17

Abstraction
In Late and Post-Modernism

Late Modernism has been characterised by the emergence of 'Reciprocal Depiction', and 'Reciprocal Depiction' has been characterised by mutual sampling of the abstract with the concrete. But this accommodation of the abstract can hardly do justice to the project of abstraction as a whole. In fact the compromise prompts bolder projection to pattern for abstraction. In Late Modernism bolder pattern arises in stricter symmetry and is claimed mainly where work uses issues of colour and tone for materials and techniques on a greater scale, or beyond the 'easel scale' painting. Later, where symmetry becomes foremost, or projects *to* novel materials, scale, shape and colour, rather than is projected *from* them, Late Modernism becomes Post-Modernism. Post-Modernist abstraction pursues symmetry to more elaborate and established patterns, but where such pattern then arrives at repeating pictures or even the single motif, style and period draw to a close.

This chapter can only briefly trace this arc, but hopefully with sufficient detail and persuasion to strengthen the distinctions drawn between Late and Post-Modernism. It looks firstly at how scale is used so distinctively in the fifties, particularly by the Abstract Expressionists in New York. In Modernist works such as Kupka's *Disks of Newton* (1911-12) (Figure 2) and Klee's *Table of Colour (in Grey Major)* (1930) (Figure 7) scale and facture have been shown to be intimately linked, the small scale of the work grants the size of the brushstroke and paint viscosity an intimacy and spontaneity, and they in turn convey to colour a certain precarious character. The size of such works is thus an integral part of what is sampled. Clearly the same materials or technique function differently in larger works, often stressing quite the opposite qualities, so that a large work by Kupka such as *Amorphia: Fugue in Two Colours* (1912) (211 X 210 cm.) (Figure 92) with its short, chiselled brushwork and

thick paint, give the work a strangely cautious, fussy quality, somewhat at odds with its sweeping curves and bold colour, although perhaps apt as a metaphor for the contrapuntal structure of a fugue. Similarly, large works by Sonia Delaunay, such as *Electric Prisms* (1914) (250 X 250cm.) or Kandinsky, such as *Composition VI* (1913) (195 X 300cm.) use no more than standard brushstrokes and often the short parallel strokes that derive from Cubism and Cezanne, to urge a more traditional grandeur of scale.

But with the work of the Abstract Expressionists, large works exploit a new range of materials and techniques.[274] The most obvious example is Pollock's dripping of enamels, but equally radical is the use of large sign-writing brushes by de Kooning, in works such as *Woman I* (1950-52) (Figure 36) that extend the range of facture - together with massive wipes, smears, scrapings, and allow the work to maintain an intimacy and spontaneity even when this is no longer an entirely comfortable experience. Scale provides de Kooning with the space to display this range of activity and its 'interrupted' object. This new space for techniques or techniques for space, bring other, less obvious modulations of line, tone and colour (roughly, through scumbling or mottling) that are framed in the distinctive formats adopted by Rothko, Barnett Newman (1905-70) and Ad Reinhardt (1913-67).[275] In their works qualities of colour or tone are inseparable from issues of scale and facture. This striking integration provides a certain mystique, even sublime but also expresses some of the equivocation found in 'Reciprocal Depiction'. One mottled colour, or toned mottle, with exquisite subtlety gauges another, combines in a further, grander harmony. Yet this sampled integration needs an equally impressive means of sampling, a striking frame or isolation to set it off and this is provided by greater, more recognisable pattern.[276]

---

[1] The point here is that large scale alone is not the decisive factor in this shift, as is often assumed in accounts of the style. See for example Robert Motherwell's summary in Max Kozloff, 'An interview with Robert Motherwell' *Artforum* 4. No.1 September 1965, p. 37, "The large format at one blow, destroyed the century-long tendency of the French to domesticize modern painting, to make it intimate." This is also quoted in Irving Sandler, *Abstract Expressionism*: *Triumph of American Painting*, London/New York/Washington, 1970, p.156 and elsewhere.

[275] Given the dominance of American artists in this field and period, all artists henceforth introduced in this and following essays are taken as American and New York-based, unless otherwise indicated.

[276] On Abstract Expressionism, see Irving Sandler, *Abstract Expressionism*: *Triumph of American Painting*, London/New York/Washington, 1970, David Anfam, *Abstract Expressionism*, London, 1990, Michael Auping, *Abstract Expressionism: The Critical Developments*, Buffalo, New York, 1987 and concerning its broader social history, Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole The Idea*

In works such as Newman's *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (1950-1) (Figure 93) or Rothko's *White, Yellow Red on Yellow* (1953) (Figure 94) it is notable that colour identity and attendant distinctions are wrought within conspicuous symmetry.[277] In Newman's work this is established by parallel vertical bands, which is to say, the symmetry here runs laterally, across the middle of the picture, while in the Rothko essentially the same kind of bands typically run laterally, allowing a vertical symmetry. Reinhardt's work usually adheres to a one or both of these. In other words, the symmetry or pattern channels colour, facture and scale distinctions along axes, laterally in most of Newman's work, vertically in Rothko's.[278] This is not to disregard the actual height of the Newman, or the width of the Rothko, rather to underline the fixity conferred upon them by these formats. Such works thus establish compelling new qualities for colour, tone, scale and facture by edging pictures closer to obvious pattern.[279]

In Late Modernism the effectiveness of greater symmetry also enables work that stretches and relaxes it. Artists such as Helen Frankenthaler (b. 1928) and Morris Louis (1912-62) deal in a similar integration of colour, facture and scale but now adopt an extremely diluted acrylic paint and novel pourings or stainings onto an unstretched bare canvas to determine the shape and other features of a colour – the colour and other features of a shape. Yet without the rigour of a sampling symmetry, usually such techniques seem no more than prompted or projected by the shape and colour properties obtained. Elsewhere works concentrate upon a

---

Modern Art, Chicago, 1983 and Francis Frascina (ed.) *Pollock and After: The critical debate,* London, 1985.

[277] It must be acknowledged that such small reproductions of such large works, inevitably loose the distinctive modulations under consideration. This is particularly true in Newman's case.

[278] The importance of symmetry to this work, while often acknowledged as often fails to accurately locate the axes. See for example discussion of symmetry in Newman's work in Yves-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* Cambridge/Mass./London, 1993 pp. 187-213, and more briefly in Jonathan Fineberg, *Art Since 1940* (2nd edition), New York/London, 2000, pp. 100-102. The complementary formats of Rothko and Newman, if not quite the symmetry, are noted in Greenberg, 'American-Type Painting' in *Art and Culture*, Boston, 1961, p.225.

[279] In this regard the Suprematist works of Malevich, such as *Black Square* (1913 or 23) and *Black Cross* (1923) offer interesting comparison, since they employ biaxial symmetry, upon a square canvas, but separate colour or tone from shape – so that the strict masking of the outline, while pointedly rarely quite straight or uniform, strictly avoids the involvement of colour or facture. The results are 'a picture' of a square or cross, approximately in shape, and in which blackness and facture are then only incidental properties. Possibly, this stresses the further intangible nature of the true or ideal square or cross. At any rate, it distinguishes such work from Late Modernism both because it resists a greater integration of colour, facture and shape and because it remains committed to traditional scale for these issues.

single colour or tone in order to exploit facture more fully, as in Rauschenberg's successive white and black series. In some works by Ellsworth Kelly (b. 1923) at this time, such as *White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection* (1951-55) colour is equated with shape, not so much through facture, which here amounts to little more than a smooth coat of white paint, as with the actual shape of the support, here wood, although this feature is generally called a shaped canvas.[280] Monochrome works obviously possess symmetry, although do not necessarily display it, as is the case of the Rauschenbergs. However Kelly's shaped paintings and collages from this time are often notably symmetrical (even while, as with this example, also offering a more concrete depiction). Yet since the pattern is stressed through the frame shape, as much as its smooth and single colour, it balances pattern and shape against picture and painting, providing a more complex formula.

More obvious pattern is pursued along two paths. One abandons the elaborate systems of a Kupka or Mondrian, even the loose grids of Klee, for simpler patterns easily discernible over and above their colour content (or vice versa). The contained variations on a square by Josef Albers (1888-1976) such as *Hommage to the Square: Ascending* (1953) (Figure 95) and the uniform stripes of various lengths by Swiss Richard Paul Lohse (1902-88) such as *Rhythmic Progression* (1952-59) (Figure 96) inch forward in this direction, although still provide a sliding scale of lengths in Lohse's example and like variation of width to height of square in Albers' example. Yet Albers' work also establishes a clear vertical symmetry that crucially reinforces its pattern and although neither artist's work acquires the scale of the Abstract Expressionists, their structures anticipate the work of later artists such as Kenneth Noland (b.1924) and Gene Davis (1920-85) where greater scale is unquestionably at issue. Noland initially adopts concentric circles of varying widths rather than squares; Davis adopts stripes of uniform length as well as width.

The second and lesser path at this time engages pattern less in the interests of colour, than depth. The convergence of perspective (and 'Rerealism') with abstraction occurs in the work of Vierra da Silva (1908-) for example *Library* (1949) (Figure 97-x) and Matta, for example, *The Onyx of Electra* (1944) and is taken further

---

[280] Monochrome abstraction continues to attract proponents following those mentioned, variously establishing equations between colour, shape and facture. Of note are the French artist, Yves Klein (1928-62) and Robert Ryman (b.1930)

into pattern in work such as *Rolleboise* (1955) (Figure 97) by the Dane Richard Mortensen (1910-93) *Belle Isle* (1947) (Figure 98) by the Rumanian Victor Vasarely (1908-97) and also, surprisingly, in the prints of Albers, such as the *Structural Constellation* series produced in the early fifties (Figure 99).[281] Such work exploits the angles of perspective and projections (in Vasarely's case, without resorting to straight lines) to generate patterns that deal in the approximate symmetry of the Vasarely as well as the more complex reversals and inversions of the Albers. This approach asserts a complexity of pattern distinct from that of Kupka or Mondrian, and in contrast to the symmetry of stripes and squares. Both paths obviously place certain constraints upon technique and colour. As works acquire an impressive scale, simple pattern offers vital latitude in technique while complex pattern would seem initially to give or gain little. Colour relations in both kinds of work, duly marshalled into Newtonian complementaries and other harmonies, are nevertheless reductive. Once isolated within the strict shapes of pattern and single luminances and intensities of a given hue, colour is not so much demonstrated within a neutral format as conforms to and demonstrates the format.[282]

Essentially the shift is in what is sampled in the work. Initially symmetry or pattern is at the service of colour and tonal relations with facture and scale. Yet as colour, tone, facture and scale are marshalled more strictly, pattern or geometric format becomes foremost. At a certain point colour, tone, facture and scale are now at the service of more obvious pattern, in fact reinforce the identity of pattern through their variation, and now properly sample the projection of pattern *to* painting. This step occurs most forcefully in the work of Frank Stella (b.1936) at the end of the fifties, and initiates a Post-Modernist period for abstraction.

Stella's key works here are the 'Black' or 'Pinstripe' series, produced between 1958 and 1960, in which the picture is divided into a number of stripes of fairly even width, and which initially remain parallel to the sides of the picture, as in *Tomlinson Court Park* (1959) (Figure 100). A crucial determinant of width of stripe (and hence

---

[281] This untitled example is taken from Joseph Albers and Francois Bucher, *Despite Straight Lines*, New Haven and London, 1961, but supplies no details of size or medium.

[282] John Gage arrives at a similar conclusion in considering the accuracy and identity of colour sampled in such work. See Gage, *Colour and Culture,* London, 1993, pp. 247-268. Colour 'harmonies' have more recently been treated in terms of 'equiluminance' in neurobiological studies and the result of centre/surround distribution of colour receptors in the retina. See Margaret Livingstone, *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing*, New York, 2002.

of number and relations) is to be found in the unpainted canvas intervals between stripes (the pinstripes), where the casual brushwork avoids a sharp or hard edge and 'scrubs' or 'feathers' a more approximate edge. The intervals and brushing are broad enough to ensure that they are taken as more than some minor shortcoming in execution, and also broad enough in relation to the width of the stripe to call into question the precise shape of the stripe. One does not hesitate in taking the stripes to be more or less straight, and yet the unevenness is of a nagging tolerance.[283] Like Johns' adherence to the design of the American flag or a stencilled alphabet, the unevenness in Stella's stripes establishes a curious degree of tolerance or compliance, not so much relative to the familiarity of the design, as with Johns, but here more to the scale of the stripes and their relation to the frame. Stella's work nonetheless may be taken as a response to Johns, and to parallel the response of Warhol, although slightly preceding it. Abstraction here is of a piece with the shift to print sampling and Post-Modernism, and shares the provocatively cool attitude. Discussion of the links between pattern and print is deferred for the moment. The immediate task is to trace which patterns are used, and in what ways they are extended or projected in painting.

Where Post-Modernist abstraction initially dwells on stripes, or reasserts grids and concentrates upon interval and scale, this fundamentalist tendency is called Minimalism. It is not however drawn to stricter or more minimal ordering, to mere points at uniform intervals, to a single line or indeed a single point. However, there is one suitably singular work that illustrates just this reduction of two-dimensionality at this time. The work is *The Rose* (1958-64) (Figure 101) by San Francisco-based Jay DeFeo (1929-89). It also straddles the issues of monochrome and tonal constraint, materials and techniques and painting versus sculpture, and surely deserves a place in the foundation of Minimalism.[284] Almost as pointed, in more ways than one, is the later work of the Italian Argentinean Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) where line occurs as an actual incision upon a primed canvas, in works such as *Spatial Concept -*

---

[283] On Stella, including a puzzling denial of any relations within the stripes in works, see Michael Fried, *Three American Painters, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski and Frank Stella,* Cambridge/Mass, 1965 William Rubin, *Frank Stella*, New York, 1970, Robert Rosenblum, *Frank Stella*, London, 1971.

[284] On De Feo, see Jay De Feo*, Jay De Feo, Selected Works: 1952-89*, (catalogue) Philadelphia, 1996, Donald Goddard, 'Selected Works by Jay De Feo', www.newyorkartworld.com (2004)

Attese (1958).[285] But Minimalist painting generally restricts the issue of materials and technique to a certain leeway in stripe rigour. For example it finds and makes stripes in the later (Post-Modernist) works of Louis, such as *Alpha Pi* (1960) (Figure 102) where width, angle and symmetry of the 'unfurled' stripes are gained through the radical expanse of unpainted canvas in the centre of the painting. Area and sheer size determines proportion and then identity of stripe and symmetry.[286] This accommodation of novel materials and technique is sometimes referred to as the 'Process' branch of Minimalism, whereby the physical and chemical processes of the materials are prominent in the degree of geometric rigour, or pattern attained. Process nevertheless leads to three-dimensional works, by artists such as Richard Serra (b.1939) and Eva Hesse (1936-70. Allied to Process, is 'Systems' Minimalism, which stresses a series of consecutive or overlaid patterns or systems, whose combination generates further and surprising pattern, such as the drawings of Sol Le Witt (b.1928) or the paintings from the late sixties of the Los Angles-based Ed Moses (b.1926). Artists such as Robert Morris (b.1931) and Barry Le Va (b.1941) apply Systems to three-dimensional work.[287]

Apart from Minimalism, Post-Modernist abstraction exploits the more complex geometry noted in Late Modernism. What starts as plays with conflicting projections and perspectives of colour planes, develops firstly into conflicting functions of line, in works such as Vasarely's *Markab* (1956) (Figure 103) where complexity is now a matter of the density and alternation of high contrast line used to indicate volume or depth, and then to greater density in works such as *Fall* (1963) (Figure 104) by Englishwoman, Bridget Riley (b.1931) where complexity now generates the distinctive retinal effects of motion and depth called Op Art.[288] Such effects are not restricted to the linear, but also exploit colour equiluminance and intensity in works such as *Han-San Cadence,* (1963) (Figure 105) by Larry Poons (b.1937). Yet these effects, if not the exact patterns, while undeniably engaging, are

---

[285] On Fontana, see B. Ceysson et al., *Lucio Fontana*, (catalogue) Paris, 1987.

[286] On Louis, see John Elderfield, *Morris Louis*, (catalogue) New York, 1987, Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: essays and reviews,* Chicago, 1998.

[287] On Minimalism see Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*. Seattle, 1990, David Batchelor, *Minimalism* Cambridge, 1997, Gregory Battcock (ed.) *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology,* New York, 1968.

[288] More detailed analysis of these effects is found in Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: a study in the psychology of decorative art* London, 1979 pp. 117-148, Gregory (ed.) *The Artful Eye*, Oxford and New York, 1995 and Livingstone, *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing*, New York, 2002. On Op Art, see Cyril Barret, *An Introduction to Optical Art,* London/ New York, 1971.

hardly novel.[289] Indeed it is the recycling of patterns familiar to the psychology of visual perception that crucially allows them to be used somewhat differently in painting. The effects while still compelling, are as often surrendered to the restless or mobile viewer, indeed to the various incidental distractions of the painting's location, so that the singularity of the 'retinal' pattern competes and draws attention to other qualities of the painting, to its more relaxed and various receptions, to the perceptions of the pattern that actually fall short of or avoid its optical spell (such as very close or distant inspection). In other words the patterns of Op Art now extend painting to certain particulars of the viewing situation, to matters of scale and context, and as much for a print as a painting, but for more than a pattern. Consequently, while the pattern of the Op Art painting is easily reproduced in a photograph, to reproduce it *as a painting* is almost impossible.

In noting the varieties of pattern used in Post-Modernist abstraction we have been drawn into noting ways in which they extend and are extended by painting. This is now considered more fully by returning to Stella's work following the Black series. Here monochrome is maintained as well as the unpainted intervals between stripes, although the unevenness is reduced to a cleaner edge and the brushstroke now highlighted by refraction from metallic particles in the industrial enamels used. The straight lines to the stripes now conform to distinctly symmetrically shaped canvases, so that stripe and interval link shape and colour in a way unavailable to Kelly, and which in turn prompt more elaborate symmetries, inversions and reversals. Works now extend in enormous T-Shapes, U-shapes Star-shapes and various zigzags. Colour variation is later introduced, together with fluorescent paints so that ordering across stripes now assumes some of the complex system noted in Kupka (Figure2) as well as the colour effects found in Op Art, and largely replaces the uneven edge as a regulator of stripe width or edge. The introduction of irregular polyhedrons and curves to the shaped canvases stretch pattern beyond just stripes, in works such as *Effingham I* (1967) (Figure 106) and *Agbatana III* (1968) (Figure 107) so that pattern does not just project to canvas shape, facture and colour, but is also projected by them, and builds stripes and remaining shapes or 'fill' to the

---

[289] An interesting precedent occurs in The Independent Group's display This is Tomorrow at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1956, where Hamilton, John McHale and John Voelcker's contribution, (as Group 2) included standard perceptual test graphics printed on large wall-mounted cards, supplying familiar 'optical effects'. See Richard Morphett, *Richard Hamilton*, (catalogue) London, 1970, pp. 28-30, Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties*, London, 1996, p. 46.

canvas into more diffuse pattern. In other works stripe and colour create intersecting and 'interweaving' pattern, as in *Saskatoon I* (1968) (Figure 108) so that pattern now acquires a basic depth, as stripes are projected by textile and basketry motifs.

Stella's work thus undergoes a steady progression. Painting *as* shape of canvas and industrial paints prompts more elaborate pattern. Stripes duly acquire colour ranges, curves and additional enclosed shapes or fill, and even the 'depth' of interweaving planes or bands. Further pattern surely urges more familiar motifs, more concrete depiction. Yet Stella resists this and instead presses painting further into bas-relief constructions and more freestanding sculpture. The result is a greater sense of relaxation and yet disappointment. This is firstly because the rigour established between pattern and painting cannot be sustained in three dimensions – three dimensions require more of a pattern than a set of curves or planes as painted surfaces. It literally requires another dimension to the governing principles of construction.[290] Secondly, it is because much in painting and sculpture at this time render Stella's version of both decidedly pedestrian.

This brings us to other ways painting is extended by pattern at this time. Stripes abandon canvas for temporary murals upon various architectural features, interior and exterior, in the work of Frenchman Daniel Buren (b.1938). Le Witt converted stripes to lines and grids, and more elaborate geometric figures, devised formulae (or perhaps scores) governing their execution as murals, sometimes without his presence.[291] Gene Davis applied his signature striped colour harmonies temporarily to roads and parking lots, such as *Franklin's Footpath* (1972) a vast expanse (414' X 76') in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Artists of the Surface/Support Group in France in the late sixties, such as Claude Viallat (b.1936) favoured loose hanging rather than stretched supports and adopted various printed fabrics over which were painted striped and gridded motifs; often installed outdoors.[292]

---

[290] Ironically, this is close to the criticism Stella directs at Minimalist sculpture at the time. See Rubin, *Frank Stella,* New York, 1970, pp. 68-70. On later Stella, see Currentartpics 47

[291] Interesting precedent for Le Witt's systems arises in Francois Morellet's 'Op' drawings, see for example *Four Superimposed Webs* (1959) in Barret, *An Introduction to Optical Art*, London/ New York, 1971, p. 31. On LeWitt see also Currentartpics 33.

[292] On the Surface/ Support Group and similar, see, Philip Armstrong et al., (eds.) *As Painting: Division and Displacement*, Columbus/ Ohio/Cambridge/ Mass. 2001-2 and Raphael Rubenstein, 'Opening The Field' *Art in America*, October 2001, pp. 57-61.

Looking to the materials of pigment rather than of support, it has been noted how pattern is relaxed by process (and scale) in works such as Louis' *Alpha Pi* (1960) (Figure 102). Similarly, in Noland's *Beginning* (1958) (Figure 109) staining now reciprocates pattern with process. But where pursued, process steadily relaxes or dissolves pattern. Works such as those of Jules Olitski (b.1922) at this time initially offer simply more irregular circles and pattern through staining, but as technique expands with various pouring, spraying and spattering, in works such as *Seventh Loosha* (1970) (Figure 110) pattern recedes to no more than a Rothko-like framing of edge to centre. Pattern or symmetry is now radically relaxed, in a way unavailable to Rothko, even Frankenthaler or early Louis. It hovers at a compelling minimum, orders colour, tone, facture and scale accordingly. This style is called Lyrical Abstraction and also attracts the work of Poons. The pour-ability stakes are raised with the pigmented latex or polyurethane adopted by Linda Benglis (b.1941) in works such as *Odalisque - hey hey Frankenthauer* (1969) (Figure 111). Here, the quick-setting foam assumes a three-dimensionality that once more broaches sculpture. Later work by Olitski and Poons literally rises to the challenge.[293]

These examples obviously trace the extremes for the way pattern extends painting, is extended by it. On the one hand pattern stretches painting in embracing architecture and the wider environment, and on the other, painting stretches pattern in embracing further versions of pigment and support. This leaves the course of more elaborate pattern and its extension in painting. But before turning to this, mention should to be made of several moderate developments. The work of Brice Marden (b.1938) at this time broadens stripes or narrows monochromes to sets of discrete panels, such as *After The Marchioness of Solana* (1969) (Figure 112) where a distinctive combination of oil and wax are used in generous modulations, more tactile than Newman perhaps, but now strengthening symmetry and identifying colour by discrete panel rather than shift in technique or width of stripe. Also drawn to combined monochrome panels, Robert Mangold (b.1937) from the mid sixties onward combines them with irregular shaped canvases measured not by stripes, but typically an outline of an ellipse, also often irregular, the edge of which

---

[293] On Olitski and Poons see Fried, *Art and Objecthood: essays and Reviews*, Chicago, 1998. Also on Olitski see Currentartpics 52.

meets the frame of the canvas at one or more points, offering a 'pattern' between outline and canvas shape.[294] The shaped canvas is pursued with tinted fibreglass and polyester resin moulds in the work of the Los Angeles-based Ronald Davis (b.1937) where shape now aligns with three-dimensional projections for irregular volumes, offering a further step toward more concrete depiction.[295] Finally, the work of similar 'Fetish/Finish' artists in Los Angeles, including John McCracken (b 1934) and Larry Bell (b.1939) adopts not simply industrial materials but industrial standards of finish (hence the name). In such works pattern while immaculately presented, is hardly immaculate pattern, but rather samples just such presentation. In some ways these works recall the convergence with industrial design found in certain Bauhaus works, such as Albers' sandblasted glass designs. Equally, this attention to industrial process and standards extends concerns explored in the commission and fabrication of works for, rather than by artists, an issue taken up in Chapter Nineteen.

Departing from the interweaving stripes of Stella, artists such as Sean Scully (b.1945) in the early seventies and later Los Angeles-based Don Sorenson (1949-86) and Valerie Jaudon (b.1945) developing more elaborate – even maximised - patterns of interweaving, often preserving the pale edges or intervals to the stripes, if not Stella's more relaxed facture[296]. Although Sorenson's later work places greater emphasis upon process, and in general the use of poured and spattered grounds confined by masking tape to stricter geometries, is commonplace throughout the decade.[297] However the paintings of Joyce Kozloff (b.1942) from around the middle of the decade, order stripes less through interweaving than the symmetries of Native American pattern, as in works such as *Notions of Finish – Frieze III* (1974) where stripes are in turn broken down into grids with intricate variations on colour

---

[294] On Mangold, see Richard Schiff et al, *Robert Mangold*, London, 2000.

[295] On Davis, see Charles Kessler, *Ronald Davis, paintings, 1962-1976* (catalogue) San Francisco, 1976.

[296] On Jaudon see also Currentartpics 81.

[297] On Scully, although only briefly dealing with the early work cited here, see David Carrier, *The Aesthete in the City: The Philosophy and Practice of American Abstract Painting in the 1980s*, Philadelphia, 1994, pp. 243-267. On the rather forgotten Sorenson, see Sandy Ballatore, 'Don Sorenson at Copley and Wilder', (review) *Art in America*, September-October 1976, p. 115, Christopher Knight, 'Don Sorenson – Nicholas Wilder Gallery', (review) *Artforum*, December 1979, p. 80. On Jaudon, see John Perreault, 'Issues in Pattern Painting' *Artforum*, November 1977, pp. 32-36.

and facture.[298] More forthright concern with traditional patterns is also accompanied by concern with their traditional mediums, with weaving, textile printing and ceramic tiling, for example. These present a formidable counter-project to painting. However, certain sampling of textiles may yet be considered as depiction and painting. For example the elaborate collages of various printed and dyed fabrics by Miriam Shapiro (b.1923) or Lucas Samaras (b.1936) such as his *Reconstruction #19* (1977) (Figure 113) sample textile prints by stripes, independent of textile pattern, overlaid rather than interweaved, and closer in system and scale to a Sorenson or a Moses than a quilt or embroidery. These works function as pictures and even painting, when painting now projects such pattern and technique.

Interest in more traditional pattern and mediums – particularly printed textiles - is the basis of the mainly New York-based Pattern and Decoration Movement at this time.[299] It obviously converges with other print sampling in painting, even with other textile sampling, such as that of Viallat, Polke or Rauschenberg. Yet Pattern and Decoration artists are not always and only concerned with printing and textiles, artists such as Robert Kushner (b.1949) and Robert Zakanitch (b.1935) also use quite standard painting to sample much less standard properties of pattern. For Kushner, loosely drawn - not quite Neo-Expressionist - figures, are painted over and around a ground of various printed textiles, as in *Aida* (1979) (Figure 114) introducing casual variations to the dancing figures as a repeating motif, as well as using printed patterns as sheer areas of colour and tone in the background. Elsewhere Kushner expands this use of printed pattern as shading to figures, much the way Lichtenstein's Benday dots are used to indicate tone and colour. Zakanitch also paints common repeating patterns, generally floral and drawn not only from textiles, but to which vigorous brushwork introduces greater variation within the

---

[298] The use of non-western patterns at this time is also anticipated in the titles of many of Stella's works from the late sixties, such as *Agbatana III*, that take their names from ancient Babylonian and Moroccan sites, alluding to exotic and ancient foundations and Islamic pattern. The tendency throughout the seventies is thus to annex peripheral or exotic pattern, as abstraction steadily advances on more familiar, current and western pattern.

[299] On the Pattern and Decoration Movement (or P&D) see Amy Goldin, 'The 'New' Whitney Biennial: Pattern Emerging?' in *Art in America*, May-June, 1975, pp. 72-73, Carrie Rickey, 'Art of the Whole Cloth' in *Art in America*, November, 1979, pp. 73-83, Jeff Perrone, 'The Decorative Impulse' in *Artforum*, November, 1979, pp. 80-81, Corinne Robins, *The Pluralist Era, American Art 1968-1981*, New York, 1984, pp. 131-154, Irving Sandler, *Art of the Postmodern Era: From the late 1960s to the Early 1990s*, New York, 1996, pp. 141-63 and Christopher Miles, 'Tracking Patterns' in *Art in America*, February, 2004, pp. 77-81.

motif. As with Johns or Stella, the pattern is stretched by such variation, while constrained by such version of painting.[300]

In both cases pattern now acquires pictures, and Post-Modernist abstraction gently draws to a close. Floral patterns are not pursued to the murals of a Le Witt or the exterior installations of a Viallat, nor to the foams and pigment cocktails of a Benglis or Poons. But pattern in repeating pictures tempts the single, central motif, even as it trades in vigorous brushwork and drawing. In this respect it converges with New Image Painting, and 'outline and fill' designs. But where brushwork is traded for single flat colours, where drawing and object conform to the simple silhouettes of commercial and civic icons, and where support is no more than loose fabrics or sheets of paper, pattern finds one further extension for depiction and painting. The installation by Mat Mullican (b.1951) at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York (1980) accomplishes this (Figure 115). Mullican's work soon moves away from the central and standard icon, but it is pursued in the work of Peter Halley (b.1953) such as *Prison with Conduit* (1981) (Figure 116) where the title points to the small square of five black vertical stripes depicting bars on a window, and perhaps a prison, while the black horizontal stripes below it form the conduit, and suggest both an electrical circuit (with another kind of cell) and a concealed access to the prison. Where Mullican counts on the loose hanging banner to draw an icon into a more decorative medium and pattern, Halley adopts the texture of a coarse paint roller to sample the strictness of the lines and stripes and the evenness of colour – a pattern of Minimalism in fact. Process and System are gently mocked in other words, more so where they allow more concrete depiction. For the prison and electrical motif, while not initially obvious, offers potent metaphor for the larger Minimalist project.

Other works at this time similarly find Minimalist motifs for pictures, or vice versa. Those of Ross Bleckner (b.1940) use soft or blurred vertical stripes offset by a collage of small birds, the stripes thus rendered as a cage. Yet stripes as a cage or prison bars still allow us to recognise the Minimalist pattern, to project it to picture and object, by a delicate balance. This balance is also present in the work of Philip

---

[300] On Kushner, see Alexandra Anderson-Spivy, *Robert Kushner: gardens of earthly delight*, New York, 1997 and Janet Kardon, *Robert Kushner*, Philadelphia, 1987.

Taaffe (b.1955) from this time where pattern maintains a distinctive facture even as it surrenders outline to stencils and silk-screens. Patterns here neatly sample print and painting, and in examples such as *South Ferry* (1985-6) (Figure 117) find a mooring rope depicted in the simple diagonal motif contained within the gently asymmetrical silhouette, recalling earlier New York abstraction, such as that of Kelly, Al Held (b.1928) or Myron Stout (1908-87). The use of Bridget Riley's patterns in some of Taaffe's work at this time also accompanies a brief interest in how far such borrowings - as 'appropriation' or 'simulation' - may be taken before charges of plagiarism arise. The work of Sherry Levine (b.1947) and Mike Bidlo (b.1953) at this time variously duplicate particular, well-known works, usually Modernist, photography as well as painting, to plumb where the useful sample and sampling become too obscure or specialised. The project of abstraction strictly would seem to end by the mid-eighties and to underline the closure of Post-Modernism generally.[301]

Crucial changes in abstraction thus coincide with distinctions drawn here for the periods of Late and Post-Modernism. Late Modernist abstraction converges upon established pattern with basic symmetry and reduction of simple volumes in perspective and projection schemes to linear and tonal ambiguity. It uses pattern to sample fine distinctions between facture, scale, colour and tone and these inspire use of greater, more emphatic pattern and in turn greater latitude to facture, scale, colour and tone relations. But where pattern then becomes paramount, Post-Modernism arises and this reversal closely coincides with the arrival of Pop Art. Post-Modernist abstraction samples the projection *of* pattern *to* painting and depiction. This too inspires greater latitude to scale and materials, but when pattern is pursued to repeating pictures, to the single concrete motif, style and period are exhausted. The course of abstraction thus strengthens the claim for the periods as proposed, and grasp of stylistics. More will be made of the co-ordination in the concluding chapter. Here grasp of period is furthered by looking next to developments outside of depiction and painting. The outward projection to material sampling that arises with abstraction was noted in Chapter Eleven. In the following

---

[301] For standard interpretation of many of the artists mentioned above, at this time, see Hal Foster, 'Signs Taken for Wonders', in *Art in America* June, 1986, pp. 80-91, p.139. Also useful interviews are included in Lilly Wei, 'Talking Abstract: Part Two' in *Art in America*, December, 1987, for Levine, p. 114, for Halley, pp. 120-21, p. 171, for Taaffe, p. 122, p. 171. Also on Taaffe see Currentartpics 24.

chapter this is traced against the periods as proposed, under the description of 'expanded materials'.