding space for such issues, or perhaps issues for such space, possibly indicates a national trait, surely grants space and issues a striking extension, or transfer of domain.

But in later pictures no event is staged, rather captions or text are arranged or plotted throughout a setting, and re-order the space, into a kind of three-dimensional model or 'layout', such as *Varus* (1976)) (Figure 78) or *Deutschland's Geisteshelden* (1973) (Germany's Spiritual Heroes) the literal spaces are now a darkened forest, and a great wooden hallway, respectively. But texts not only turn such bland locations into mythic and historic metaphors, often the metaphor is mixed, as in *Nero Paints* (1974) or text no more than a pat phrase, such as *Märkische Heide* (March Heath) (1974) (Figure 79) possibly summoning certain nineteenth century Prussian attitudes, otherwise merely imposed upon a rugged open field. The accumulative effect is that allegory and the transferred domain all but evaporate under such diffusion. Then again some later pictures assume a greater abstraction, such as *Die Meistersinger* (1982) (Figure 80) where text confronts vigorous materials over little more than a diagram of lighted tapers, so that the expressive and allegorical converge, and the text, never more than an indifferent handwriting, strikes metaphors for its own idle line and 'layout'.

Yet to doggedly track the various quotations, allusions and their permutations is perhaps to risk losing sight of the underlying strategy – of the picture anchored in allegory, even to its materials, and of text drawn into depictive and material metaphors. The increasing variation and complexity to the work may also be seen as a way of drawing out just this common thread. However for other and later German Neo-Expressionists, allegory is less conspicuous if not absent – in the Berlin and Hamburg groups for example, and the style accordingly looks closer to

an ironic revival, a pastiche or parody.²⁶³ While Kiefer's work concentrates on settings and texts for his allegories, the work of a group of Italian Neo-Expressionists, emerging later in the seventies focus upon the figure and gesture, often in absence of a setting.²⁶⁴ This group includes Francesco Clemente (b.1952) Enzo Cucchi (b.1950) Sandro Chia (b.1946) and Mimmo Paladino (b.1948). Clemente is perhaps the most prominent. His work is notable at this time for a versatility of media rather than expansion or invention, for the clumsy or 'bad' drawing of the person, their emphasis upon a compelling sensory engagement, particularly for the body's orifices and their frequent self-portraiture. Metaphor here is prompted by the absence or indifference of setting, as well as the irresolute drawing and often, schematic nature of poses and related objects in works such as *He teaches emotions with feelings* (1980) (Figure 81).

Yet what is pointed to in this way is perhaps less metaphor than metonymy. For while the pictures isolate and exaggerate the bodily and sensate of experience – especially the tactile – experience is not strictly remote or removed from the body, but usually regarded as a continuum to and traditionally a duality with it. So reference, while clearly not only to the literal, is more accurately by metonymy, where part stands for whole²⁶⁵. It allows the artist to remind us of the surprising and sensual as well as alarming aspects to physical engagement with other objects (and persons) how such experiences interact with our identity and 'self' portrayals. It grants the bizarre unions and transformations in Clemente's pictures such as *Self-portrait with bird* (1980) (Figure 82) something like the function of hyperbole, stretching the literal but maintaining metonymy.²⁶⁶

Concentration upon the figure rather than the setting, and the use of 'bad' or Neo-Expressionist depiction are pursued differently in the work of the American David

²⁶³ On the varieties of German Neo-Expressionism see Wolfgang Max Faust and Gerd de Vries, *Hunger Nach Bilden: deutsche malerei der gegenwart*, Cologne, 1982.

²⁶⁴ In the interests of space, this account omits less influential versions arising elsewhere at this time.

²⁶⁵ Part to whole figures of speech are usually taken as *synecdoche* rather than metonymy – metonymy allowing for a wider range of parts or properties of an object (including adjuncts, causes and effects) but only from part to whole, while synecdoche takes a narrower view of parts but allows for reference either way, from whole to part (as in Australia beat England by twelve runs) as well as from part to whole (as in bat dominated ball in the Fifth Test).

²⁶⁶ On Clemente, see Lisa Dennison (organiser) *Clemente* (catalogue), New York, 2000 and Currentartpics 44.

Salle (b.1952). Salle's work at this time is drawn to 'layout' rather than allegory and like Polke, to a loose derivation from photographs, a weak or 'bad' sampling of print styles. He similarly employs additional printed fabric in works such as *His Brain* (1984) (Figure 83), elements of text and even occasional items of furniture, as in *King Kong* (1983) (Figure 84) and other areas of pattern or abstraction as in *The Burning Bush* (1982) (Figure 85). Salle's figures, in contrast with Clemente's are generally female and their poses the sexually explicit clichés of pornography. Distinctive to his work is the way 'layout' and 'bad' depiction are combined to make such work 'about' pornography rather than merely pornographic. Nevertheless such work stands or falls on the value given pornography. Here sexual allure at its most narrowly anatomical is sampled and sorted by overlapping and superimposed pictures and the casual exercises in line and tone that slow or halt prompt recognition. The analogy, if not the allegory, is between 'bad' sexuality and 'bad' depiction. The cheap thrill of pornography is here extended to the lax tracing and modelling derived from photography, the entrenched allure and recognition of the object permitting, even encouraging a waywardness of depiction.

By the same token, surrounding and contrasting pictures and objects offer less or no such easy recognition, and rather underline the limits of such depiction and allure. In as much as depiction survives in these cases, as in the houseboat in *His Brain* or the sketch in white of (perhaps) looting soldiers in *The Burning Bush*, there are grounds for allegory, but often even this much is obscured in the emphatically dilatory depiction. 'Layout' here not only sorts porn with 'bad' depiction, but with patterned fabric, as in *His Brain*, and the furniture and text of *King Kong*. Neither patterns nor furniture gain much, in the way of an erotic charge from the association. But nor are the female figures reduced to little more than decorative motifs by it. Rather porn pulls depiction one way, pattern and furniture pull it another, and the result is both comic and desolate in its severe truncation. Significantly, Salle's later work gradually discards its Neo-Expressionist traits, acquires a smoother more consistent style as his themes and objects soften or broaden. He retains a commitment to 'layout', monochromes and lax print sampling that is resolutely Post-Modernist, and remains more adventurous in his selection if

not treatment of these, than similar approaches by Robert Longo (b.1953) Troy Brauntuch (b.1954) David Wojnarowicz (1954-92) and others.²⁶⁷

The work of Julian Schnabel (b.1952) concentrates upon novel materials and techniques, and their resistance or 'traction' for depiction that ranges from allegory to 'layouts' and abstraction. As with Kiefer, 'bad' depiction is carried through to 'bad' materials, struggles to express a coherent metaphor and results in a deeply ambiguous tone. But where Kiefer at least retains an allegorical structure for various locations or settings, Schnabel uses figures, portraits, still lifes and landscapes, as well as text and other notation to variously draw the surface into two-dimensionality, occasionally to allegory, even as novel materials resist 'good' or a recognised depictive style.

Schnabel's best-known innovation in materials consists of shattered china plates, glued to the bare or painted support and usually painted over. The fragments are generally arranged in approximate order to their wholes, stressing their derivation and disintegration. While china rarely finds a serviceable metaphor in the objects depicted or the style of depiction, they nevertheless express a fragility and destructiveness to materials, indeed a certain wanton abandon to the process of re-sorting. It is a process that literally labours the picture painted across or between them. Then again, the picture is adjusted to rugged surface, radical pigment or application, vast expanse, weathering or other distress, to duly draw the surface into depiction, if only 'badly'. But while china serves to stress fragility, even extravagance, it does so clumsily. Glass or Styrofoam might equally serve, or better, some combination. For the 'china-ness' side to the sample remains stubbornly obvious, and confuses or weakens the sample's 'fragility and extravagance'. Yet such dissipation is also to the point. 'Bad' materials here reciprocate 'bad' depiction.

Schnabel's flexibility in adjusting (or misadjusting) means to ends is demonstrated in the swift progression from works such as *The Patients and the Doctors* (1978) (Figure 86) that balance the beds of shattered china against casual outlines of blade-like shapes, to the pictogram-like 'layout' of *Portrait of God* (1981) (Figure 87) wrought in

²⁶⁷ On Salle, see Janet Kardon, *David Salle*, (catalogue) Philadelphia, 1986, Lisa Phillips, *David Salle*, New York, 1987, Peter Schjeldahl, *Salle (an interview with David Salle)*, New York/Toronto, 1987 and Currentartpics 97.

bold gesture across an imposing scale, to the dense layers of imagery in *Prehistory: Glory, Honour, Privilege, Poverty* (1981) (Figure 88) entangled with actual deer antlers mounted upon pony skin, to the jagged and vaguely botanical forms of *A.D. (Wreath for Tennessee Williams)* (1983) (Figure 89) rendered upon a massive tarpaulin with oil paint and fibreglass. Indeed this flexibility often threatens to descend into 'anything goes'; where 'badness' is no longer held in check and the balancing act between materials and picture (much less allegory) simply collapses. The work is not necessarily more daring for embracing this dissolution either. Actually risk disappears as options proliferate, and more accurately, the work that dilates in this way also stalls in indifference. At this time Schnabel increasingly favours found surfaces, not so much the printed fabrics of Polke or Salle, as discarded theatre backdrops, animal hides and black velvet. Accordingly, depiction often takes on a superimposed, graffiti-like quality, something also stressed by the use of spray cans in works such as *Resurrection: Albert Finney meets Malcolm Lowry* (1984) (Figure 90) as well as the scrawled and partly deleted inscriptions. Indeed graffiti looms as an obvious progression for such projects although rather than embrace installation or site-specific works to this end, Schnabel subsequently devotes more of his career to writing and film directing.²⁶⁸

The graffiti option is pursued however in the early work of the Mülheimer Freiheit group in Cologne, and by American artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-88) Keith Haring (1958-90) and Kenny Scharf (b.1958).²⁶⁹ To the extent that such work survives, it essentially betrays the spirit of graffiti, and to the extent that various styles of graffiti are sampled upon standard supports for painting, the works betray the material of graffiti. And while such work is never quite true to graffiti, nor does it remain quite true to 'bad' depiction or Neo-Expressionism, since its stylistic identity is streamlined or narrowed in the process, and loses some of its unruly 'badness' in adopting the recognisable means of graffiti. Such work finally exhausts Neo-Expressionism. The expanding means of Neo-Expressionism enable greater appreciation of certain peripheral work, such as the later work of Phillip Guston

²⁶⁸ On Schnabel, see Nicholas Serota and Joanna Skipworth (eds.) *Julian Schnabel, Paintings, 1976-86* (catalogue) London, 1986, Stuart Morgan, 'Julian Schnabel interviewed by Stuart Morgan', *Artscribe*, No 44, December 1983, pp. 15-21 and *Currentartpics* 56.

²⁶⁹ A record of the activities of the Mülheimer Freiheit group from this time is provided in an interview with several of its members in Cordelia Oliver, 'The Second Bombing: The Mülheimer Freiheit Group' *Artscribe*, No 44, December 1983, pp. 22-26.

(1913-80) the racial satires of Robert Colescott (b.1925) and the nudist anecdotes of Eric Fischl (b.1948), but it also consolidates ‘badness’ as a category, and with that reduces its effectiveness and interest.²⁷⁰ But rather than look to these fringe benefits, or parallel developments elsewhere, the study turns to developments in New York, signalled by the exhibitions ‘Bad’ Painting and New Image Painting.

Both shows appeared in 1978, and detect shifts in painting as print sampling dissipates and more painterly means are adopted for less ‘printerly’ ends – much like discussion on sampling effectiveness toward the end of Chapter Fifteen. In the earlier of the two shows, ‘Bad’ Painting, organised by Marcia Tucker at her New Museum of Art, the work of James Albertson (b.1943), Joan Brown (1938-1990), Eduardo Carrillo (1938-1998), William Copley (Cply) (1919-1996) Charles Garabedian (b.1923) Robert Chambless Hendon (N.D.A) Joseph Hilton (N.D.A.) Neil Jenney (b.1945), Judith Linhares (b.1940) P. Walter Siler (N.D.A.), Earl Staley (b.1938) Shari Urquhart (b.1941) and William Wegman (b.1943) concentrates on how comic-like graphics, occasionally traditional motifs or pattern, yield to expressive and Expressionist handling, while themes or iconography similarly reflect a more remote derivation, a mixture of irreverence and idiosyncrasy, that as discussed, is in some ways unavoidable in seeking to further the project. This is the ‘Bad’ to painting, but it carries much less emphasis upon allegory and text than German variants, much less interest in strict drawing or abstraction than New Image Painting. Indeed, the division between ‘Bad’ Painting and New Image Painting, between anecdote and stylisation, to some extent splits the impact of Neo-Expressionism on American painting. But while ‘Bad’ Painting unquestionably detects a change, it lacks the focus of New Image Painting, the vigour and breadth of Neo-Expressionism.

New Image Painting was the title of an exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York in December 1978 curated by Richard Marshall. It consisted of work by Nicholas Africano (b. 1948) Jennifer Bartlett (b. 1941) Australian Denise Green (b.1946) Michael Hurson (b.1941) Neil Jenney (b.1945) Lois Lane (b.1948) Robert Moscovitz (b. 1935) Susan Rothenberg (b. 1945) David True (b.1942) and Joe

²⁷⁰ For standard interpretation of such work see Tony Godfrey, *The New Image: Painting in the 1980s*, New York, 1986.

Zucker (b.1941). It highlighted a course to painting distinct from print sampling or preceding styles of concrete depiction.²⁷¹ Like Neo-Expressionism, it gains momentum as print sampling falters. Central to most of the work is the model set by the early work of Johns, with its use of a design or template-like image within a vigorously worked ground. But where Early Johns largely resists the use of familiar depiction to function thus, and where early Warhol imports standard graphics to this end, the New Imagists forge new or unfamiliar icons. Typically they build an orthogonal picture plane restricted to a spare outline and 'fill' of colour and facture. The model set by Johns inflects a design such as the American flag or a stencil alphabet with an intermittent or approximate compliance, through an opposing rigour of technique and novel materials. The model is not concerned with the literal and allegorical in depiction but the parameters of recognition and identity. This is the first part of the contrast with Neo-Expressionism.

In New Image Painting however, the objects depicted in basic silhouettes and/or isolated within a surrounding ground never quite carry the rigour of a template or design. Instead, the images declare their drawing as invention and undermine the function of the surrounding 'fill' or worked grounds. The tension between the two slackens once drawing becomes an issue. Often they amount to no more than a curious contrast of techniques, a strict outline against a broadly worked 'fill'. In the case of early Jenney and Rothenberg, facture is especially reminiscent of Johns in works such as Rothenberg's *Butterfly* (1976) (Figure 91) while the more subdued techniques of Africano, Green, Lane and Moscovitz nevertheless sample facture against outline, often with a single or flat colour. Of the group, only Zucker is drawn, like Johns, to novel materials, with cotton swabs and rhomplex augmenting acrylic paint in *Merlyn's Lab* (1977).²⁷² Only True and Zucker extend drawing beyond the isolated icon, and all but surrender to something like minor cartoon and illustration styles, while only Bartlett and Hurson are drawn to 'layout' and multiple pictures within it. But neither Bartlett's grids nor Hurson's sequences can quite ground outline and 'fill' more firmly either. Bartlett's *Rhapsody* (1975-6) and Hurson's *Palm Springs No 2* (1971) offer deft variations but ultimately outline and

²⁷¹ Marshall does not quite couch his selection in these terms of course, although gropes for something along these lines. See Marshall, *New Image Painting*, (catalogue) New York, 1978, pp. 7-13.

²⁷² On this score Bartlett's ceramic tiles are an alternative rather than an addition to painting.

‘fill’ here engage only the more obvious and less interesting stylistic features for their objects.

The problem is that the terms themselves – outline and ‘fill’ – are too cosy and entrenched by Johns to now offer means of testing recognition and identity more fully, or without falling into greater abstraction.²⁷³ In this respect New Image Painting is too ‘good’, or demure. It samples too conservatively. This is the second contrast with Neo-Expressionism. Where Neo-Expressionism embraces the ‘bad’ and backs away from Modernism to teeter at its cusp, renew allegory and extended reference, New Image Painting clings to the territory between Late Modernism and print sampling, only to find the crucial testing of recognition and identity now eludes mere outline and ‘fill’. On one path we test allegory and reject Modernism, on the other we preserve Modernism, but test too little and literally. Both are necessary, if troubling experiences. Both flag an end to Post-Modernism.

Before embarking upon the last period to the twentieth century it is appropriate to consolidate the distinction drawn here between Late and Post Modernism. So far this break has been based solely upon developments in more concrete depiction. It now needs to be shown how the distinction holds for abstraction, what changes the proposed periods bring to abstraction. Then, given abstraction’s intimate relation to three-dimensional work and the ‘expanded materials’ indicated in Chapter Eleven, it also needs to be shown how the break holds for works beyond painting and mere sculpture and what changes occur there. The following chapter duly traces the course of abstraction across Late and Post Modernism and Chapter Eighteen does the same for works of ‘expanded materials’. Here the task has been to show how Post-Modernism contains a rival style to print sampling and how it briefly succeeds Photo-realism before concluding, along with the period, in the mid-eighties. The period is thus seen to abandon more comprehensively the tenets of Modernism (Early and Late).

²⁷³ The option of pressing for greater abstraction is explored in the work of Elizabeth Murray (b.1940) a colleague of some of the New Imagists. Her work retains an outline and ‘fill’ method, where outline adopts the radical undulations of a comic strip in its depiction of inanimate objects, and dispenses with grounds for elaborate shaped canvases. The result is a little like an unwilling mix of Peter Saul and Ellsworth Kelly.