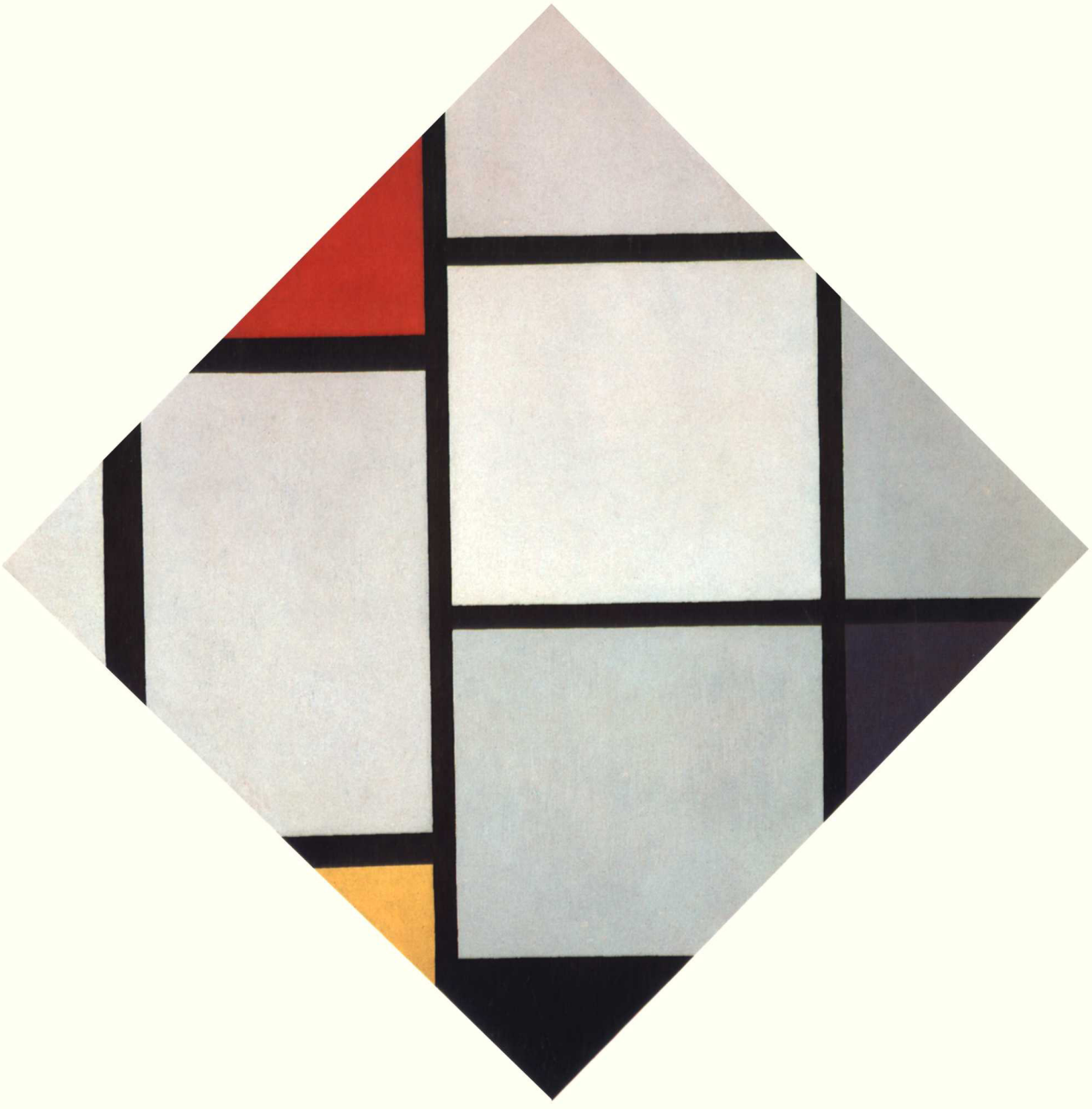

MONDRIAN

The Diamond Compositions

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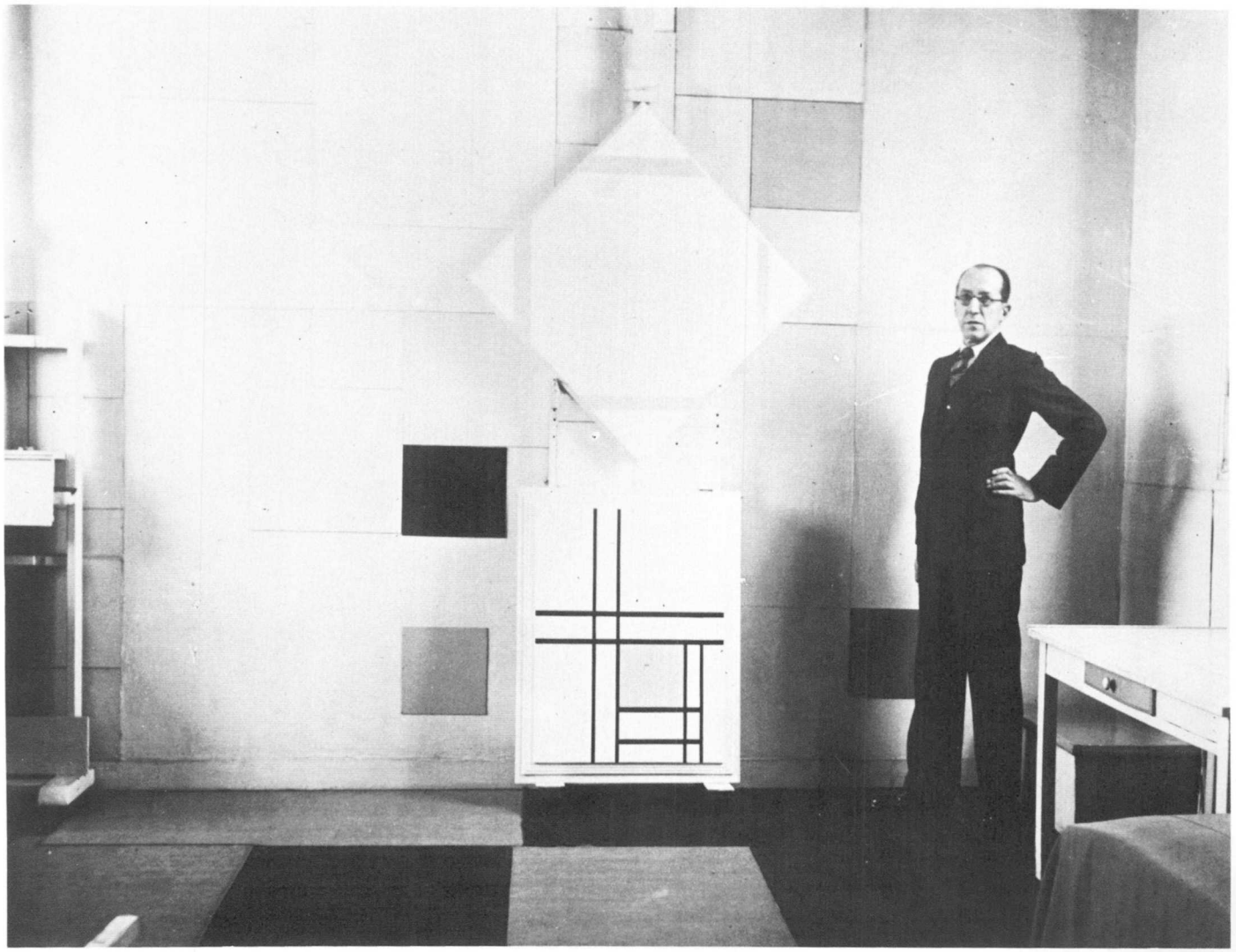

MONDRIAN
The Diamond Compositions

E. A. Carmean, Jr.

National Gallery of Art, Washington 1979

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Cover: *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue,* National Gallery of Art, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1971.

Frontispiece: Mondrian in his studio, rue du Départ, Paris, 1933, standing next to *Composition with Yellow Lines.* Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

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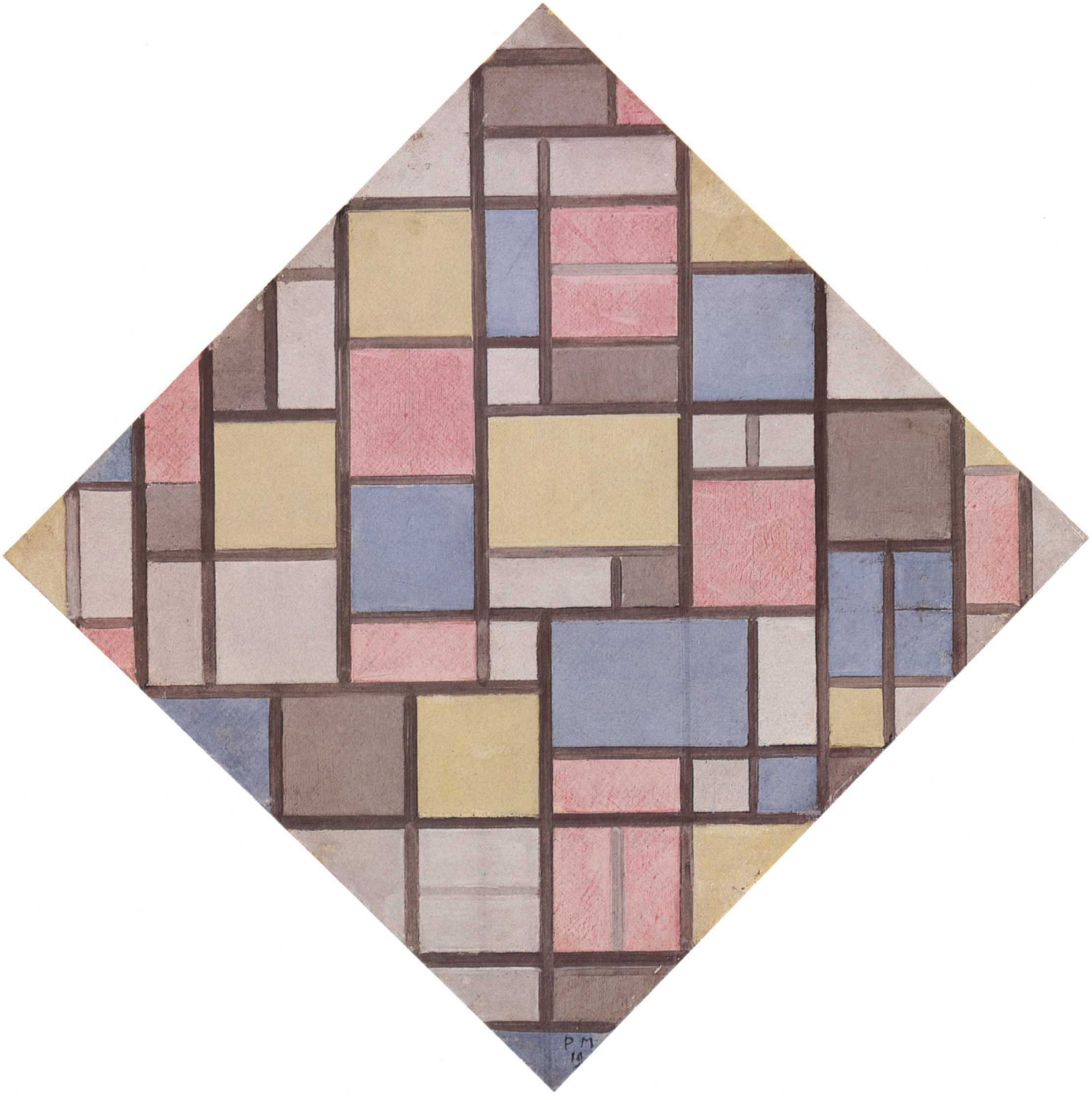

1. *Composition in Diamond Shape,* paintings cat. no. 4. Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.

FOREWORD

AT THE START OF THIS DECADE the Trustees of the National Gallery expanded the collecting policy of the museum to go more deeply into the art of the twentieth century, with the goal that by the year 2000 our collection of masterworks would include key paintings, sculpture, and prints from this era. It is expected that the majority of these works of art would enter the collection as gifts from generous donors, just as in the past the Gallery's holdings of old masters have come to the museum. No single work could have better exemplified this project than Mondrian's extraordinary *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue*, generously donated to the Gallery in 1971 by Herbert and Nannette Rothschild. Mondrian is one of the central artists in the invention of abstraction, and the Rothschild diamond has long been regarded as a key monument in his oeuvre.

The Rothschild painting was not the first Mondrian diamond to be exhibited at the National Gallery. In 1963 *Painting I* of 1926, owned by The Museum of Modern Art, was shown in an exhibition of major works from that institution's collection. More recently, the great *Victory Boogie-Woogie* owned by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine was included in *Aspects of Twentieth-Century Art*, an exhibition held in June 1978 to commemorate the opening of the Gallery's new East Building. These three paintings, along with five other canvases, have been brought together in the present exhibition, *Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions*.

It is the responsibility of museums not only to collect works of art, but to preserve and study them as well. The first project undertaken by the Department of Twentieth-Century Art upon its establishment in 1974 was a scholarly examination of the Rothschild painting. As this study proceeded, it became necessary to examine Mondrian's other diamond pictures and, in addition, the numerous drawings he made for studio ideas. Progressively, it became apparent that this material, cutting across the range of the artist's development, would make an interesting exhibition, rewarding to the eye and with sufficient new information to provide a scholarly contribution. Thus *Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions* follows *Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting* as the second in a series of didactic exhibitions devoted to various aspects of the Gallery's collection.

We are most grateful to the lenders who have allowed their rare and fragile paintings and drawings to be in this show. Although certain canvases were not in condition to travel to Washington, we have included them in the essay and in the catalogue, to permit a complete listing of Mondrian's diamond compositions. This study also required the assistance of many other people, both friends of Mondrian who shared their recollections of the artist and art historians who made available their specialized knowledge of his paintings.

Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions was organized by the Gallery's curator of Twentieth-Century Art, E. A. Carmean, Jr. Trinkett Clark, research assistant in the Twentieth-Century Department, aided in all phases of the exhibition, including research and interviews in the United States while Mr. Carmean was in Europe. Their studies revealed a fascinating—and puzzling—history around the National Gallery's own painting, which required a joint detective effort with conservator William Leisher, published here as an appendix to the catalogue. Many other staff members were involved in this project, and we extend to them our grateful appreciation of their efforts.

J. CARTER BROWN
Director

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

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Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS EXHIBITION AND STUDY would not have been possible without the time and efforts of a great many people. Trinkett Clark, research assistant in the Department of Twentieth-Century Art, aided in all aspects of the exhibition and assumed organizational duties during my absence in Europe. William Leisher and Barbara Miller of the conservation staff performed miracles of discovery in the laboratory during each complicated step in examining the Washington painting.

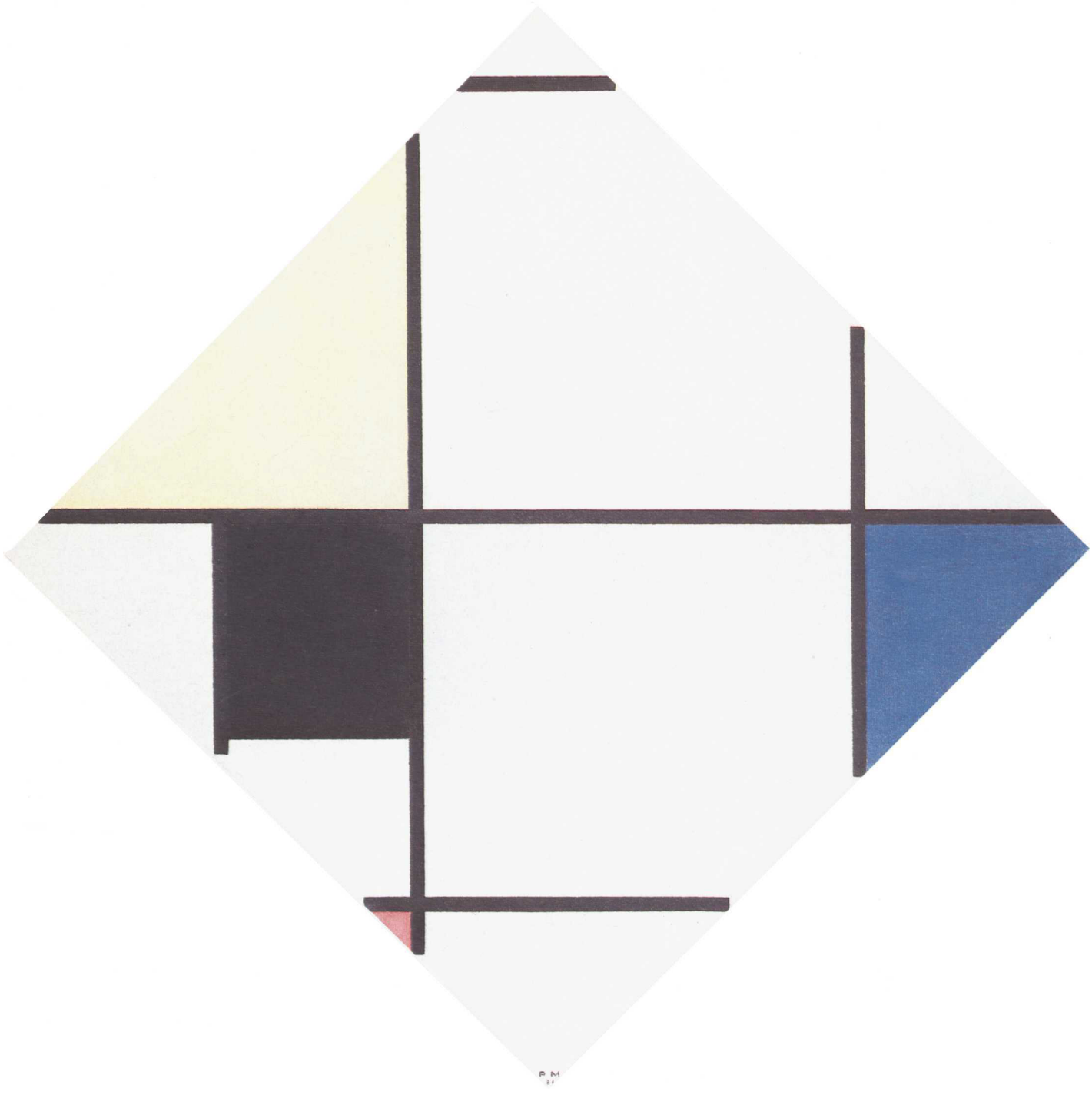
We are especially thankful to the scholars who shared their knowledge of the diamond paintings. The senior figure, Michel Seuphor, who is celebrating his eightieth birthday this year, consented to several interviews and made available his incredible documentary material. His junior colleagues, Robert P. Welsh (University of Toronto) and H. L. C. Jaffé, as well as Joop M. Joosten (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam), Herbert Henkels (Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague), and Jan Burema (Gemeentelijke dienst voor culture, Hilversum) answered my questions. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Marigene Butler of the Philadelphia Museum of Art made arrangements for Mr. Leisher and myself to examine the Philadelphia 1926 painting in their laboratory; Nancy Troy and Robert L. Herbert of Yale University conducted a similar examination of the picture there. In addition Ms. Troy and Susan Denker (Brown University) kindly made available research from their dissertations.

Mondrian's friends and admirers were also most generous. James Johnson Sweeney and Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine discussed their important paintings with me, while Harry Holtzman and Charmion von Wiegand recalled the artist and his New York years in conversations with Miss Clark.

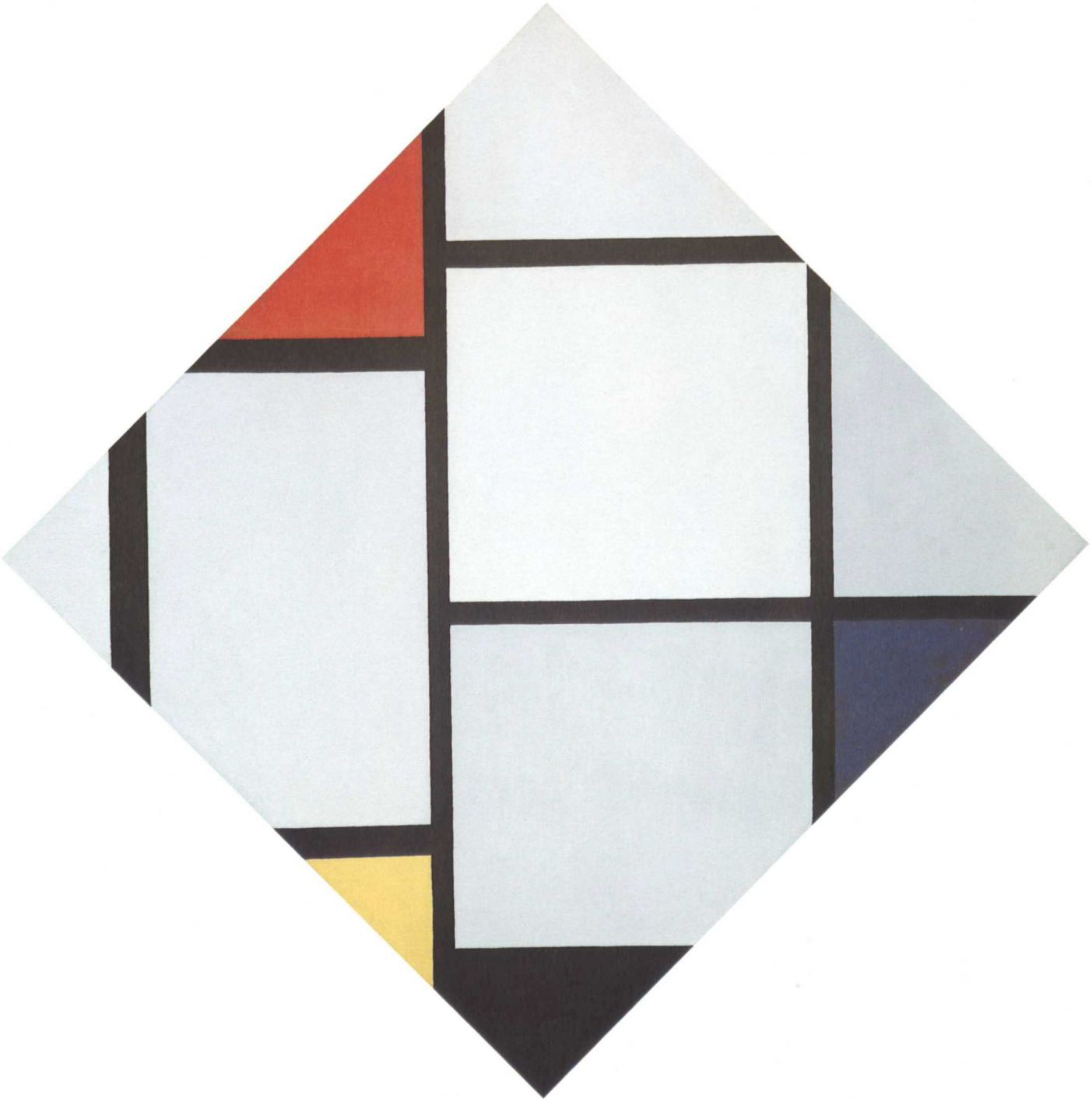
The following people were also important to this project: in Washington—Roland Housan, The Embassy of France, and W. Joris Witkam, The Embassy of the Netherlands; in New York—Judith Harney of the Pace Gallery, Budd Hopkins, Dorothy Kosinski of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Linda Lagacé, and Pamela Stein of The Museum of Modern Art; in Chicago—Anne Rorimer and Courtney Donnell of the Art Institute; in Cambridge—Agnes Saalfield of Harvard University; in Paris— Yve-Alain Bois and Jean Clay of *Macula Revue*, Nicole Genetet-Morel of *Art Present*, and Pierre Schneider of *L'Express*.

Many members of the National Gallery staff contributed. Richard Amt and José Naranjo made technical photographs and analyzed reproductions which presented the only evidence of two other diamond compositions. Arthur Wheelock, curator of Dutch paintings, assisted in negotiations. Katie Klapper and Dana Wechsler, summer interns in the Department of Twentieth-Century Art, conducted research on this topic. Cathy Gebhard edited the text and helped clarify several points. William J. Williams of the Education Department translated this material into wall labels, and the blend of visual and didactic experiences is the work of the Department of Installation and Design.

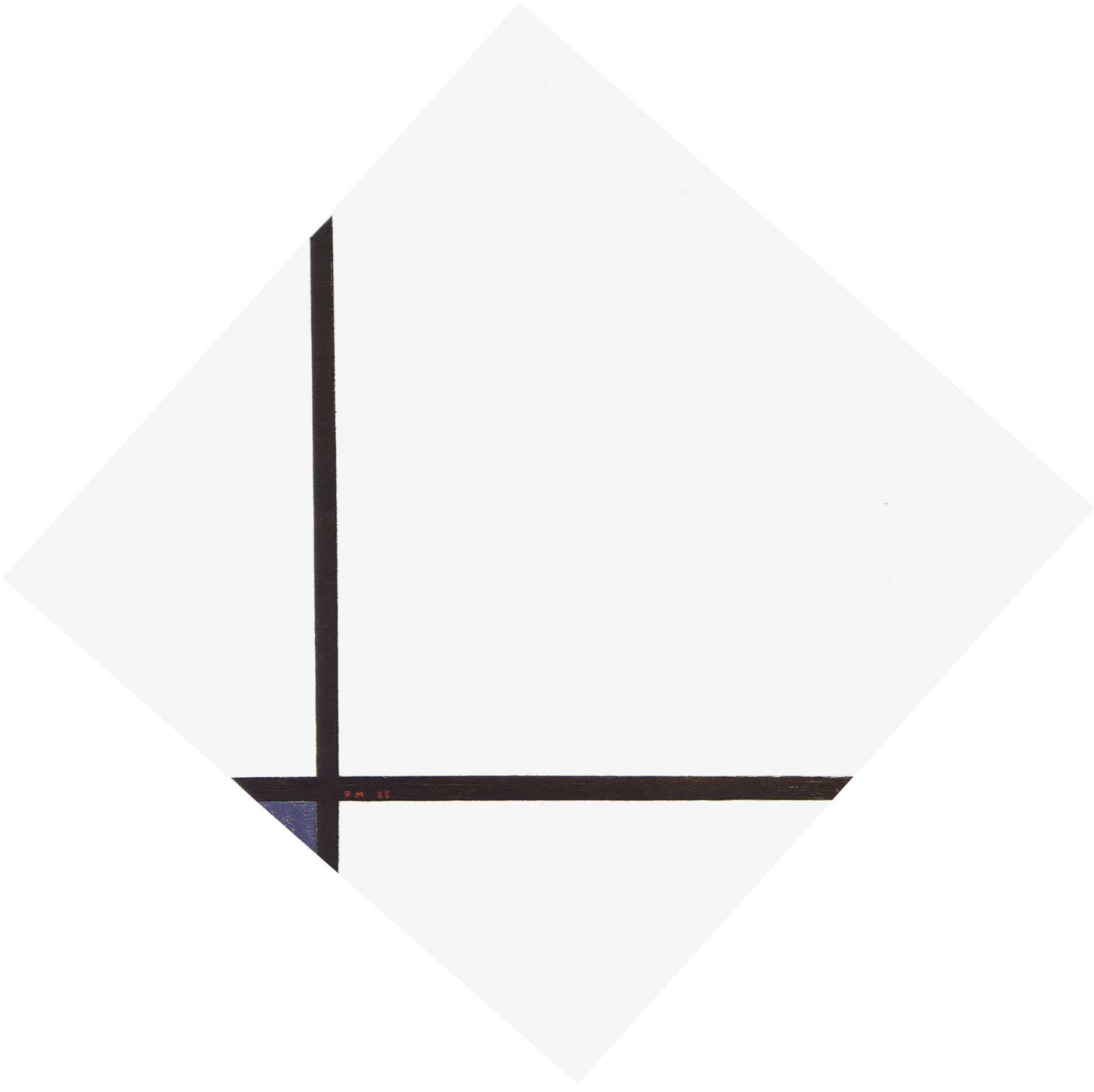
E. A. CARMEAN, JR.



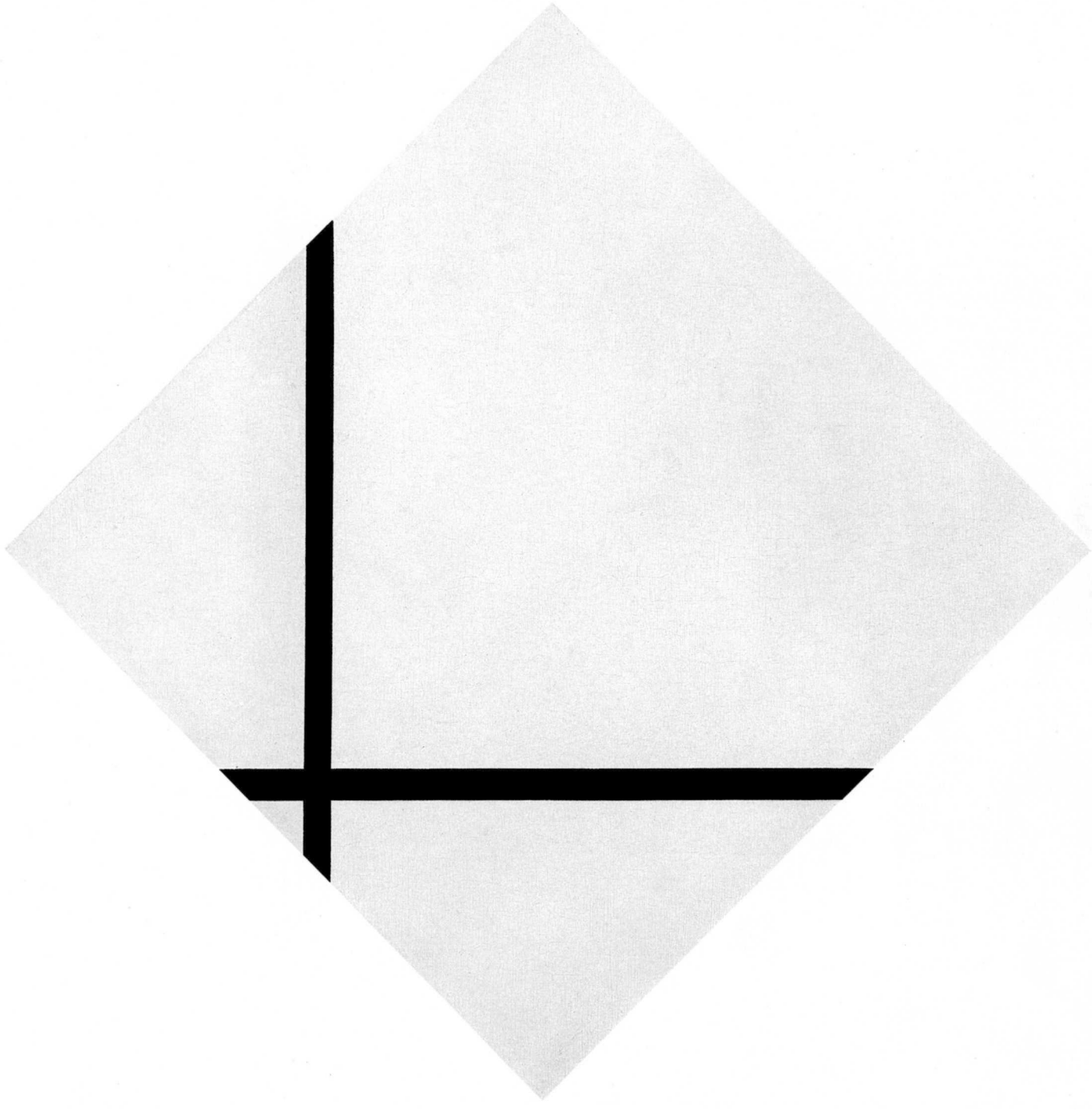
2. *Diagonal Composition,* paintings cat. no. 5. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.



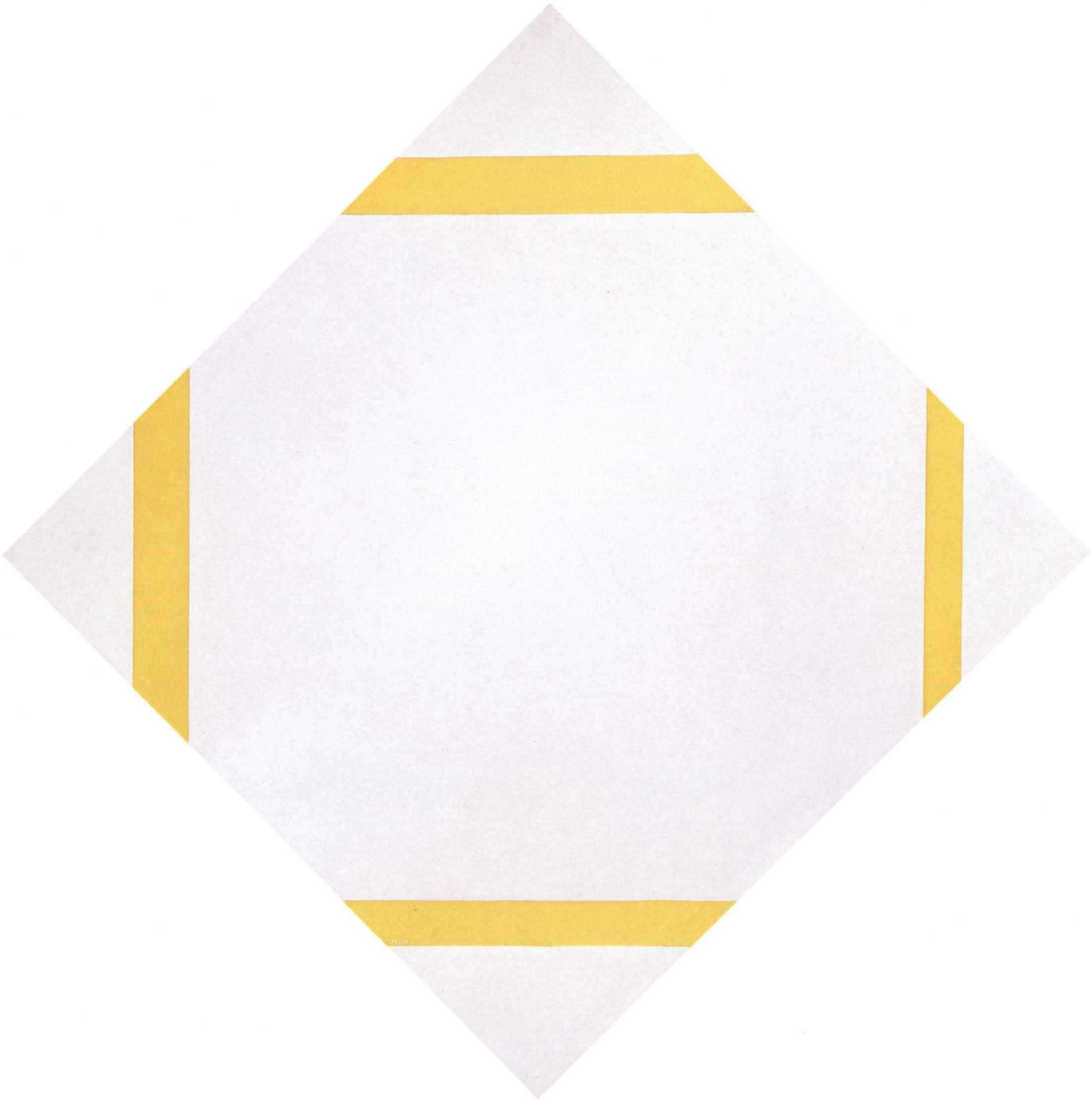
3. *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue,* paintings cat. no. 6. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1971.



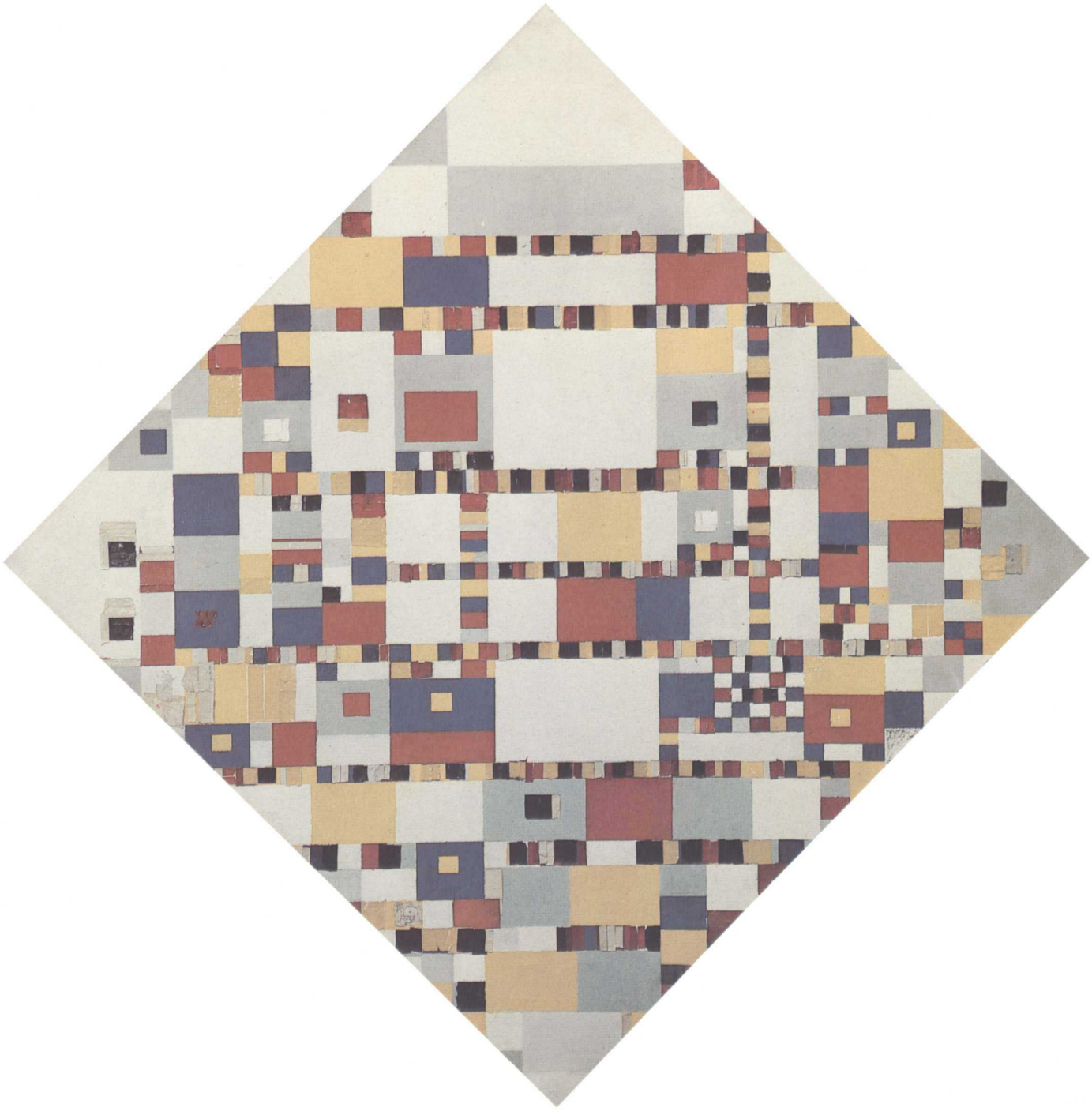
4. *Composition with Blue,* paintings cat. no. 9. Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection.



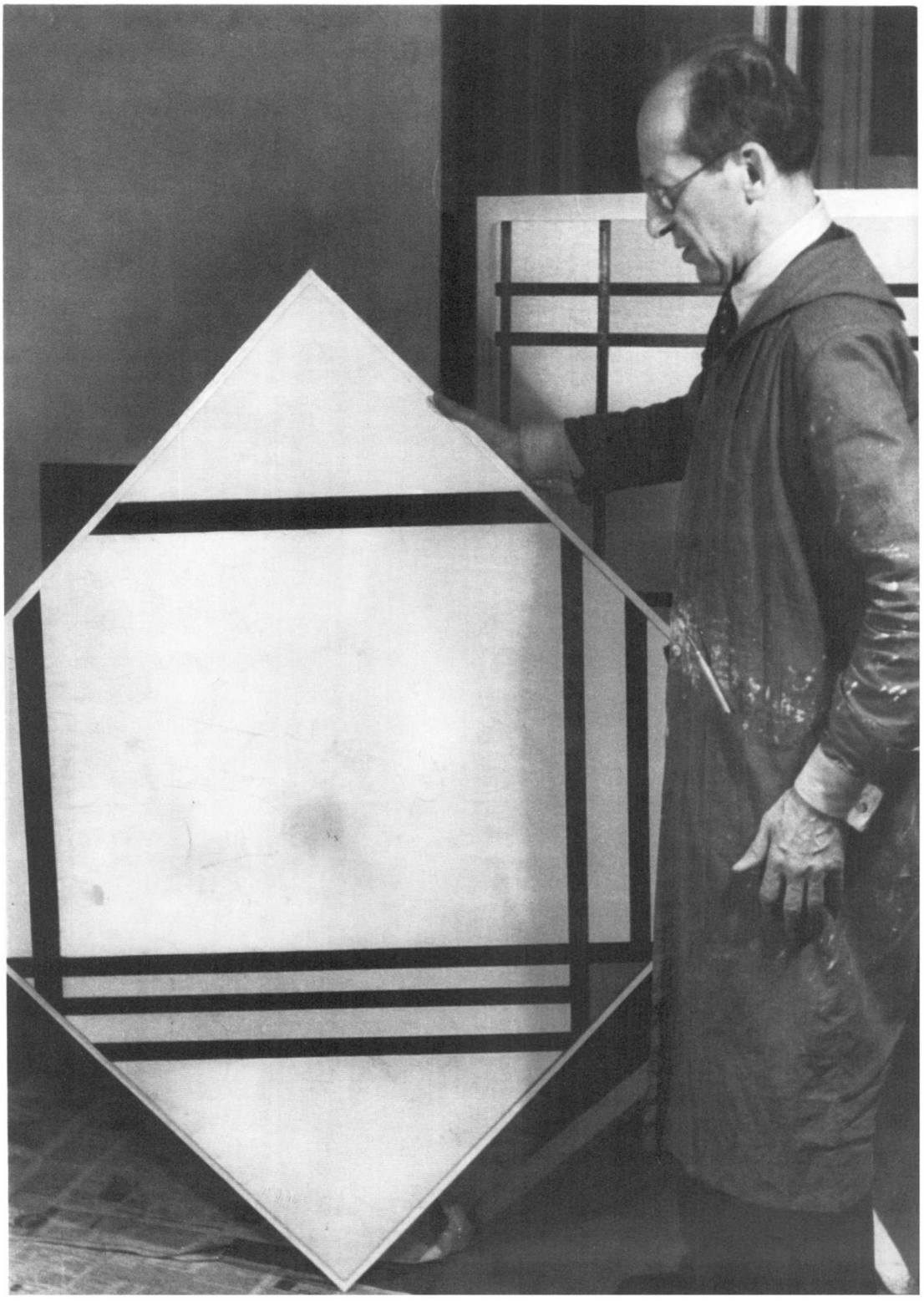
5. Composition with Two Lines, paintings cat. no. 13. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, on loan from the Municipality of Hilversum, the Netherlands.



6. *Composition with Yellow Lines,* paintings cat. no. 14. Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.



7. *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* paintings cat. no. 16. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine.



Mondrian in his New York studio on First Avenue holding *Composition in a Square with Red Corner,* 1943, document no. 6. Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris.

MONDRIAN: THE DIAMOND COMPOSITIONS

E. A. Carmean, Jr.

THIS SMALL, DIDACTIC EXHIBITION is not a comprehensive review of Mondrian's work. Rather it concentrates on one of his great formal and expressive inventions: the diamond-shaped painting. These canvases occur in almost every phase of his mature career, from the first four which initiate his abstract work to the last picture, *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* where Mondrian was still proposing new ideas. The diamond paintings are probably the most famous of the artist's pictures and have become one of the classic images of modern art. This prominence is remarkable when we realize that there are only sixteen known paintings in the format, and of these, less than half are in the black bands and color planes vocabulary we generally identify as Mondrian's style.

The essay which follows is a study of several aspects of the diamond paintings. Although their format makes them individual, the diamonds are related to Mondrian's other work. As we will see, he often either extrapolated ideas from the rectangular paintings and translated them into the diamonds or used the diamond format to introduce new ideas which later emerge in rectangular canvases. At the same time, the diamonds can be seen as a unique set sharing particular compositional and expressive elements. Moreover, they have an internal relationship and in certain cases can literally be seen as variations on a theme.

In making his diamond paintings Mondrian appears to have studied various possibilities first in drawings. Fortunately nine such sheets are known; and they provide insights into the origins of the format, its crucial role in changing Mondrian's art in 1925-1926, and the creation of his great last painting.

The initial state of this project was a study of the National Gallery's *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue.* During this work I came to realize the central importance for Mondrian's art of the diamond paintings as a whole. Certain questions encountered in research and analysis led back to a more complete examination of the Washington picture, which is here printed as Study A. A discussion of a possible eighteenth diamond canvas follows in Study B. We have also prepared a catalogue raisonné of known and missing diamond paintings, supplemented by a catalogue of the diamond composition drawings and a listing of documents which bear directly upon these pictures. Finally, a short bibliography and chronology is included.

Mondrian's diamond compositions have never been studied in union before. Nevertheless, this study would not have been possible without the crucial Mondrian scholarship of the last twenty-five years, including that initiated by Michel Seuphor, then continued by Robert P. Welsh. Hans L. C. Jaffé and Joop M. Joosten have expanded this work, joined most recently by Kermit Champa and other younger art historians.[1]

Tableau Losangique

We have entitled the exhibition and this accompanying study *The Diamond Paintings* after Mondrian's own term for the mid-1920s works *tableau losangique.*[2] *Losange* in French translates directly to the English cognate lozenge where *en losange* can be rendered as diamond shaped. It is this distinction which Mondrian wanted to maintain in using *losangique*, for *losange* indicates a diamond in an elongated form, with axes of unequal length; Mondrian's diamond is always a square turned 45° with equal axes. His friends pointed out the ambiguities suggested by *losangique*, but Mondrian insisted upon its use:[3] the term is found as the title of diamond paintings by his followers Jean Gorin and Cezar Domela made shortly after this period. Mondrian adopted the term *losangiquement* in the 1930s to indicate the form of the work and referred to his paintings as diamonds in English in New York at the end of his life.[4]

The Peculiarities of the Diamond Shape

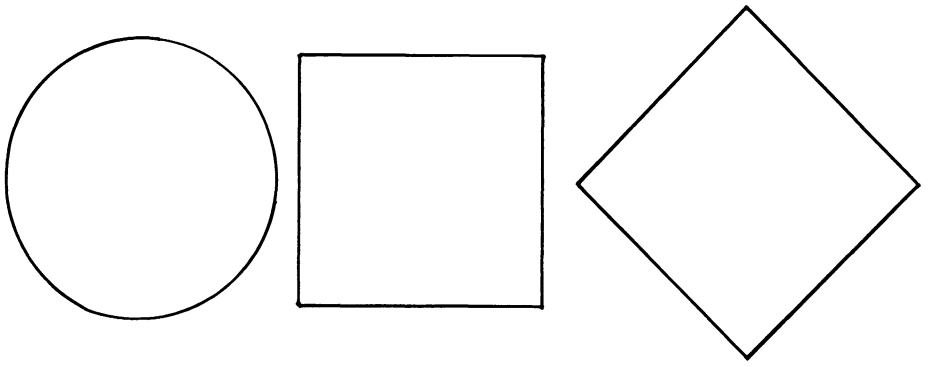
The square diamond, like the square rectangle and the circle, is a special pictorial shape. While all three formats share the unique quality, for simple shapes, of being vertically *and* horizontally symmetrical (the same

both ways, not the same each way), only the diamond has points instead of sides marking the limits of its lateral spread. The rectangle, of course, indicates its height and width with its parallel sides, and the circle with one circumferential side. In the latter two cases, the outside reach of the picture coincides with its exterior sides. Only the diamond offers a (simple) double symmetrical shape which points its height and width and has sides which do not equate with those limits. Because of this the sides of the diamond seem to cut, rather than to constrain, the elements of the picture which come in contact with them.[5]

Another distinction can also be made between these three simple shapes—that of surface area and visual size. The square, circle, and diamond forms diagramed here (dia. a) have an equal surface area, but the diamond, because of the greater distance from point to opposing point, reads as a much larger shape. Within this shape any continuous horizontal (or vertical) placed along or near the horizontal (or vertical) axis will be of greater length than is possible in the comparable square. As we will see these characteristics of the dynamic shape of the diamond—its cutting edges, its greater surface, and its extended lines—correspond directly to particular aims of Mondrian's art. The diamond was in fact a form both instrumental in and receptive to his evolving ideas, and it is in Mondrian's diamond paintings where we find his art at its most fulfilled and assured.

Questions of Origin

The invention and subsequent articulation of the diamond-shaped abstract painting is certainly Mondrian's claim. No precedent—in the full sense—can be cited. To be sure, diamond-shaped paintings do exist before Mondrian's, including Dutch portraits which he may have known.[6]



a. Circle, square, and diamond forms of equal surface area.

But in these works the nature of the shaping is decorative, and because of the illusionary nature of the images the angled edges of the painting play no graphic role in the (modern) sense of composition.

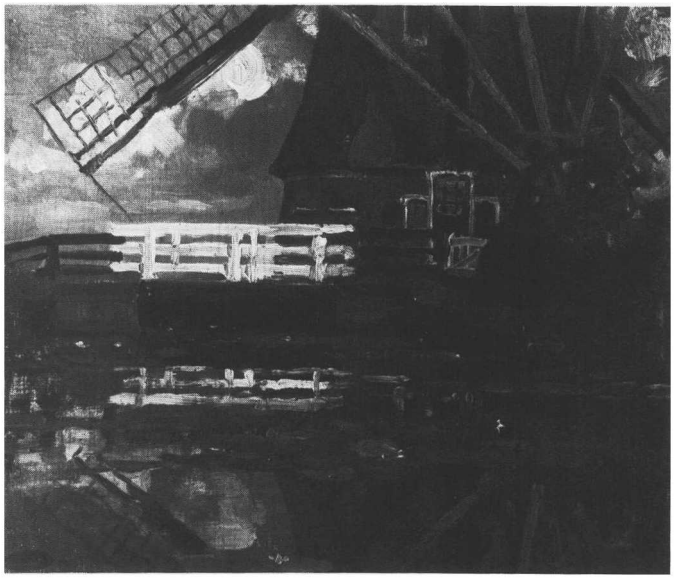
Mondrian's diamonds have such peculiar formal qualities that scholars have been led to suggest other, nonpictorial sources for them. The most interesting of these was first proposed by Meyer Schapiro: the heraldic diamond form escutcheons of the deceased, available to Mondrian either in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of church interiors or, as Budd Hopkins has written, in contemporary churches.[7]While this influence cannot be ruled out, it should be noted that the correspondences are most convincingly made to Mondrian's later and spare compositions of the 1920s and 1930s. The first and precedent-making pictures of 1918-1919 bear far less resemblance (see below).

Other writers have found affinities between the diamonds and Mondrian's own early work, especially a series of landscape paintings done around 1900 (fig. 1) where a peaked roof and its direct reflection in the water compose a diamond motive. Given the eighteen year gap between these works and Mondrian's first diamond pictures, one must agree with Robert Welsh that ". . . it would be incorrect to see this work as a conscious prognosis of the diamond compositions."[8] Nevertheless, that Mondrian used this motive in his pictures is worthy of note. What these early paintings do reveal is the artist's tendency toward two-dimensional, surface-oriented design as well as simple geometric patterns.

Mondrian and Impressionism and Cubism

These internal and external sources are at best secondary influences on Mondrian's development of the diamond painting. Rather, the diamond appeared in response to directions within Mondrian's own works of the preceding six years and was specifically the result of a dialogue between cubism and impressionism. As this dialogue continued to inform Mondrian's painting throughout his career, it is important for us to examine the period of 1912-1918 at some length before discussing the diamonds which develop from it.

Mondrian had worked in an impressionist manner as early as 1900, although his pictures never fully conformed to that style—a logical consequence of his relative isolation in Holland. This provincialism is also a characteristic of his subsequent pictures in expressionist, pointillist, and fauvist idioms. Only after his move to Paris in December 1911 and his



1. *Mill by the Water,* c. 1905, oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 30.2 x 38.1 cm (11⅞ x 15 in.), The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *(Unless otherwise noted, all paintings and drawings are by Piet Mondrian.)*

direct contact with cubism does Mondrian's art really achieve a significant stature.

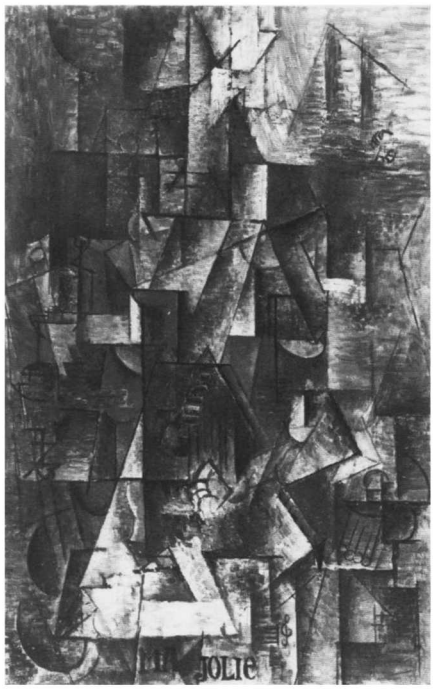
The cubism Mondrian found in Paris was at the end of its high analytical period, a moment when the works of Picasso and Braque were at their most complex (fig. 2). Intricately detailed, filled with nuances of shading and drawing, and painterly, these canvases are as close as cubism came to abstraction. Given these characteristics, it is extraordinary how rapidly Mondrian absorbed this difficult style into his own new works, which by 1914 have a sophistication and unity that nearly matches that of these sources.

It is important to isolate two aspects of this absorption: firstly that it was of a formal rather than thematic nature, and secondly that even if cubism was becoming less spatial and less descriptive, Mondrian's translation was more two-dimensional and abstract. In the classic cubist paintings of this moment the subject still retained a sculptural presence, albeit that of bas-relief. The planes in the cubist scaffolding shunt back and forth spatially, further modeling the image(s). Finally the figure or still life rests firmly on the bottom of the painting—though it fades from the edges along the three upper sides—giving an even greater impression of palpable mass.

As early as March 1913 Mondrian's work was described as a "very abstract cubism"[9] (by Guillaume Apollinaire), and by 1914 this term was quite appropriate. In such paintings as *Composition No. 6* (fig. 3) of that year, Mondrian has transformed the cubist scaffolding into a grid which spreads out laterally like a screen. Given this structure the color planes, which are in pinks, blues, and grays, are also positioned much more two-dimensionally. The drawing is now almost entirely composed of horizontal and vertical lines, with only occasional accents of curvilinear elements—a disposition toward the geometric which becomes a hallmark of Mondrian's mature style.

Faced with this style, there are almost no clues as to the subject of the painting. But as Robert Welsh has shown,[10] this picture can be connected with building façades in Paris; indeed many of Mondrian's works from this period derive from architectural sources, including church architecture, railway stations as well as apartment structures. These subjects are clearly different from the figural and still-life themes of Picasso and Braque. William Rubin has suggested that Mondrian perceived an analogy between the cubist scaffolding with its "upward narrowing and dematerialization"[11] and Gothic architecture and thus selected the latter for his theme. But it seems to me that Mondrian's subjects are more properly understood as being a result of his parallel increasing interest in impressionism.

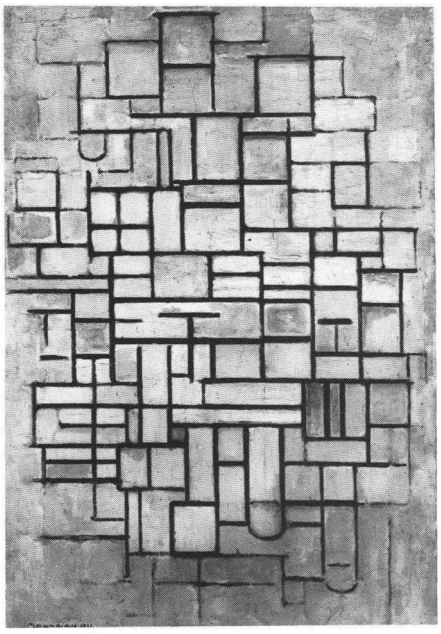
While we have no documentary evidence that Mondrian was studying the impressionists' paintings during this period, his works reveal many analagous features. The structure in Mondrian's pictures, although it clearly derives from cubism, has a tendency toward a more evenly posed composition, delicate tonalities of pink and blue, and a less tangible appearance, all characteristics of the impressionist canvas. Furthermore, the subjects—Paris architecture, Gothic cathedrals, and the slightly later seascapes—are ones standard to this style, especially to the paintings of Monet. Significantly, these themes provided Mondrian's cubist works with subjects that not only have a given structure of horizontal and vertical elements, corresponding to his pictorial constructions, but also are planate, and thus in keeping with the increasingly screenlike surface of his images. This manner of selection is impressionistic;[12] these artists "edited" their paintings by choosing views that would accord with their



2. Pablo Picasso, Spanish (French School), 1881-1973, *"Ma Jolie" (Woman with a Zither or Guitar),* 1911-1912, oil on canvas, 100.0 x 65.4 cm (39⅜ x 25¾ in.), The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

style, avoiding a vista with any large areas of solid color which would break their facture of small interwoven strokes of differing hues. In addition an impressionist painting can be seen as essentially a projection of a scene onto a flat surface, not unlike a photographic or cinematic image. As we have noted Mondrian's 1914 structure has a similar screenlike appearance, although highly abstracted from its visual source. Thus both styles as a result of this quality have a lightness, which is notably distinct from the sense of volume and weight still evident in cubism.

Mondrian's 1914 works differ from cubist paintings in another way: the relationship between the image and the surrounding pictorial space. It is this difference—and its development in Mondrian's hands

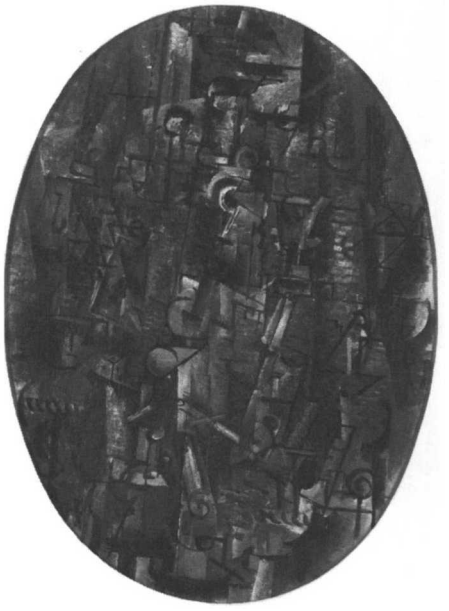


3. *Composition No. 6,* 1914, oil on canvas, 88.0 x 61.0 cm (34⅝ x 24 in.), Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

—which leads to the diamonds. We have seen how the image in the cubist painting is disposed toward the frame in such a manner that a neutral space surrounds it on the three upper sides, while the lower portion rests on the bottom edge. Rubin has observed that in Mondrian's works:

> the dissolution of the scaffolding near the edge is consistently carried out on all four sides. . . . Moreover, Mondrian's "floating" of his now more filigree structure in the lateral as well as the shallow recessional space of the composition gives it a lightness and less allusively architectural appearance. . . .[13]

The cubists were, of course, aware of this neutral area which surrounded their increasingly flatter and more abstracted structures. This area was necessary to provide an ambiguous ground for the painted image which itself fluctuated between volume and flat pattern. Nevertheless it presented, as Braque referred to it, a "problem of corners."[14] As a solu-



4. Georges Braque, French, 1882-1963, *Still Life with Dice and Pipe,* 1911, oil on canvas, 79.0 x 59.0 cm (31⅛ x 23¼ in.), Private collection.

tion to the problem Braque and Picasso tried fitting their compositions into oval or circular formats (fig. 4), but here the difficulty of adjusting the basically geometric and modeled structure to the edge of the work still remained, with its attendant question of how to visually account for the discontinuities caused by the conjunction of the two-dimensional presence of the frame and the sculptural implications of the painted field.

Mondrian adopted the oval composition into his works as well, often painting an outlined oval structure on a rectangular canvas. But in other works a change occurs. In *Composition No. 6,* for example, the image is essentially ovoid, but here the border is absent and the scaffolding dissolves into the rectangular ground around the central construction. Now the painting reads as a rectangular field containing an image that is oval in character. Further, as Mondrian's structure is quite two-

dimensional the spatial distinctions between it and the surrounding areas are far less ambiguous. This increases its independence from the pictorial field.

There are historical precedents for this kind of imagistic independence, using illusionistic space. One pertinent for our discussion is Rubens' *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* (fig. 5) where the figures form a vertical (and close-up) diamond configuration against the horizontal (and distant) landscape. In Mondrian's *Composition No. 6* the cubist-impressionist screen acquires a unity of image which is comparable, the first stage in the development of the diamond.

5. Peter Paul Rubens, Flemish, 1577-1640, *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus,* c. 1616, oil on canvas, 222 x 209 cm (87⅜ x 82¼ in.), Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Plus and Minus

Mondrian's next set of works, the so-called plus-and-minus pictures, form the connection between his cubist paintings and the diamonds. They were created in relative isolation from cubism, as Mondrian had returned to the Netherlands for a visit in August 1914 and was retained there by World War I. He became friends with Bart van der Leck and Theo van Doesburg, learning and sharing their style of sharp geometric forms and pure colors which by 1917 led to the de Stijl movement.

Mondrian's *Composition with Lines* (fig. 6) of that same year shows the developments of this period. Now the cubist color planes have been eliminated, and the painting depends entirely upon a linear structure in solid black against the white surface. This scaffolding, although still distantly cubist in character, is here disjointed, made of short, independent, horizontal and vertical lines which occasionally intersect. While evenly disposed on the surface, certain crossing elements within this field do create minor points of focus.

Earlier we observed how in the 1914 *Composition No. 6* Mondrian had dispensed with the oval bordering band and allowed the grid itself to establish the basic format. *Composition with Lines* represents the end of this development; the structure here assumes a clear identity as an independent shape. Furthermore it is the structure alone which creates the image. As we might expect in a cubist-derived painting, there is still the problem of corners. And when we read the image as depicting depth (see below), they do have an oddly indeterminate character. But we can also see this picture abstractly. Then the black elements form a circular structure, and the corners, being continuous with the neutral white field, become simply part of the flat ground.

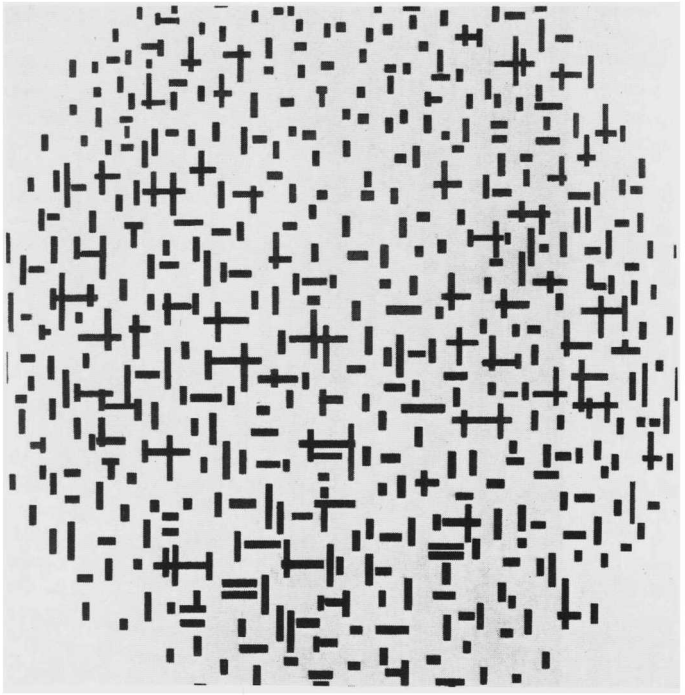
In spite of its abstract appearance, *Composition with Lines* does derive from an external visual source—the pier or breakwater projecting into the ocean at Domburg.[15] This subject, and particularly the sparkle of sunlight on the water, relates directly to impressionism rather than cubism. Further, Mondrian's means of stating this theme—by short disconnected elements somewhat evenly distributed over the surface—is in accord with this style. Also impressionist in character is the relationship of Mondrian's choice of subject to his formal ends, for as Rubin has written:

> Looking at the sea, which extended before him laterally rather than rising perpendicularly (as did the facades), and which was a flickering and elusive surface rather than a concrete three-dimensional object, Mondrian found that source in nature which is perhaps, through its "formlessness," the most inherently abstract.[16]

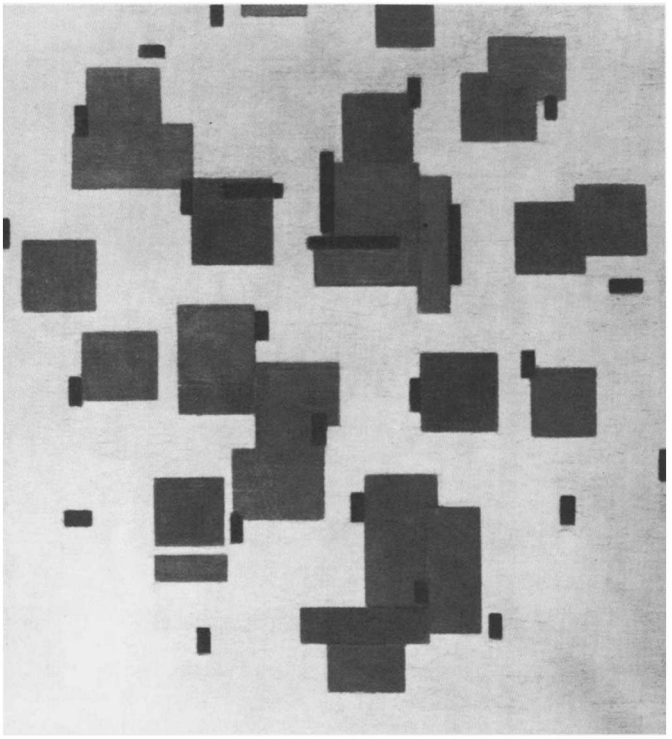
It is important to note in this comparison with impressionism, that Mondrian's works share the similar goal of capturing reality. This ideal remains a constant in his art, but with the invention of the diamonds and his mature style, the manner in which it is expressed undergoes radical transformation.

Toward the Diamond

One more step was necessary in Mondrian's work before the abstract circular structure *Composition with Lines* of 1917 was transformed into the first diamond painting of the following year. This took place in two related paintings from 1917—*Composition in Color, A* and *Composition in Color, B* (fig. 7)—as well as a corollary drawing for the latter. The two paintings are quite different from the preceding plus-and-minus pictures. Here Mondrian returns to flat rectangles of color unbounded and occasionally overlapping. Although the black structure is absent, short black elements are placed on or between the color blocks. The arrangement is far more casual than that in the plus-and-minus works and does not provide the same unity. This



6. *Composition with Lines,* 1917, oil on canvas, 108.2 x 108.2 cm (42⅝ x 42⅝ in.), Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo



7. *Composition in Color, B,* 1917, oil on canvas, 59.0 x 44.0 cm (19¾ x 17⅜ in.), Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (Photo taken from Seuphor, p. 264).

more disparate character prevents the composition from having a particular identity, although it does indirectly suggest a shape. Significantly, that form is a diamond.[17]

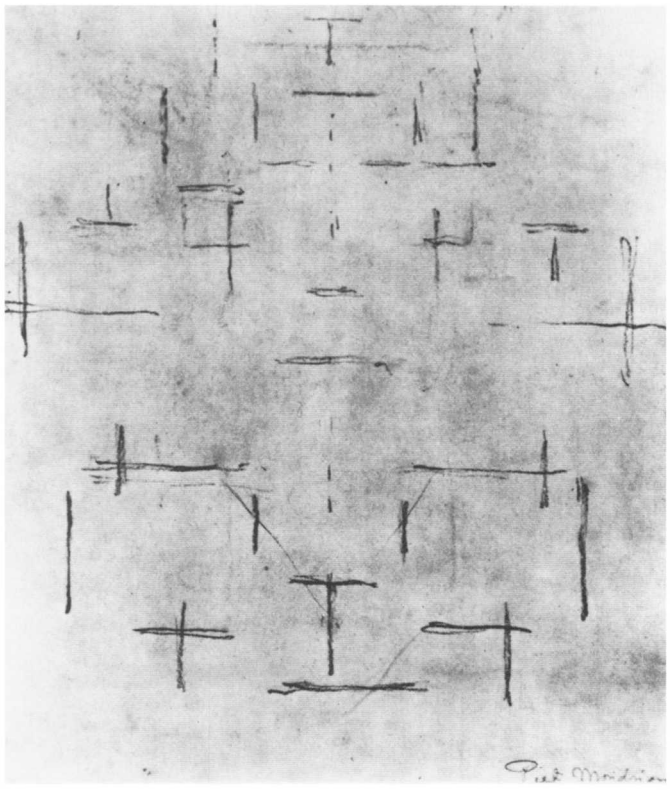
Our reading of *Composition in Color, B* as a diamond arrangement within a rectangular field finds strong support in a drawing now in the Holtzman collection (fig. 8). This sheet, *Composition Based on Diamond Shape*, has been dated 1914, but must surely date from 1916 or 1917. It follows the general formula of the plus-and-minus works with crossing and independent horizontal and vertical lines, though here they are longer and more abstract. But there is also something new inscribed onto this image; in the lower area are diagonal lines which indicate a diamond format. They mark the first direct evidence of this orientation in Mondrian's work.

The Holtzman drawing can be directly connected with the more elusive diamonds of the two 1917 paintings. Welsh discovered that on the reverse of *Composition in Color, B* there is a preliminary sketch for the painting which

> shows a positive similarity to [the Holtzman] drawing in the disposition and greater length of the grid lines, in comparison with their appearance in the painting.
>
> This [Holtzman] drawing may thus have been a preliminary design for one of the two paintings, and this would explain the inclusion of a faint regular diamond or lozenge form in the drawing as a compositional anchor for the partly cruciform, partly ovoid and partly circular dispersal of the smaller images.[18]

By viewing the drawing on the verso of the painting and the earlier Holtzman sheet as transitional steps we can then propose a connection between the circular plus-and-minus *Composition with Lines* and the suggested diamond compositions in color, the latter replacing many of the multiple black units with large color planes, but still using some black elements.

The drawing also allows us to speculate about the theme of the two paintings. Welsh has proposed that the Holtzman sheet relates to earlier works based on the façade of Notre Dame des Champs,[19] and Jaffé has further argued that this identification can be extended to the paintings as well, although they present the subject in a highly abstract manner.[20] If we accept Jaffé's theory, then we can see how as late as 1918 Mondrian's work was still drawn from visual sources, albeit in a greatly removed fashion.



8. *Composition based on Diamond Shape,* drawings cat. no. 1. Collection of Mr. Harry Holtzman.

The Grid Diamonds

The years 1918-1919 were crucial ones in Mondrian's work. During this period he created his first four diamond paintings, and they play the significant role in the transition of his art from the plus-and-minus pictures of 1917 to the works of his mature style of 1920-1921. Also at this time Mondrian returned to Paris and thus to direct contact with the cubist movement which had so greatly changed his art before the war.

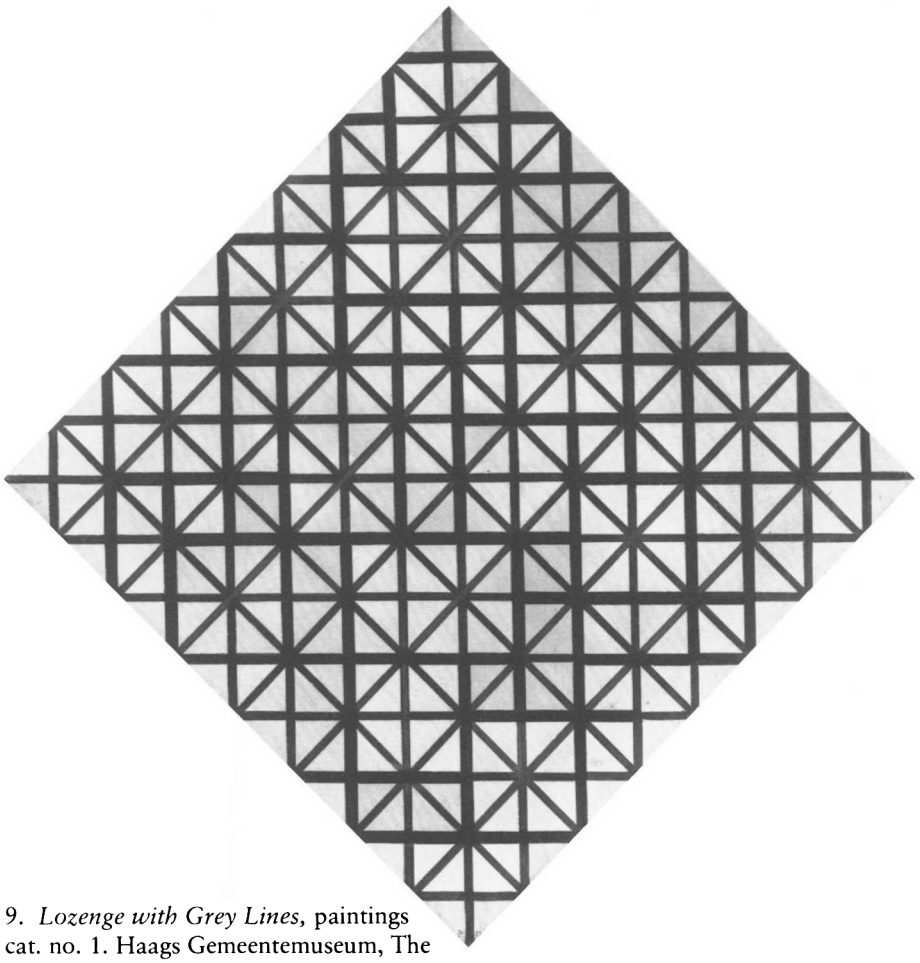
Mondrian invented the diamond painting in 1918, and three more diamonds were finished by 1919. The earliest work is gray and black, the second in brownish gray and white, while the latter ones use color planes. These pairs, joined with two vertical rectangles and one square canvas, which date between them, form a linked group of seven compositions, which employ an all-over grid pattern.

The first two grid paintings are diamond shaped, one dating from 1918 (fig. 9), the other from 1919 (fig. 10), but probably begun earlier. Both are made up entirely of straight, hard-edged, linear elements, crossing from one side of the painting to the other. The ground of each picture is neutral in relationship to the linear composition which is quite dense. Each work is divided diagonally into a grid pattern of eight units, thus forming sixty-four smaller diamonds which correspond to the larger, parent shape. Mondrian has further divided this surface by crossing horizontal and vertical lines through the points of each smaller module. Each diamond is thus cut into quarters, producing a surface of two hundred and fifty-six equal units—or nearly equal—some being slightly smaller because Mondrian thickened certain horizontals and verticals to create an asymmetrical pattern, one which contrasts with the grid, but nevertheless is conjunctive with it.

Because the differences in width between the accented lines and those of the grid are small in the first diamond, it is difficult to decipher the accented pattern. The easiest way to see it is by studying the second diamond, for the construction formed by its more differentiated lines is virtually identical with that of the 1918 painting. All widened lines in the earlier picture are present in the second, save for one short horizontal below center on the right. Three vertical lines are added in the 1919 painting—two at the lower left and one at the upper right.

In both works the balance of this delicate, part-to-part structure with the almost mechanical energy of the grid is quite extraordinary. In the 1918 painting the accented lines are barely perceptible, but nevertheless they do visually shift away from the grid. In the 1919 Philadelphia painting, where the accents are more strongly deployed, the lines can be read as the boundaries of a series of tangent rectangles, and the ground of the work becomes another compositional element. Indeed, Mondrian has here left the weave of the canvas visible. Rather than painting the ground he rubbed it with white paint, allowing the pigment to remain only in the areas between the woof and warp; this creates a subtly modulated plane behind the grid and the accented pattern. (Exposure to the air has turned the canvas very brown, making the rubbed-in white paint even more noticeable by contrast; nevertheless, the raw surface would have had a yellowish tone even when fresh.)

However, in both paintings, and



9. *Lozenge with Grey Lines,* paintings cat. no. 1. Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

especially in the more evenly proportioned first diamond, the presence of the rectangles is countered by the grid. Its density combined with its crisp graphic character and contrast to the field, produces an optically flickering surface; the eye, in reaction to this evenness of pattern, focuses not on the lines, but on the intersections, seeing in effect eight-pointed stars.

Certain formal characteristics—the high contrast of the dark lines and the light ground, the density of surface markings, and the optical flickerings these produce, as well as the asymmetrical, accented pattern—allow us to connect the first diamonds directly to *Composition with Lines* of the previous year, which has similar formal qualities. We have already noted the tendency toward evenly balanced, all-over fields in Mondrian's work from his mid-cubist painting to the 1917 seascape. The two diamonds here then, particularly the first, mark the culmination of this trend.

The diamond format itself can also be seen as a culmination of another tendency in Mondrian's images—the tendency to assume a shape, albeit oval or circular, against the rectangular field. In this context the Holtzman sheet of a crosslike, plus-and-minus composition marked to suggest a diamond takes on even greater importance. The crucial difference in the diamond paintings is that here Mondrian identified the shape of the painted composition directly with the actual shape of the painting, rather than placing a diamond grid onto a square canvas. In this sense what the diamonds do is simply "get rid" of the neutral parts of the painting, the "problem corners" endemic to cubist and cubist-based art.[21]

Stars and Constellations

Because the sharp contrasts, the graphic vocabulary, and the continuous design create such an abstract character, we might assume that the diamonds are the first of Mondrian's nonthematic paintings. Yet just as they can be linked in form with the artist's preceding works—and specifically the seascapes—they also can be thematically connected with these paintings by their common derivation from a visual source.

In 1942 Mondrian recalled this period in a general way:

> Observing sea, sky, and stars, I sought to indicate their plastic function through a multiplicity of crossing verticals and horizontals.[22]

This description might apply to certain of the plus-and-minus works, for example fig. 6, which suggests a horizon with scattered stars in the sky above. However, it is the sky and stars alone—minus any indication of sea or horizon—which is the subject of the first two diamonds. As Welsh has shown, on August 1, 1919, after his return to Paris, Mondrian wrote van Doesburg, saying of one of these paintings that it was "a starry sky which first inspired me to produce it."[23] Welsh also observed that:

> The mention of a "starry sky" no doubt refers to the optical "popping" effect of flickering intermediate gray spots which occur at the intersections of the various lines that can be read as an abstract metaphor for a field of sparkling stars.[24]

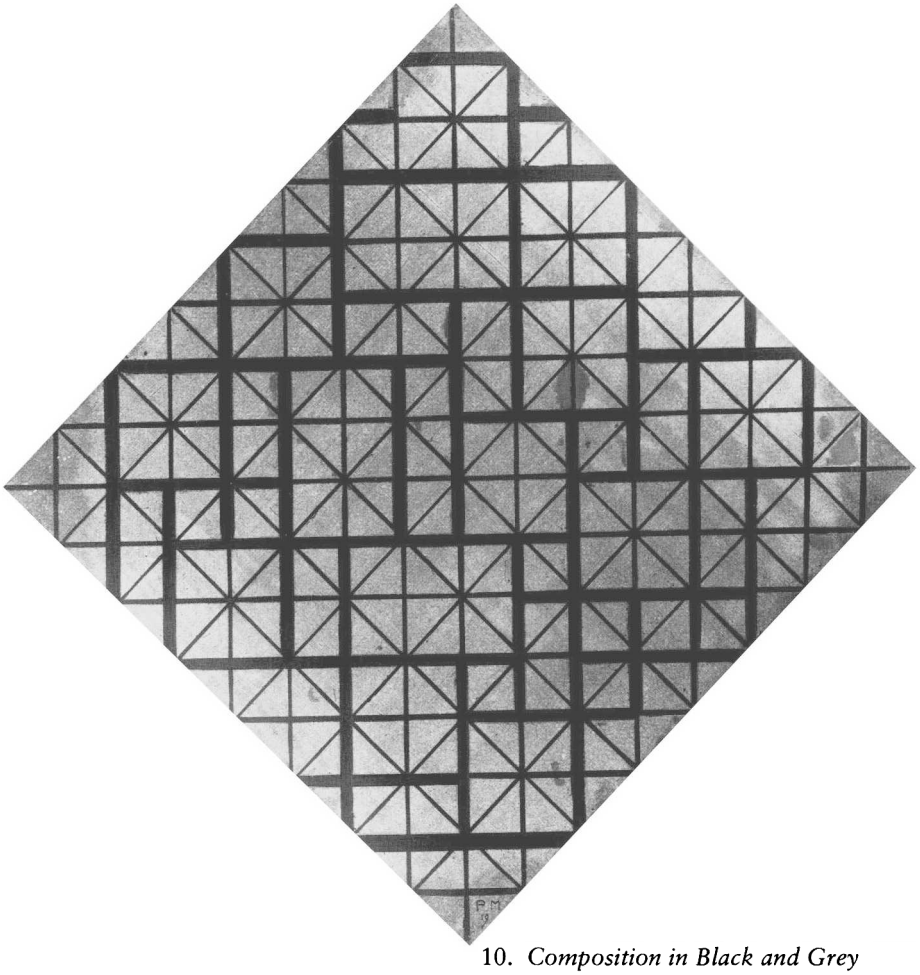
It is essential to realize that if Mondrian's structure in these paintings remains linked to that of analytical cubism—however geometrized—his thematic approach can still be linked to impressionism. Like the Paris façades and the seascapes in his earlier paintings, the sky in the diamonds is formally compatible with the pictorial structure. This is evident not only in the all-over patterns and accented designs which are analogus to the starry sky, but also in the immeasurably shallow layering of the linear construction which corresponds to the way in which our eyes, unable to evaluate the endless expanse of the universe, see the heavens as essentially without clear definition of dimension.

Further, there is no doubt, that these paintings correspond to Mondrian's expressed goals for this time:

> Impressed by the vastness of nature, I was trying to express its expansion, rest, and unity. At the same time, I was fully aware that the visible expansion of nature is at the same time its limitation; vertical and horizontal lines are the expression of two opposing forces; these exist everywhere and dominate everything; their reciprocal action constitutes "life." I recognized that the equilibrium of any particular aspect of nature rests on the equivalence of its opposites.[25]

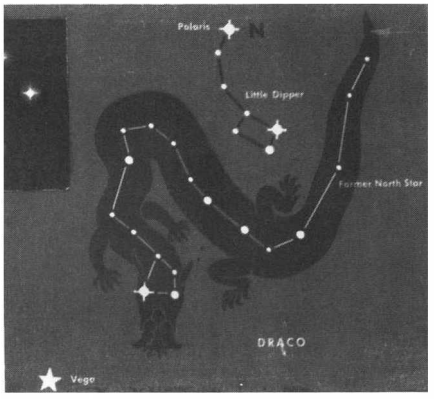
Of course, the stars in the sky above us appear—visually anyway—to be placed at random; certainly they do not fall into the regular gridlike pattern of these diamonds. Thus the optical flutters must be seen as analagous to, rather than derivative from, their source. The 1918 diamond, with its less pronounced pattern, seems more akin to the starry sky than the Philadelphia painting, where planar rectangles and a separate structural pattern are present. But curiously it is this structuring in the second diamond which indicates the emergence of a central theme in Mondrian's painting, the equation of aesthetic form and metaphysical revelation. In the starry sky Mondrian found that order is indeed present amid randomness. The nature of this discovery is spelled out in his 1919 essay (in dialogue form) where the art lover, a realist painter, and an abstract painter discuss "a bright, starry sky above a stretch of sand." The abstract painter says:

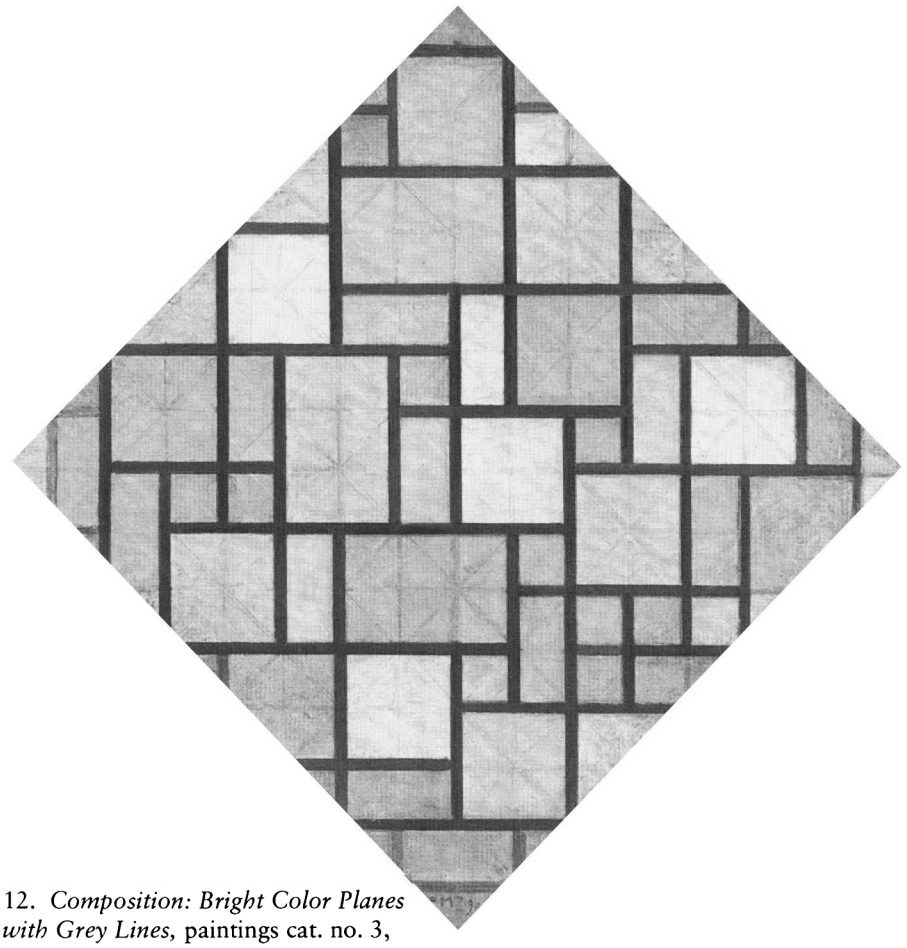
> Because the stars seem like points, they speak less of themselves and more of the primordial relation—at least to those of us who have the gift of abstract vision. But the point as such, seen visually, speaks to us at most as a luminous apparition: in itself it neither expresses nor represents anything. It cannot liberate us



10. *Composition in Black and Grey (Lozenge with Grey Lines)*, paintings cat. no. 2. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

11. Joseph Cornell, American, 1903-1972, *Rapport de Contreras (Circe)*, 1966 (detail), collage, 21.0 x 28.6 cm (8¼ x 11¼ in.), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.





12. *Composition: Bright Color Planes with Grey Lines,* paintings cat. no. 3, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.

from limitation, because it says nothing definite about the universal. Seen visually—that is to say, with just our physical eyes—the point itself expresses no relation, and hence cannot destroy our individuality. And it is precisely this individuality which continues to create forms, even where form does not appear directly.

Now we never see a point, but points. And these points create forms. The line appears plastically between two points; between several points, several lines. And the starry sky we look up at is now showing us innumerable points. All are not equally accented: one star shines more brightly than another. And these uneven light values produce forms in their turn. Think of the constellations: they too are forms. I merely mean to say that form is not eliminated from the starry sky when we see it as it appears naturally.

As I said before, the point itself is a vague thing, while these various luminous points give determinateness to the indeterminateness of the sky. They express, though in a way that is merely visual, the relation in a certain form, for instance, as geometric figures that veil the balanced relation; but if we see *through* natural relations, we can achieve a direct vision of this perfect relation. We see the primordial relation of one star to another in the diversity of measurements: we merely have to arrange these harmoniously to obtain a plastic representation of pure equilibrium.[26]

This discussion, written at a formative period in his career, expresses in a less direct way a central theme of Mondrian's art. Just as the stars—although visually scattered at random in the sky—do make up constellations and thus have form, so for Mondrian nature was not to be comprehended in its individual components, but rather in the relationships between them. These relationships constituted the laws of Reality, but were hidden by natural appearances. In this way the first two diamonds, and especially the second, have cosmic significance beyond their ostensible theme of the starry sky. In the later work the broader linear segments which connect the points of the intersections—the stars—can be seen as an abstract equivalent of the constellations we find in the sky (fig. 11) and described above. Most significantly, this structure stands metaphorically for the "hidden laws of reality," for rather than being descriptive of any actual portion of the sky, here it has been arranged "harmoniously" to obtain a plastic representation of pure equilibrium.

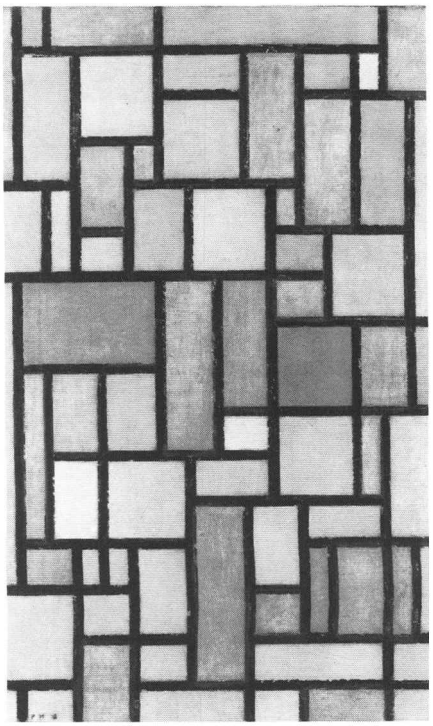
I believe that after the "starry sky" diamonds Mondrian's mature art begins; that in these two works he created a geometric construct that could both symbolically stand for the cosmos and also formally reveal the laws of reality he felt were veiled by natural appearance. In doing so Mondrian must have realized that an abstract construction could be sufficient to express his metaphysical concerns without descriptive or symbolic reference to the natural world.

The diamond shape was essential to this recognition; it was thematically accurate. More than the oval, the tondo, or the rectangle, the diamond avoids any tendency for reading horizontal pattern as an indication of horizon, probably because of the abstract nature of the shape itself. Thus the sky alone—rather than the horizon and the sky—is best presented in this format. Furthermore

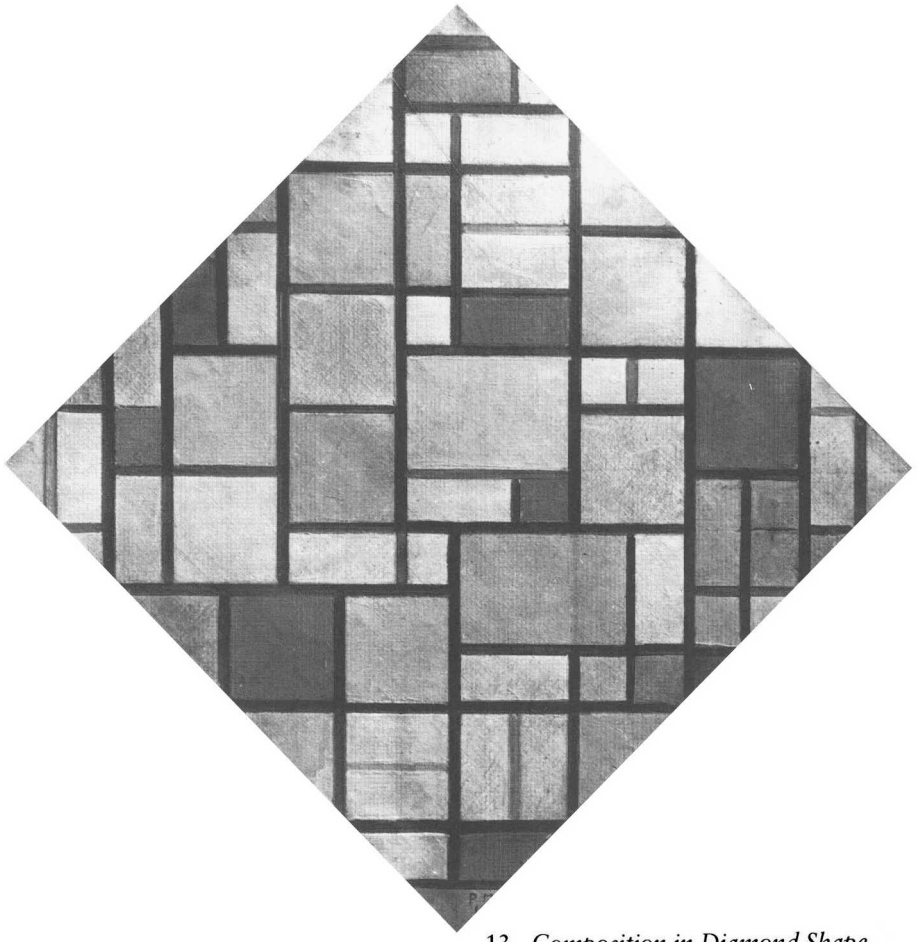
Mondrian's aim of expressing "expansion, rest and unity" was well suited to the dynamic balance of the diamond. It has an energetic, outward projecting shape and at the same time, because of the graphic cropping effects of its point-to-point, exterior lines, a most emphatically limiting pictorial field.

Significantly this latter quality was a characteristic which Mondrian took steps to reinforce, by emphasizing the edge itself. An important part of Mondrian's aesthetic was the way in which he framed his pictures. Traditionally a painting was framed so that a narrow margin at the edge of the canvas was covered. By 1916 Mondrian had replaced the conventional frame with a thin strip of wood which he set flush with the surface of the painting.[27] In this way forms which ran to the edges would not appear to lie behind the frame, as the end of the canvas was now visible. But beginning with the diamonds Mondrian set the framing strip back from the surface, thus making the 45° edges even more graphic and active (see Study A):

> So far as I know, I was the first to bring the painting forward from the frame, rather than set it within the frame. [He later wrote]: I had noted that a picture without a frame works better than a framed one and that the framing causes sensations of three dimensions. It gives an illusion of depth, so I took a frame of plain wood and mounted my picture on it. In this way I brought it to a more real existence.[28]



14. *Composition with Gray and Light Brown,* 1918, oil on canvas, 80.6 x 49.5 cm (31¾ x 19½ in.), The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Schlumberger.



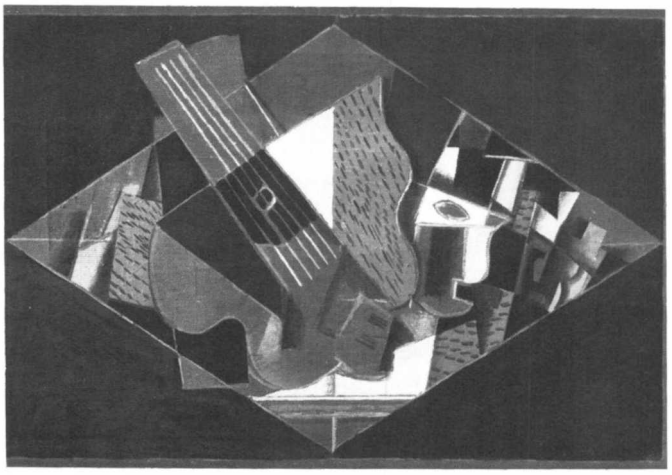
13. *Composition in Diamond Shape,* paintings cat. no. 4. Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.

Color Planes

Logically we might expect the paintings which follow the 1918 and 1919 diamonds to extend their developments. Yet artists work in different ways and paintings do not always fit neatly into the schemes we might devise. Indeed, the succeeding two diamonds (figs. 12 and 13), both from 1919 and both now in Otterlo, are curious mixtures. Consolidating the composition and continuing the format, they are simultaneously less bold in their abstraction; yet in these paintings Mondrian's mature style emerges.

The key difference between the two pairs of diamonds is that in the second set Mondrian has filled in the planes implied in the earlier constellations to produce a field of tangent rectangles of varying colors. The third diamond, *Composition: Bright Color Planes with Grey Lines,* has as its underlying structure the same eight-by-eight grid found in the earlier works and also uses bisecting horizontal and vertical bands. These divisions are barely visible, however, as the planes are painted over the linear elements, causing them to appear only faintly under the colors. What is remarkable about the pattern present on the surface is that—with few exceptions—it matches the structure of the first two diamonds, thus forming a sequence of three paintings in which the transition from an all-over linear schema to a planar construction is quite apparent.

The use of pale gray, red, blue, and yellow planes in this picture marks a return to the artist's earlier Paris paintings of 1913-1914. Indeed, those Paris pictures may have been uppermost in Mondrian's mind at the time, as he painted these diamonds either directly before leaving for France or shortly after his arrival there. In fact, they are an interesting mixture of his most abstract thinking—the linear design and the diamond shape—combined with elements from his earlier cubist pictures, including the compositional fading near the framing edges (here seen in the more faint lines on the left and lower points).This connection to cubism, or to cubist elements, finds support in contemporary rectangular pictures, such as the *Composition with Gray and Light Brown* of 1918 (fig. 14), now in Houston, where the brown and gray palette and the loosely painted grid pattern both suggest the cubist style.



15. Georges Braque, French, 1882-1963, *Still Life with Guitar in Diamond-Form,* 1917, oil on wood, 60 x 92 cm (23⅝ x 36¼ in.), Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.

These cubist connections are also found in the fourth diamond, *Composition in Diamond Shape.* Here, however, the scaffolding does not match that of the previous works. It is far more open in appearance, with many more long vertical lines, especially at the top. This work also lacks the underpinning eight-by-eight grid, which gives the surface a less restricted character. For the first time the vertical and horizontal structure is fit independently into a diamond format. The fourth diamond also uses a different palette; Mondrian has now limited himself to only reds, blues, and yellows. While here the colors are pale—they are mixed with white paint—nevertheless this restriction to the primaries predicts the direction Mondrian's work will take in the following two years.

The planar quality of these two later diamonds suggests that they may in fact be derived from Paris façades, as the Holtzman sheet may also be. But the regularity and continuity of the grid, the use of primary color, the repetition of the constellation construction, and the abstract nature of the diamond format itself argue against this connection. By far the most plausible theory is that within these four diamonds Mondrian has made the transition from "the impressed" composition which derives from a natural phenomenon to an independent structure which is created in accordance with the "veiled laws of reality." Thus, if the first two diamonds allowed Mondrian to realize the possibility of expression, the second two are abstract works which derive from that recognition.

The Mature Style

It can be argued that Mondrian's invention of the diamond format was made possible by his isolation from Parisian modernism, and especially cubism, which allowed for greater experimentation in his art. Nevertheless, Mondrian was anxious to return to Paris after the war, doing so at the first opportunity.[29] He arrived there sometime between February and July of 1919, and given his earlier connections to the movement, surely recent developments in cubism would have been of primary interest.

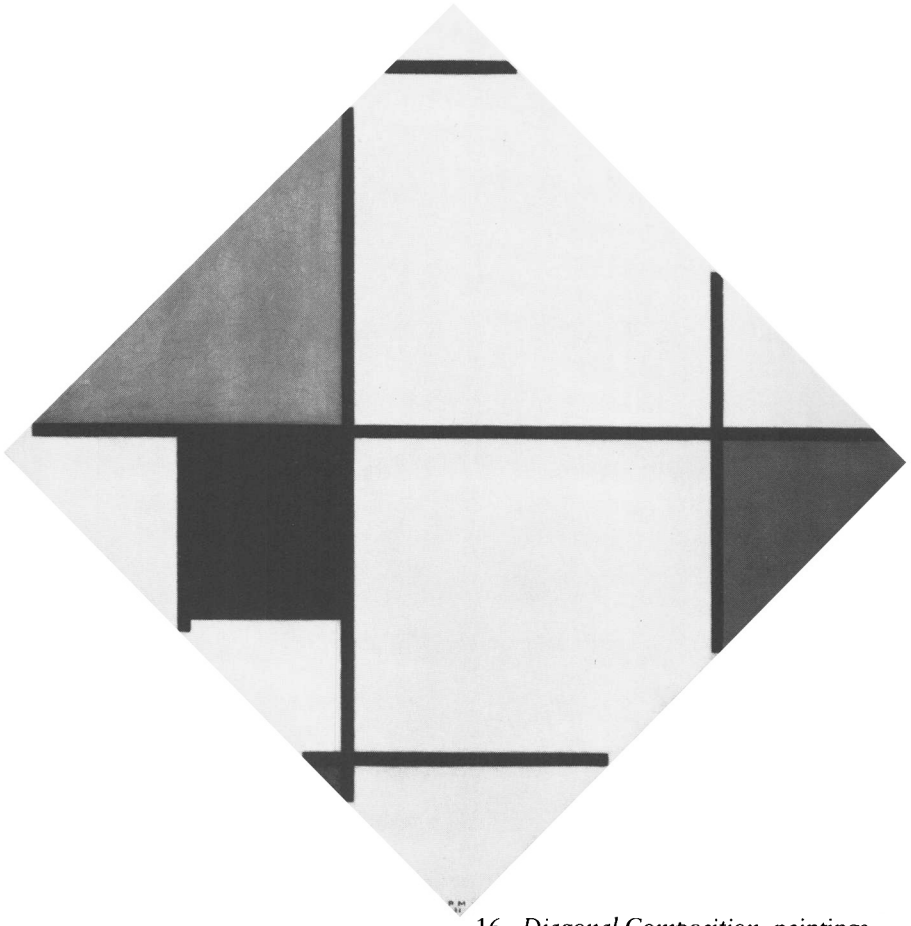
There is little art historical discussion of Mondrian's relationship to cubism after the war, as scholarship

has preferred to emphasize his de Stijl connections. But as we have seen, the third and fourth diamonds can be called cubist related and are less radical than the initial two paintings in the format. That they date from this transitional period in his work—which involves the return to Paris—perhaps accounts for their style.

It is one of the twists of history, that while Mondrian's second set of diamonds (and the Houston rectangle) look back to earlier cubism, cubism itself had evolved during this period to be more comparable with the character of Mondrian's first two diamonds. The movement, primarily under the direction of Juan Gris, had been turning toward a style which was more geometric, given to flat planar forms and simplified spatial constructions. More importantly, in certain works by Gris, Picasso, and Braque, untraditional forms of pictorial shape had been used, including the diamond format (fig. 15). Simultaneously, Braque and Picasso had begun to emphasize the shaped areas in their pictures by raising the surfaces of the odd forms so that they project above the level of the canvas, creating an effect not unlike the emphasized shaping in Mondrian's diamonds caused by the recessed framing.[30]

These new cubist works are less radical than Mondrian's, as they are clearly representational, not abstract. Moreover, their eccentric shapes are still placed inside a rectangular format, and pictorial elements—the neck of a guitar for example—may project out of this form into the surrounding field, thus denying the shape's discrete identity.

What this suggests is that the *retardataire* characteristics of the second set of diamonds—their affinities to analytical cubism—were no longer necessary to guarantee the modernity of Mondrian's works. To the contrary, his period of experimentation had allowed Mondrian to evolve a style which now paralleled that of the most recent cubism, but had an abstract character.[31] I believe that just as his art emerges from cubism (and impressionism), it continues to be informed by that style, not through the direct influences of contemporaneous pictures, but through the ongoing influence of certain cubist principles, evident especially in his continuing use of linear constructions with planes. Even if this is the case, Mondrian's return to Paris and discovery of the geometrized cubism must have given him a new confidence. Certainly the origin of his fully mature style can be traced to this period.



16. *Diagonal Composition,* paintings cat. no. 5. The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.

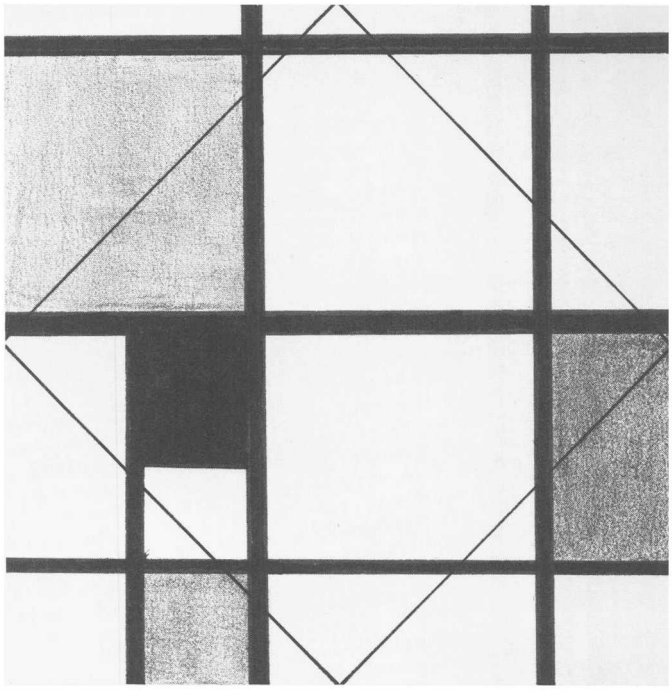
The Fifth Diamond

Mondrian's mature style properly began in 1919-1920, and by 1921 it was fully in use. One of the paintings made at that time was the fifth diamond, *Diagonal Composition* (fig. 16), now in Chicago. As noted above, it is uncertain if Mondrian painted the third and fourth diamonds in the Netherlands or in Paris. Indeed we do not know if these paintings were in France at all during this period. But although accounts say otherwise,[32] we do know that Mondrian did bring the first diamond to Paris, where it hung quite prominently in his studio; the second painting was also in the studio, as

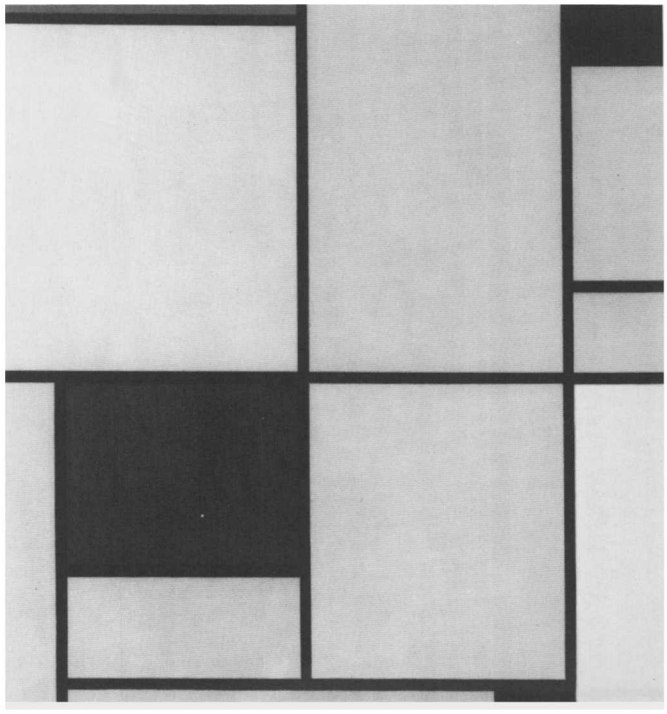
Nancy Troy has observed[33] (fig. 24).

While the Chicago painting is related to the first diamonds by virtue of format, its style is quite different from that of the initial works; here, for the first time, Mondrian has used his mature vocabulary. As is true of later 1921 paintings in general, the planes are considerably larger and thus much fewer in number. "Space became white, black or grey" wrote Mondrian of these paintings, "form became red, blue or yellow,"[34] creating a more sharply defined vocabulary than that established by the cubist-derived pastel tones of the preceding paintings. The linear elements, now quite crisply edged, are placed by intuition, rather than conforming to an underlying, continuous grid. The system of spaces and planes the lines define and their own relationship to each other are felt to be self-structuring rather than deducible from an a priori pattern (see below). While the width of the linear elements, which are now solid black, is generally constant throughout, the proportional relationships between the defined planes vary greatly. Two large, white planes dominate the work, with the areas of yellow, black, and blue much smaller, and the triangle of red at the left little more than an accent.

These changes in compositional basis and in the size of the planes create an entirely new sense of pictorial organization. The general effect of the planes in the third and fourth lozenges was to create a solid and unified screen, which existed within the boundaries of the painting, as did the cubist grid. But with the Chicago painting Mondrian realized for the first time the cutting qualities of the diagonal side. Although the above composition is adjusted to the diamond format, nevertheless, the extension of certain shapes past the boundaries of the picture is implied.



b. *Diagonal Composition,* with its lines and color planes extended to form a square picture.



17. *Composition I with Red, Yellow and Blue,* 1921, oil on canvas, 103.0 x 100.0 cm (40 9/16 x 39 3/8 in.), Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

For example, the large white plane at the upper center is in fact an oddly-shaped polygon with six unequal sides. Four of these sides are in an opposing parallel relationship, strong enough to cause the form to read as a rectangular plane whose two upper corners have been cut off by the diagonal edges of the diamond. This cropped effect is central to the mature paintings and will continue until Mondrian's last diamond picture.

It is interesting to note how the Chicago diamond corresponds in essential structure with rectangular pictures from 1921, especially *Composition I with Red, Yellow and Blue* (fig. 17). In both images we have a surface divided vertically by two linear elements into *unequal* thirds, with a much narrower tract to the right. Horizontally in each, three bands divide the surface: near the top (not all the way across in the rectangle), near the center from edge to edge, and finally close to the bottom (again not continuous in the rectangle). Within this scaffolding one large color plane is created in the lower left section, bounded by a vertical line which runs from the centered band to the lower edge and by a horizontal line which is placed between the two leftmost verticals.

This connection is even more clearly revealed by using a diagrammatic variation on the Chicago picture (dia. b). In the one presented here we have created a square painting of the same vertical and horizontal dimensions, by placing the Chicago diamond in the center and extending the black lines in all directions until they intersect our new outer limits. Clearly certain compositional features are closely related: the vertical and horizontal divisions, the greater amount of central vertical surface, and the enclosed rectangle to the lower left, which, as Welsh points out, is unique to the Chicago picture among the mature diamonds.[35] Both *Composition I* and the Chicago diamond have smaller planes of color (and black in the former) located along their outer edges. But in the diamond they are the result of tight adjustments within the pattern of the scaffolding, tight because although both pictures have similar planar proportions, linear elements, and details, the diamond has virtually half the surface (proportionally) with which to work.

The Chicago painting shares another stylistic feature with *Composition I* and other 1921 canvases. In these works Mondrian stopped some lines of the pattern before they reach the edge of the picture, giving an independent quality to those elements. Several reasons have been advanced for this practice, which, as Welsh observes was

> common to much *De Stijl* production during these years. According to the late Georges Vantongerloo, the practice originated from a fear that the abstract composition would lose its organic compactness if all lines were carried through to the edge of the composition, bisecting it completely.[36]

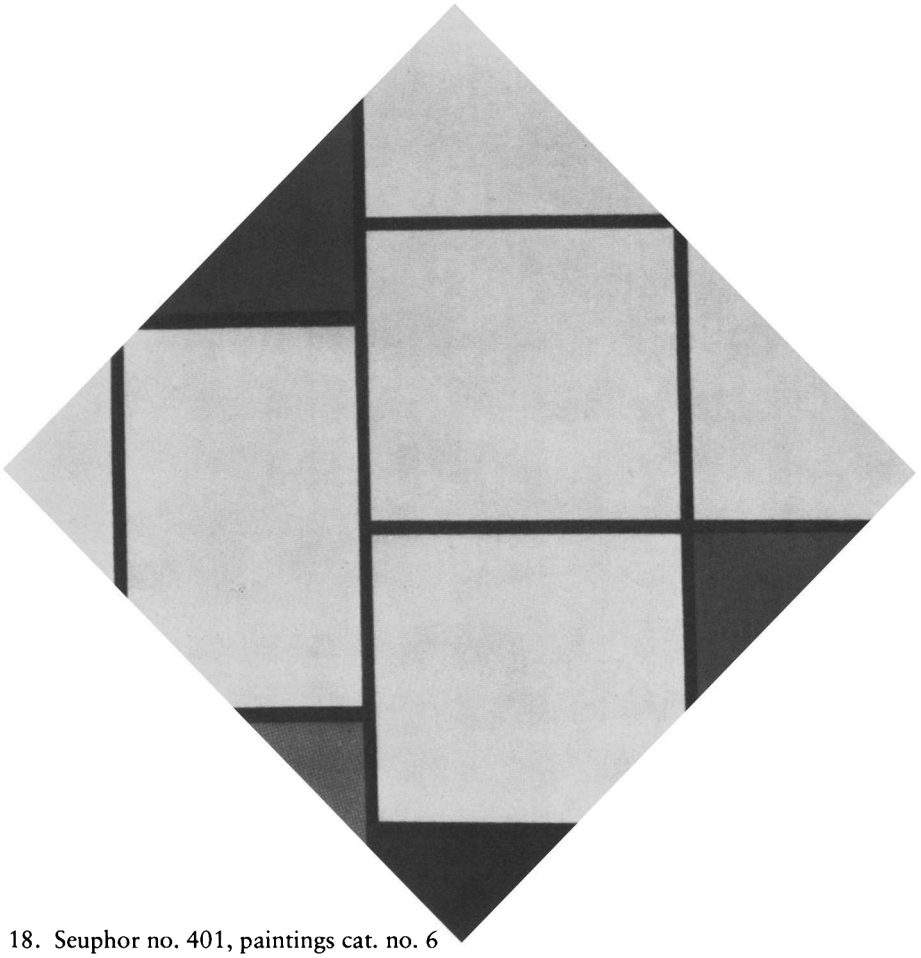
Jaffé has differed with this theory, stating:

> In Mondrian's case, it seems to me rather a return, as so often with him, to earlier practices, this time to his late cubist compositions . . . and the 1919 lozenges . . . in which, especially in the bottom half of the canvas, the structure does not reach the edge, thereby giving the whole a hovering, immaterial quality.[37]

Certainly Jaffé is correct that there is in the Chicago composition still a feeling of adjustment to the diamond format, and, in a sense, the stopping of the lines does re-enact at great remove the feeling of the cubist scaffolding. This same adjustment, as Jaffé rightly observes, probably also lies behind the Otterlo paintings. However, the linear elements in the Chicago diamond are, in fact, different from those in the rectangular paintings. Here actually all lines do touch the edge of the picture before ending, but, because the edges are diagonal, they touch them at only one point. For this reason the ends of the lines remain visible on the surface. Two of the color areas—the yellow and the red—are within these points and are thus bordered by a pattern which does stop within the work. The exceptional area, and the exceptional line, is at the right of the painting. There the black horizontal band continues to the edge, terminating with a diagonal end. This allows the blue section, in fact, to be bounded on both interior sides by black: if the black line had stopped when first tangent with the outer edge then the border would not continue. (However this extension may be a later addition, see Study A.) Curiously, in certain lines Mondrian does imply the extension of the bands by the use of small areas of impasted paint.

It is the independence of the linear pattern from the cutting power of the edges which retains in the Chicago painting a slight recollection of the cubist-derived organization. But in the continuation of the black line to the right and in the shape of the blue area—its four-sidedness and interconnection with the corner made by the two edges—lies the first evidence of Mondrian's involvement with the graphic power of the diamond format itself.

Mondrian's art developed with such clarity that it assumes an almost inevitable character. It is only by studying such paintings as the Chicago work that we see how this development was at once gradual and dramatic. In addition to the cubistlike aspects of the scaffolding,



18. Seuphor no. 401, paintings cat. no. 6 bis. Here identified as an early state of *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue* (fig. 19), (Photo taken from Elgar, p. 112).

the *Diagonal Composition* has a very delicate, almost fragile presence, which also relates it to Mondrian's work from 1912 to 1920. But, on balance, its dominant qualities are those of his mature paintings.

A Classic Diamond

The Chicago painting has traditionally been regarded as an isolated work. It is separated stylistically from the four paintings which precede it, and scholars have believed there are no other diamonds until the outburst of them four years later. Seuphor lists three works from 1925-1926 which are somewhat related in style to the Chicago picture (his titles are given here): *Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue,* c. 1925 (fig. 18) (Seuphor cat. no. 401, collection given as Holtzman), another *Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue,* 1926 (fig. 19) (Seuphor cat. no. 404, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington), and *Composition in a Square,* 1925 (Seuphor cat. no. 402, collection given as E. H. E. L. Cabos of Utrecht). But this listing is inaccurate. According to our recent study of the Washington painting (printed here as Study A), the two *Compositions in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue,* nos. 401 and 404, are in fact the same painting.[38]

As early as 1966 in his study of the artist, Welsh had observed that the Washington painting "is related compositionally to a smaller version [Seuphor no. 401]."[39] As we can see by comparing photographs of Seuphor nos. 401 and 404, the general structure is the same in each, with some variations in the widths of the lines and in the size of the large plane to the left. Examination of the latter reveals that all of the elements in the former are in fact in place in the underlayers of no. 404, and we should add, were changed by Mondrian himself. Thus, rather than being a version of the Washington painting, the photograph—identified in Seuphor as painting no. 401—is in fact a document showing the initial state of the Washington diamond.

Certain stylistic features of the Washington painting in its current state—in particular the differences in the widths of the black bands—have caused it to be dated circa 1926, as such linear variations began at that time. The relationship of the composition of Seuphor's no. 401 to the Washington work has, in turn, led the earlier version to be identified as from the same period, as two paintings of such similar compositions would in Mondrian's art be contemporaries. But if we can now see the two "works" as states of the same painting and therefore differing in terms of time, then a wider chronology can be considered.

To state the argument in a different way, the variations in the band widths suggest a general dating of 1925-1926 for the Washington painting, as Mondrian did not previously work in this style. But these stylistic features—the differences in linear gauge—are precisely those which change from state one to the final state. Seen this way, state one is then "freed" from necessarily being dated

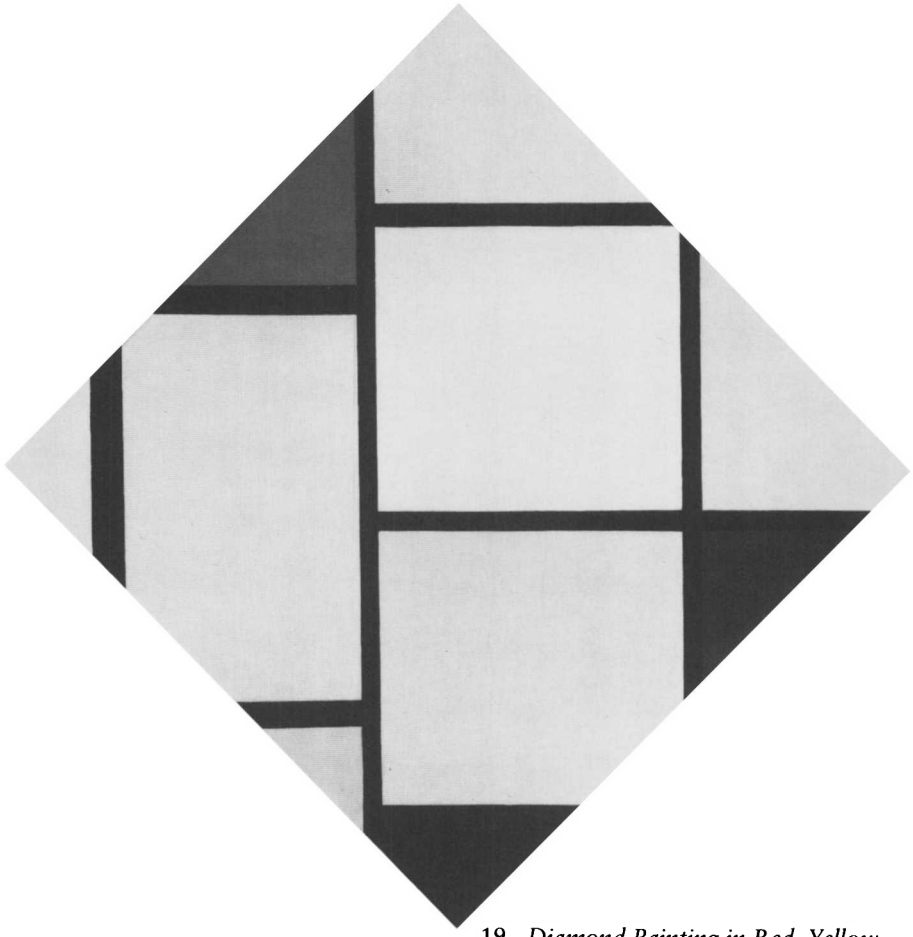
1925-1926; it can be dated much earlier. It is proposed here that the first state of the Washington painting dates from 1921 and follows the Chicago diamond.

The primary reasons for making this bold shift come from stylistic analysis based on comparisons of this diamond with Mondrian's rectangular compositions of the 1921-1925 period and with the Chicago picture. Welsh had earlier observed in the Washington diamond that "the structure recalls the period circa 1921."[40] As we have seen, the evolution in Mondrian's work from 1918 to 1921 involved a move from the even density of planes in the earlier pictures to the more dynamically balanced combinations of larger, variously-sized planes in 1921. In the following year this direction continued, but in a major change Mondrian then established the composition around one large plane, in white or gray, which dominates the painting. Color elements are much smaller and are placed in peripheral positions, giving a quite stark appearance to these works.

Stark is not a descriptive term we would use for the complex Washington painting. Although it does have a white rectangular plane in the upper right—the only complete rectangle in the work—this element does not dominate the composition. It does, however, serve as a compositional fulcrum—something which is missing from the Chicago diamond—suggesting that the Washington painting is properly located between the 1921 works and those of the following year.

Also suggestive of this pivotal position is the amount of white in the picture. In its present state there are three differing shades of gray-white in the Washington work; but, judging from the photograph of the initial state, the painting was then all white, or if in varying shades, in tones whose differences were too subtle to be recorded. The presence of this much white may also indicate a later date, as it is comparable to the use of the dominant white planes in the 1922-1925 pictures. But in the Washington work this whiteness is broken up by the numerous crossing linear elements, creating a surface of many white areas, rather than the single plane. The Chicago diamond also has a large amount of white-gray (painted in three slightly varying shades), but because of the large yellow triangle, less than its successor.

The greatest connection between the sixth diamond and the fifth is their like division of surface. In both the vertical channel runs through the painting, to the center but slightly to the right. In the Chicago painting this is entirely white, whereas the Washington work rests on a black triangle. However, this area appears to have originally been gray, but was repainted in black by Mondrian sometime before he made the major revisions to the work (see Study A). As we have noted, the Chicago painting is divided horizontally by three linear elements which cross the entire surface, giving it a certain gridlike structure distantly related to the first diamonds. The Washington painting is more sophisticated in this regard; no



19. *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue,* paintings cat. no. 6. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1971.

horizontal lines are continuous. This gives the structure of the Washington painting an even greater sense of independent existence, that is, a less deductive appearance.

The two 1921 diamonds also share a peculiar feature of proportioning. We know that in this period Mondrian worked by intuition, rather than following mathematical relationships. And a key difference between the initial and the fifth and sixth diamonds is that in the latter no underlying geometric system of compositional placement has been demonstrated. Yet both the Chicago and the Washington paintings have within their intuitive structures a geometric pairing. In the Chicago painting the left vertical is divided in such a way that the upper and lower longer lines are equal in length. Furthermore this "unit" is the same measure as the left portion of the long horizontal, suggesting two squares, one above the other. In the Washington picture the two rectangles at the right were, in the initial state, the same size. However, the remaining proportions of the works do not appear to be so geometrically decided.

As in the Chicago diamond, the lines in the initial state of the Washington picture appear to have been much thinner and of equal width. This gave the painting—to judge from the reproduction—a similar delicate feeling. But in the former the linear elements stop (with one exception) when tangent with the perimeter of the painting, whereas in the latter there is no evidence of this characteristic; rather, all of the bands continue completely to the edge of the canvas, in fact, over (see Study A), thus bringing fully into force, for the first time, the graphic power of the diamond shape.

The relationship between this power and the composition of the Washington picture is one of the most dynamic in the diamonds. Given its quite complex surface and structure—eight linear divisions and ten planar elements—the painting's repose is exceptional. The three rectangles at center, a vertical to the left, and the two horizontals to the right form a strong unit, almost mortised together like a brick wall. This strength carries to the adjacent planes, making them read as other rectangles which have been cut by the diamond shape. But these cut units interact among themselves: three triangular planes—significantly red, yellow, and blue—point inward, "facing off," as it were, like sporting contestants. The other triangle—in white at the left of the composition—checks this interior penetration by pointing outward. The three other points of the diamond, above, below, and to the right, are parts of related shapes—four-sided polygons painted in white, gray, and black, which have an interrelated balance comparable to that of the color triangles.

De Stijl and the 45° Angle

We have already seen how Mondrian's friendship with Bart van der Leck and Theo van Doesburg in 1915 had influenced his art, strengthening his predilection for a geometric vocabulary. He had participated with them in the founding of the de Stijl movement that emerged with the publication of their periodical *De Stijl* in 1917. Both before and after his return to France, Mondrian contributed numerous articles to the journal, which virtually outline his theoretical conceptions at this time. He also joined in the general spirit of de Stijl, agreeing that the "new painting" could affect modern life by its influence upon architecture and design.[41]

Even though he was not in the Netherlands, Mondrian was considered a member of the movement, which in the 1920s was headed by van Doesburg, who himself led a very peripatetic life between 1921 and 1923. Mondrian was a leading participant in the 1923 exhibition of de Stijl held at his own gallery, L'Effort Moderne. But the next year he broke with the movement, and more particularly with van Doesburg's theories, over an issue which directly touches the diamond paintings.

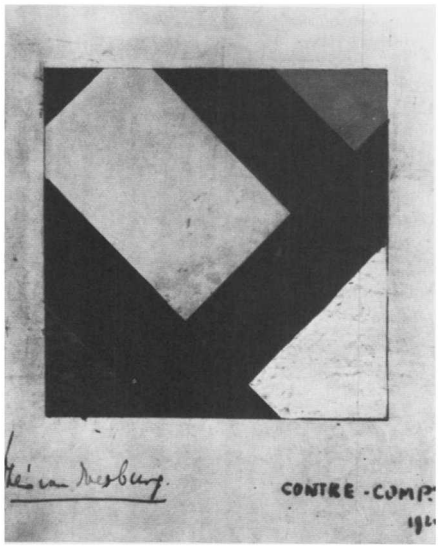
Following the principles developed in the 1910s, de Stijl painting, sculpture, and architecture were based on the exclusive use of horizontal and vertical relationships. But in 1924 van Doesburg moved to change these principles in a new direction he called "Elementism," which in several works titled contre-compositions altered the basic de Stijl composition so that the planes and linear structures are in a 45° diagonal relationship with the vertical/horizontal axes of the painting. In an early gouache of this year, for example (fig. 20), the black structure crosses the surface at an angle, and the red, yellow, white, and blue planes are also aligned at 45°. Van Doesburg argued the importance of this change—it introduced dynamism—in several contemporary publications. The comments there, as well as the suggestion of theoretical opposition in the titles themselves, were generally aimed at previous de Stijl principles, and in particular, at the theories and paintings of Mondrian.

Many writers have seen this challenge as partially or even greatly responsible for Mondrian's many diamonds from 1925-1926—"Almost as if [they are] in protest against Theo van Doesburg's decision *circa* 1925 to reintroduce diagonals. . . ."[42] Jaffé has even implied that van Doesburg's diagonal pictures are the direct cause of Mondrian's mature diamonds:

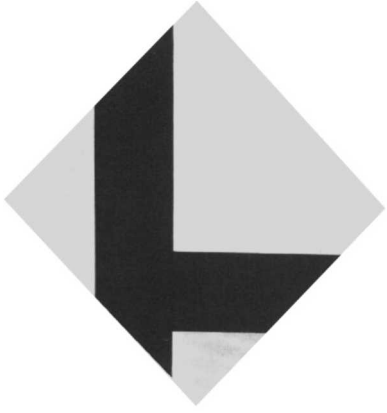
It is interesting to speculate whether or not Van Doesburg may have started his series of diagonal counter-compositions with a work closely resembling and preceding Mondrian's lozenge compositions of 1925: the 1924 composition which is now in the Art Institute in Chicago [fig. 21]. If this painting is to be hung as a lozenge, then it constitutes a transition from the Neoplastic compositions of 1923 and 1924 to the Elementarist counter-composition; if, on the other hand it is conceived as a square, the black lines running diagonally, it is one of the first counter-compositions, and a prelude to the Aubette. Photographs of both versions of display exist, and markings on the old canvas seem to point to the direction of the lozenge disposition. . . .[43]

The idea of a "changeable" painting, hung either as a square or a diamond, is found in the works of other de Stijl artists during this same period. Cezar Domela, for example, exhibited in 1926 (in Brooklyn) a painting which was hung as a diamond, but with the title *Tableau Labile,* indicating the possibility of an alternative orientation.[44] However, clearly from his later works and the inscription on the 1924 contre-composition study, van Doesburg intended the "Elementism" works to be composed diagonally.

How are we to weigh the proposition that Mondrian's diamonds emerge in response to van Doesburg's diagonal squares? It is curious that Jaffé's suggested theory that Mondrian's mature diamonds originated in van Doesburg's works ignores the precedent in Mondrian's own *Diagonal Composition* of 1921. If we add to this work the Washington painting in its initial state, then it is clear that Mondrian had in fact developed his mature diamond compositions at least two or three years before van Doesburg's contre-compositions. Indeed the redating of the Washington painting suggests exactly the reverse, namely



20. Theo van Doesburg, Dutch, 1883-1931, *Contre-Composition,* 1924, drawing, 16 x 18 cm (6 5/16 x 7 1/16 in.), Private Collection.



21. Theo van Doesburg, Dutch, 1883-1931, *Contre-Composition VIII,* 1924, oil on canvas, diagonal: 142.6 cm (57½ in.), The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Miss Peggy Guggenheim.

that van Doesburg's canvases are in fact extrapolations from Mondrian's diamonds. If we turn the van Doesburg *Contre-Composition* (fig. 20) 45° clockwise to form a diamond then its resemblance to the Washington painting is surely more than coincidental; it repeats the triangle at the left point, the irregular pentagons at the lower and right points, and the vertical channel of space down the center of the work.[45]

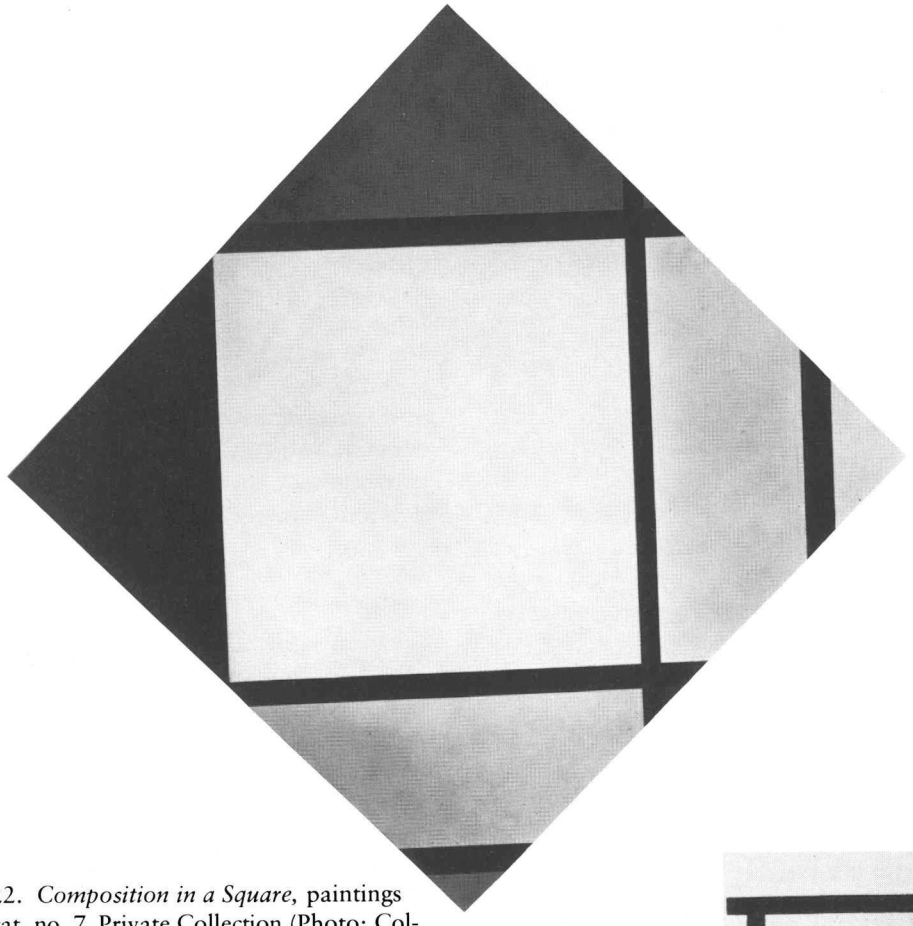
Seuphor recalls that when Mondrian was presented with van Doesburg's diagonal challenge, his response was "It is all right for him to use the diagonal. It means, however, he has not understood neoplasticism."[46] For van Doesburg the diagonal was a means of adding vitality to his compositions. For Mondrian such vitality had to be stated within the dynamics of the horizontal and vertical structure; the edges of his diamonds are pictorially active as they cut across the composition and state the limits of the pictorial field.

Classic Diamonds

We cannot say with assurance that Mondrian was unmotivated by the van Doesburg challenge, because between 1925 and 1926 he painted four diamond works and revised the Washington picture. But we might also expect Mondrian to paint diamonds at this time, for the period was a crucial one of new developments in his art, and as shown by the 1918-1919 grids and the 1921 mature style works, diamonds play an important role at such pivotal periods.

Most likely the first of the new diamonds was the painting formerly in the Cabos collection (fig. 22). The recent discovery of Mondrian's original title for the painting *Tableau losangique II* (fig. 75) suggests that the Washington canvas, which is closest in style in its revised state, was *Tableau losangique I,* and thus both date from approximately the same time.

Unlike the 1921 paintings, the Cabos picture is composed around a large, central white plane. We have already noted that this feature is typical of rectangular canvases made between 1922 and 1925, such as *Com-*

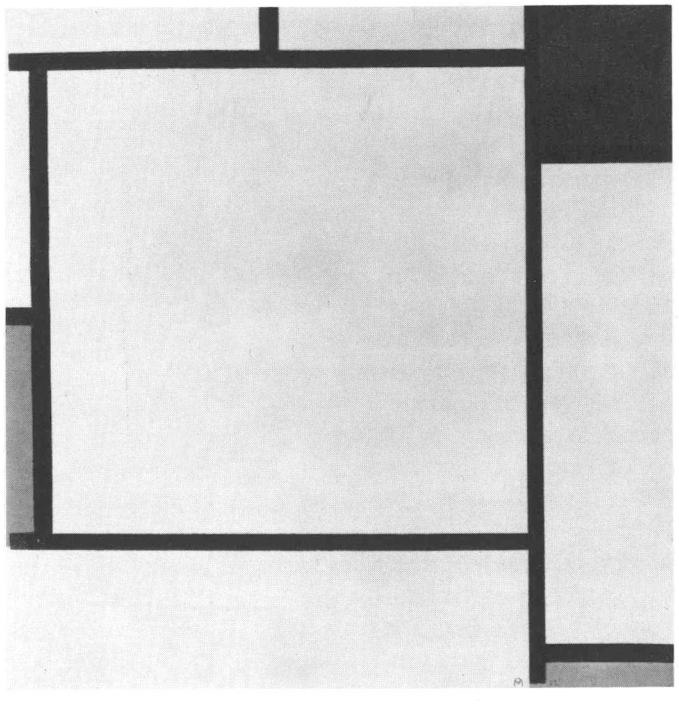


22. *Composition in a Square,* paintings cat. no. 7, Private Collection (Photo: Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris).

position 2, 1922 (fig. 23), where a similar white rectangle occupies the majority of the surface, and the much smaller, color elements and the other linear elements are placed in flanking positions. The Cabos picture represents Mondrian's only diamond in this style.

The peculiarities of the diamond format itself present certain compositional limitations on the use of a central rectangle. Mondrian wanted, we can assume, a large, complete, and nearly square rectangle within the middle of the composition, but placed in such a way as to avoid symmetry. A square inscribed within a diamond, with its corners intersecting the middle of each respective diagonal, is the largest plane possible in the format. And Mondrian appropriately uses this arrangement here on the left, where the corners nearly bisect the diagonal edges. But to avoid symmetry, the large rectangle ends within the picture rather than extending to the right edges, thus throwing the pictorial weight of the dominant element slightly askew and to the left.

In the 1921-1925 rectangular format paintings the border areas are very narrow, and the planes thus quite small. But in a diamond format this kind of division is impossible as once the rectangle is placed over half of the pictorial surface still remains split into four triangular areas. Mondrian has treated these in varying ways in the Cabos painting. To the right a vertical line is placed so as to define a vertical plane to its left —not unlike a similar element on the left side of the Washington painting. But this line also has a certain inde-



23. *Composition 2,* 1922, oil on canvas, 55.6 x 53.7 cm (21⅞ x 21⅛ in.), The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

pendent character that relates to later works (see pp. 43-44). Below are yellow and blue planes which resemble the small color detailing found in the rectangles. Quite different are the two remaining triangles: that on the left is painted solid black, while the upper one is solid red, although a vertical band does cross the area dividing it into two differently sized elements. Mondrian had used this linear division in earlier rectangular paintings in this style. These two solid areas produce a visual weight above and to one side of the work, allowing the composition to open downward and to the right, a characteristic that interestingly also corresponds to an essential feature of the rectangular canvases composed around a large plane.

A crucial difference between the Cabos painting and earlier works is the varying widths of its lines. As we will see, Mondrian in his canvases of the early 1930s increasingly emphasized the linear construction of the works rather than the balance of color planes and white areas defined by this structure. In the Cabos painting this major change is most pronounced in the vertical element to the right; far thicker than the other black lines, it takes on an increased weight within the equilibrium of the composition. Before, as in the Chicago and Washington diamonds, the lines had been equal and quite thin and were neutral with respect to any balance among themselves. Here in the Cabos work all but one or two, including the horizontal at the bottom, seem to be the same dimension. Nevertheless, the lines are thicker and thus have more pictorial authority; the different weighing of linear widths creates a second, complex compositional mixture.

Mondrian also applied these variations in band width to the Washington picture when he revised it in approximately 1925. As in the Cabos diamond, in the Washington work the widest line is the isolated vertical, here at the left. But the other linear contrasts are much more pronounced, especially between the horizontal near the center which has been left narrow and the much wider band below the red. That Mondrian could alter the drawing and not the color areas—even though they do, as a result, change in size—is an aspect essential to our understanding of his art and how he worked.

24. Photograph of the interior of Mondrian's studio, 26 rue du Départ, Paris, 1926, showing two diamond paintings—fig. 9 hanging high on the wall and fig. 10 on the easel/partition which divided the room, document no. 4 (Photo by P. Delbo). Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris.

How Mondrian Worked

In his 1956 study of Mondrian and in recent conversations,[47] Seuphor has given a detailed picture of the artist's procedures. Seuphor's account, based on his numerous visits during the 1920s, is supported not only by Mondrian's friends' parallel recollections of his later period in New York,[48] but also by the internal evidence of Mondrian's drawings made at this time and the changes in the Washington diamond.

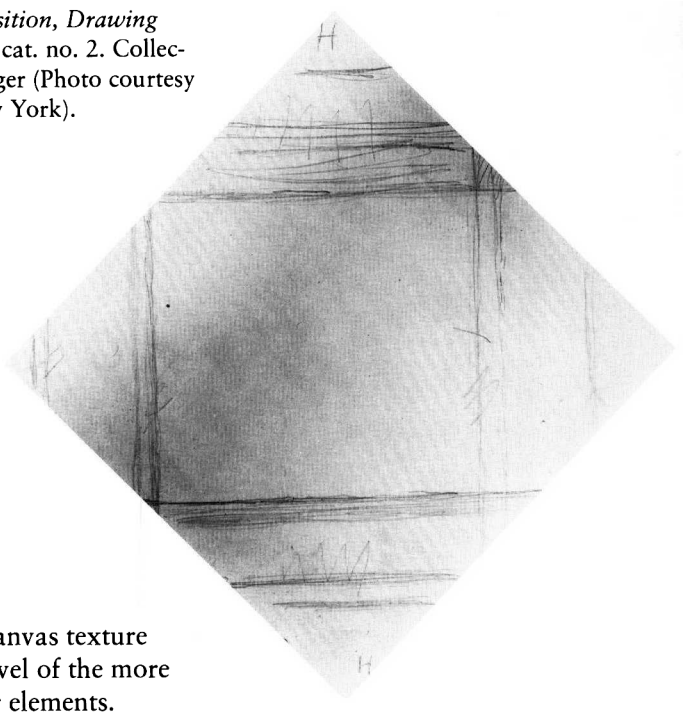
In Mondrian's Paris studio there was a table covered with canvas which had been waxed white. It was on this table that he painted, with the canvas lying flat. (There were also two easels in the studio, one of which was used as a room divider (fig. 24), the other as a stand for exhibiting or studying finished paintings.) Although the horizontal position was used by many abstract artists after 1940—Pollock's pouring paint onto a canvas spread on the studio floor is a well-known example—Mondrian may very well have originated the practice for use during the entire working procedure. When Mondrian began, the canvas was stretched and perhaps lightly primed. This means not only that he knew the exact di-

mensions of the painting, but also, especially in the case of the diamond works, their format. Thus it is impossible for the diamonds to have been cropped from larger rectangular fields.

Like the blank page for the writer, the empty canvas for the painter presents a difficult moment. And while Mondrian may have had drawings at hand which proposed paintings (see below), they probably represented only rough ideas at best, as the outline does to an author. The making of the final picture was a result of trial and testing of possibilities.

Mondrian began his works using long strips of transparent paper placed in changing arrangements on the flat canvas, creating a temporary linear structure. Measuring the various positions of these ribbons, he would note "calculations" in pencil upon the papers themselves, keeping an accurate record of the possibilities, *almost* like a mathematician.[49]

After the paper ribbon structure had been set Mondrian would transfer the composition to the canvas using charcoal and a ruler. Then would follow a period of testing the positions and the widths of each linear element. Having determined a satisfactory state, Mondrian would next place the charcoal-marked canvas on the easel for study in the upright position. It would then come down to the table again as he would make revisions and revisions, erasing the charcoal lines and adding new ones, reerasing and adding, sometimes until "the canvas took on a grey tone."[50] Only when the linear structure had been established to his satisfaction, would Mondrian paint. Significantly, the black lines were painted first, and in works of the mid-1920s, in a coat thin enough that the texture of the canvas is often visible. The areas of white and color followed and were much thicker;



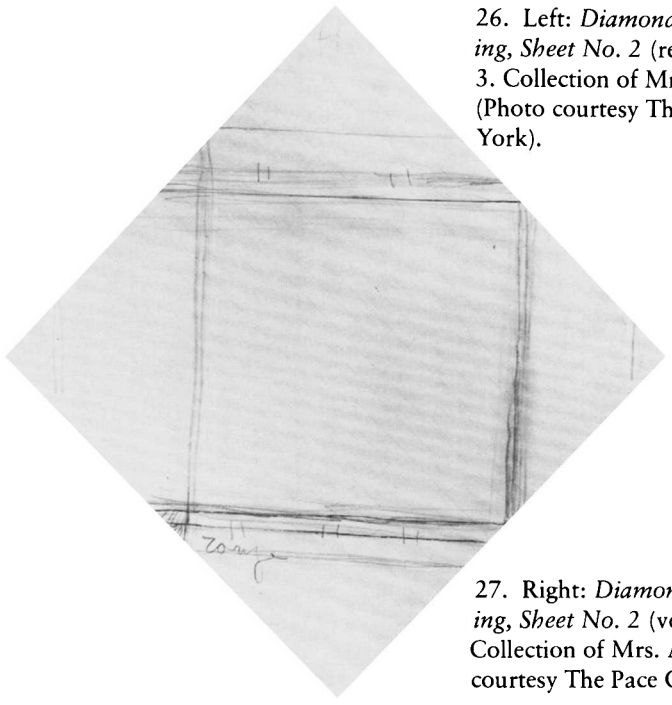
25. *Diamond Composition, Drawing Sheet No. 1,* drawings cat. no. 2. Collection of Mr. Sidney Singer (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).

without a trace of canvas texture they sit above the level of the more thinly painted linear elements.

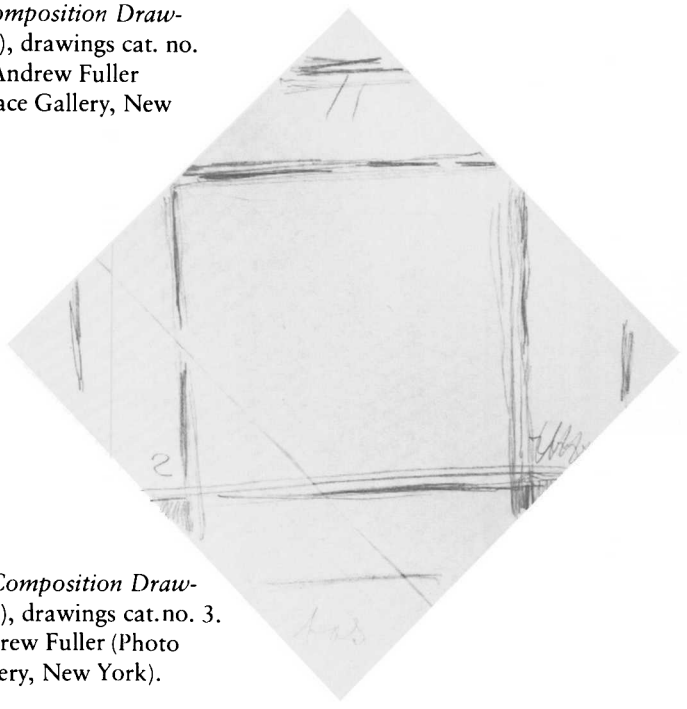
Three important aspects of Mondrian's procedure should be emphasized: the evolutionary character of his art, the dominant importance of the structure, and the question of color. It is clear from Seuphor's account, from the preliminary "idea" drawings, and from the few surviving unfinished paintings which show the tentative charcoal lines and the numerous erasures that Mondrian's paintings were developed intuitively, not by following a prescription. "Oh the work, it is so hard," Mondrian often said to Seuphor,[51] referring to the evolutionary, automatic, and uncharted character of his art. Despite the strictures of his formal vocabulary and his neoplastic ideals, there is a sense of tension, discovery, and release in Mondrian's process of painting which still retains the qualities of the personal. The resolution of the picture—"Does this work?" Mondrian would ask over and over[52]—was apparently long and difficult.

The crucial nature of the linear structure should also be apparent. It not only marks the beginning of the painting—a step surprisingly close in kind if not character to the surrealist doodle—but also it is the painting's determinative factor. Mondrian would only begin to paint when the lines had been positioned. This structure in fact dictates the character of the painting, its openness, closure, balance, etc., and it is logical that during the course of his career Mondrian can be described as giving an ever greater role to these linear elements.

The third, and perhaps most surprising, aspect of his procedure is Mondrian's attitude toward color. While common interpretation of his art stresses Mondrian's sense of color balance and dynamics, in his actual practice questions of color played little—if any—role in the creation of a painting. Transparent ribbons were maneuvered to establish the initial state of the painting; no comparable sheets of colored paper were employed. Further, the charcoal transfer and its development relate exclusively to the linear structure, and



26. Left: *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 2* (recto), drawings cat. no. 3. Collection of Mrs. Andrew Fuller (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).



27. Right: *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 2* (verso), drawings cat.no. 3. Collection of Mrs. Andrew Fuller (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).

color plays no material role. Only when the picture was resolved—that is to say the structural lines were conclusively placed—did Mondrian begin to paint, and then color followed the painting of the black bands.

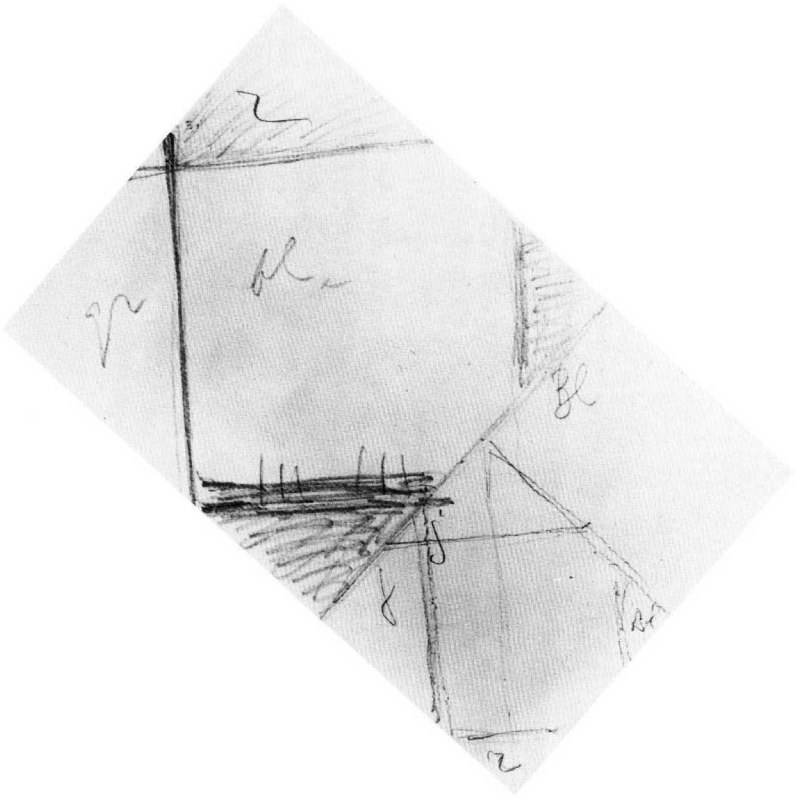
Colors are thus somewhat arbitrary, placed into an already existing construction. Obviously Mondrian positioned hues in such a way as to balance out the painting, but *which* color went where was not a determining factor in creating the work. This explains why Mondrian could leave the choice of colors up to the patron in a commissioned work of 1929 and even then accommodate all three primaries into the painting.[53] This freedom of choice was possible because he used only red, yellow, and blue; the primary colors are neutral with respect to each other. While an imaginary Mondrian with yellow, green, and orange planes would involve colors that would connect visually across the surface, the planes in Mondrian's primary palette remain spatially and inflectionally aloof.

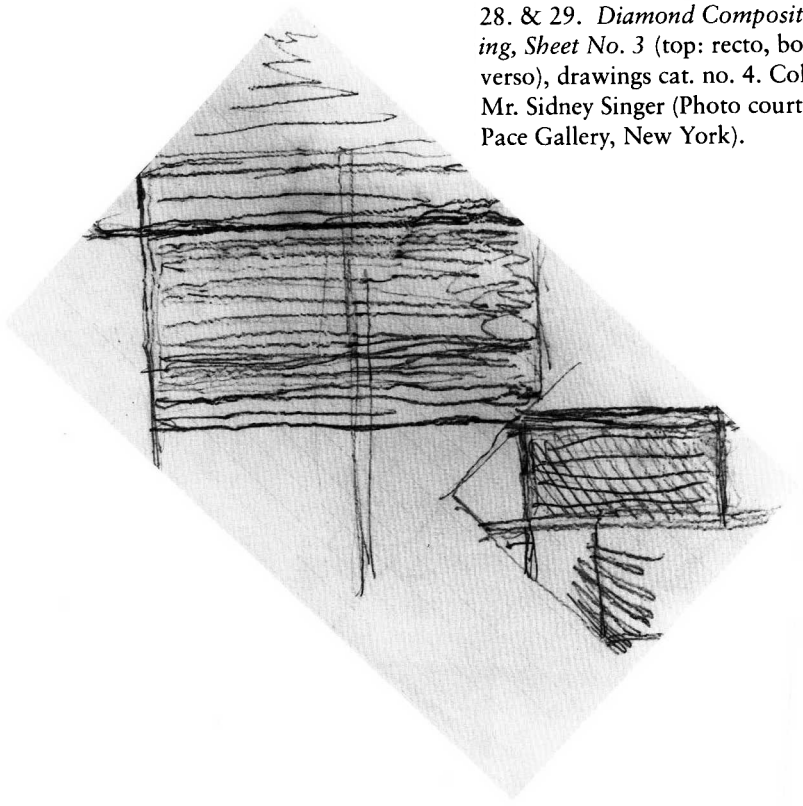
The Diamond Drawings

Mondrian's procedures, as outlined above, are also reflected in his drawings from this period. We can see this in a series of works which are pertinent to our overall subject as they comprise a crucial set of diamond compositional ideas. These drawings—some, isolated sheets, and others, pages in a notebook—were made in Paris during this key period. They have previously been dated c.1926, but are here dated 1925 on the basis of their relationship to paintings of that year. Taken together they record the transition from the classic Cabos painting to the more opened diamonds now in Zurich and Philadelphia.

Two drawings relate directly to the Cabos painting: *Sheet No. 1* (fig. 25) and *Sheet No. 2* (both sides, figs. 26 and 27). In these sheets, as in the painting, the major aspect of the composition is a large enclosed rectangle which dominates the image. To the left and right of this rectangle are vertical lines which cross the lateral "wings" and are cut by the diagonal edges of the diamond (in the Cabos work a vertical is present only at the right). Equally comparable are the lower horizontal in *No. 1*, that in *No. 2* (verso), and the band above the lower yellow area in the painting. This same area in all three drawn images is articulated by irregular lines, suggestive of the blue triangular element to the right on the canvas.

The paper sheet itself of both *No. 1* and *No. 2* is square, turned to form a diamond. Thus, in these drawings as in the paintings, Mondrian began with the diagonal edges of the diamond physically present. The drawing of the horizontal and vertical lines in both sheets is tentative—wavering with some discontinuous marks—again as in the charcoal state of the painting; although in the latter Mondrian erased elements as he revised, in these drawings the lines appear to be canceled by a looping mark or by short parallel strokes. In addition to marks for the top—*H* for *haut*—or for the bottom—*bas*—Mondrian has written





28. & 29. *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 3* (top: recto, bottom: verso), drawings cat. no. 4. Collection of Mr. Sidney Singer (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).

in color designations. Red in both sides of *No. 2* is indicated by *rouge,* at the bottom on the recto and on the verso by a looping almost reverse *S* (Mondrian's form of an *R*) to the left. It is interesting to note that *rouge* was originally to the other side of this image. Again as in the painting method, no color is physically present, and hues are assigned by conception after the linear structure is established.

Sheet No. 4 (fig. 30) is also related to the Cabos diamond (fig. 22). Here the format of the drawing is somewhat different, as the sheet is a rectangle. Turning the paper, Mondrian has divided the surface so as to form a diamond at the top, with three actual edges and a drawn border. Below this, with one actual edge, he has included three much smaller diamonds. The larger composition and the most sharply defined small diamond are similar to the Cabos painting in the position of the larger rectangle and in the small triangular plane at the lower right; the secondary vertical accents are missing. No color notations are found here, although the wavy lines in the larger drawing may indicate varying grays or value contrasts of potential colors and gray/white tones.

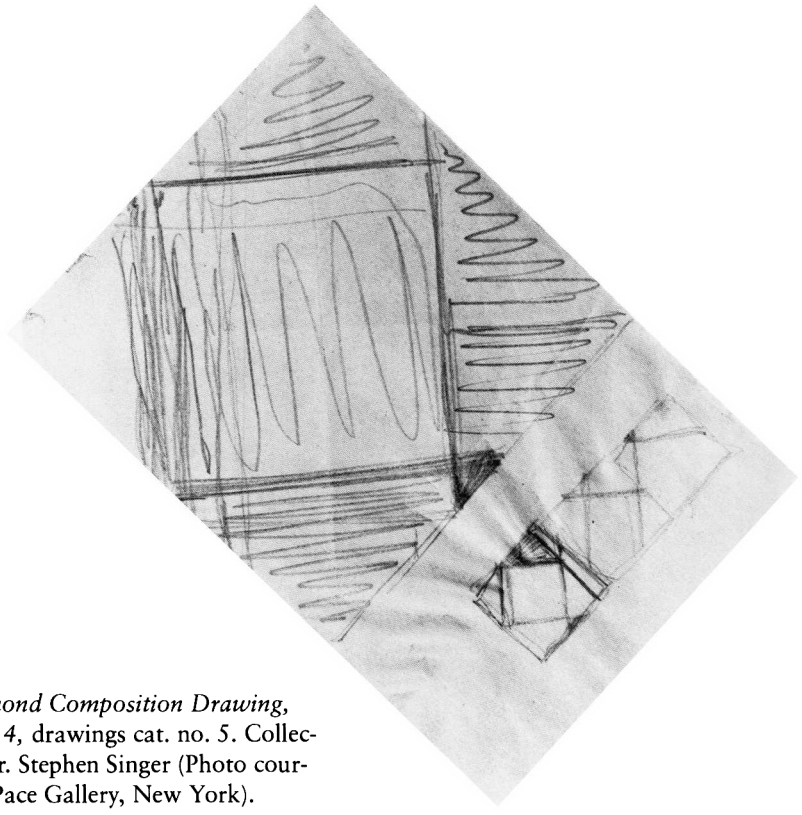
The next link in the stylistic chain is *Sheet No. 3* (figs. 28 and 29). This rectangular sheet is finished on both sides, each divided and turned so as to form a larger, three-edged diamond above and a single smaller one below. On the verso of *No. 3* Mondrian continues to use a large rectangle in the center of the image, only now turned to form a longer horizontal polygon, curiously indicated as quite dark in value. Neither composition seems successful.

The recto of *No. 3* is a different story. Here the structures of the two diamonds are more fully resolved and marked for colors and values.

Like the previous sheets, these drawings are constructed around a large centered rectangle. But here this form is not wholly within the field. For the first time in the diamonds Mondrian has introduced a composition without a single complete rectangle. In these two images the field is traversed by four linear elements, two verticals and two horizontals. The left vertical crosses the upper horizontal to form a small triangular area, while it lies tangent with the lower horizontal. The vertical to the right is independent, thus allowing the inscribed rectangle to open at top and bottom on that side.

Both compositions include color indications. The larger work uses the classical distribution of elements and colors: red in the top area, marked by the *R (rouge)* and blue to the right, as indicated by the adjacent *Bl.* Three tones complete the painting, most likely black at the bottom, from the heavy swirls of pencil, a gray to the left as marked by the *Gr (gris),* and white in the center as indicated by the *bl* for *blanc* (*bleu* is in capital *B, blanc* in lower case). The suggested painting at the bottom is more curious in its palette: blue is again to the right, now red is seen below, and the left and upper areas are marked by yellow, *J* for *jaune*, the only appearance of a repeated combination in such a prominent location in the diamonds.

Interestingly, yellow also dominates the largest image of the drawings on *Page A* (fig. 31), one of three sheets of diamond drawings from a notebook which must stand next chronologically. Here Mondrian is not working with the actual edges of the paper, rather the three diamonds are drawn in the field. The composition in all three—the smaller ones are variations of the larger—is greatly changed from the previous uncompleted rectangle. The diamond is

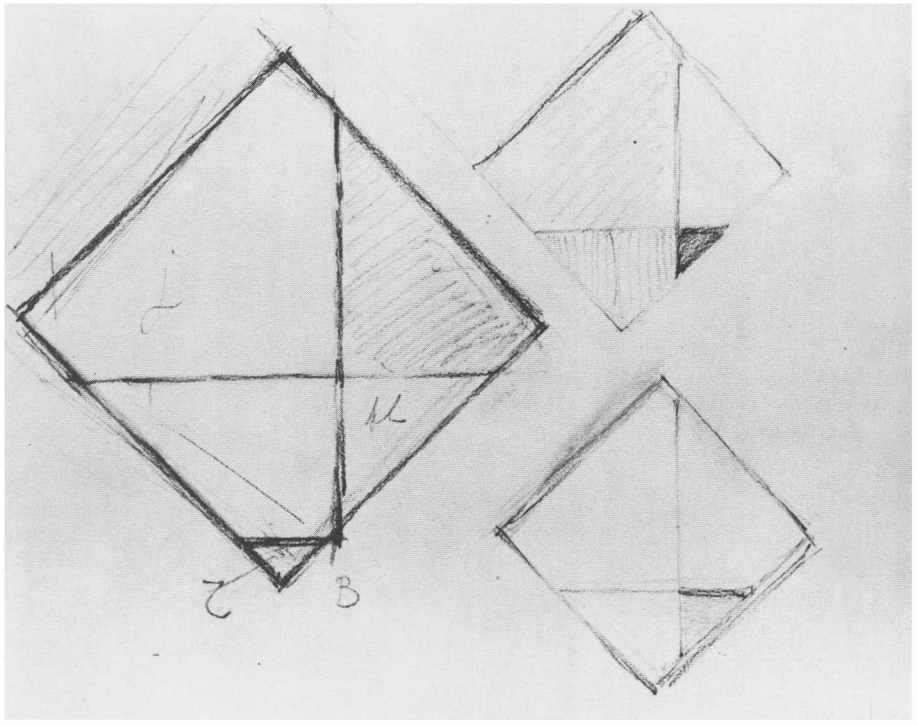


30. *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 4,* drawings cat. no. 5. Collection of Mr. Stephen Singer (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).

traversed by a long horizontal and a long vertical which cross near the center. At the bottom of this composition—as in the Cabos and Washington paintings—another short horizontal forms a triangular plane. The larger of the three images is marked for colors. Yellow again is prominent, filling the upper left polygon. Red presumably is in the lower triangle, although the capital *B* gives some question (blue is usually marked by *Bl,* however). White, indicated by *bl (blanc),* is in the lower area to the right, while the light hatchmarks in the area above suggest gray.

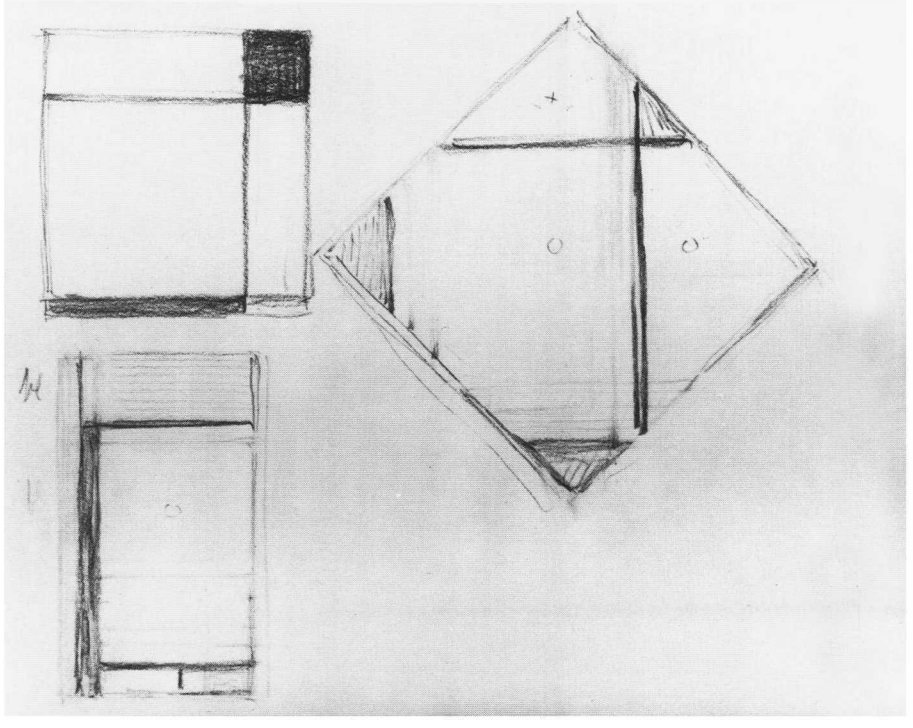
The two smaller images to the right on this sheet are even more radical in format. In both the lower horizontal has been removed, creating a compositional structure of only two crossing lines. This starkness is relieved by indications of value or possibly color. In the upper diamond, where the triangular area left by the lines is much smaller, Mondrian has indicated varying tonal values using diagonal and vertical hatching. In the lower image, the triangle is larger and lighter, and the field reads as white. More importantly these two images, in reverse form, relate directly to the open diamond now in Philadelphia (fig. 36).

Do the diamond drawings show how this radical change in Mondrian's art came about? Unfortunately they do not, at least directly, since their chronological order is somewhat unclear, and we cannot be sure if one image is a variation of another. But *Page B* (fig. 32) from this notebook does provide some clues. Here a single diamond is drawn, against the field as before. The division in this diamond recalls that of the larger image on *Page A* with two long crossing lines, now in the upper right. Two shorter lines, to



31. *Diamond Composition Drawing, Page A,* drawings cat. no. 6. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Tony Rosenthal (Photo taken from *Mondrian: The Process Works,* p. 27).

32. *Diamond Composition Drawing, Page B,* drawings cat. no. 7. Whereabouts unknown (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).



the left and below, form small triangular elements, versus one in the *Page A* diamond. These, from the hatchmarks, are presumably in color, while the field above is two-toned, the *O*'s standing for white and the *X*'s indicating gray.

The most significant aspect of this sheet is the drawings of rectangular pictures placed to the left of the diamond. The uppermost image is related to rectangular paintings which feature one large plane with smaller elements at its perimeter: the key compositional factor is the crossing vertical and horizontal lines. We suggested before that the Cabos diamond (and drawings *Nos. 2, 3,* and *4*) is connected with such a composition. *Page B* extends this idea by making the comparison directly.

In the other sheet from this notebook, *Page C* (fig. 33) Mondrian continued to explore the open diamond and eliminated more and more from the image. The diamond at the right—formed of two crossing lines—is very similar to the small one on *Page A,* with the shaded area now at the lower left. The adjacent diamond has approximately the same composition save for a vertical line added at the left. The presence of this line implies that the central area is still in some way part of a larger rectangle, cut at its lower left corner and above. While the other drawings suggest existing paintings, this image is unique because it directly relates to a canvas—the diamond composition of 1925, now in Zürich (fig. 34)—suggesting it served as a preliminary study for this painting.

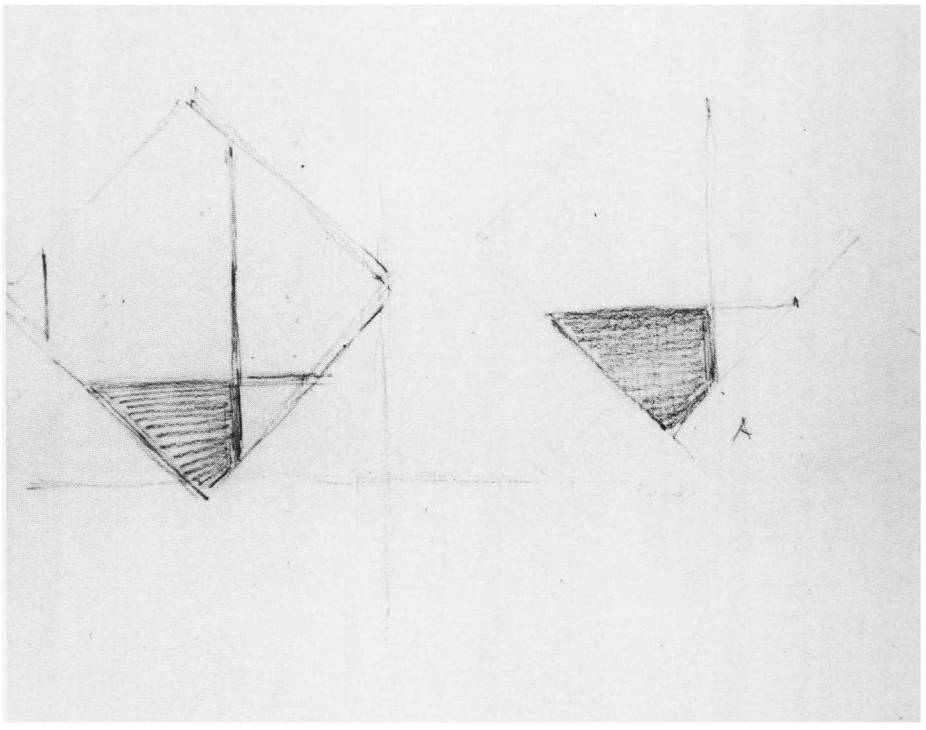
The Open Diamonds

Late in 1925 Mondrian apparently had a small one-man exhibition at the Kühl and Kühn Gallery in Dresden and participated in a group show, *International Exhibition of Art,* in June to September of the fol-

lowing year. Little information exists about these exhibitions. As Welsh has shown,[54] Mondrian did make an illustrated record (fig. 74) of some of the paintings sent to Dresden in the same notebook which contained the above drawings. A diagram indicates that the diamond format was included, but unfortunately this sketch does not reveal the composition. We know that at least two diamonds were in Dresden, the Washington painting and *Composition I with Blue and Yellow* (fig. 34), as both works entered the collection of Friedrich and Enid Bienert of that city at this time. We do not know if either or both were exhibited. However, Mondrian's reference, also in the record of works sent, to the diamond as *Losangique Pyramidal* seems to fit the looming white upper portions of the Zürich picture.

The probable reference to the Zürich painting in the same notebook with the diamond drawing on *Page C,* discussed above, more tightly links the two together. As noted, essentially the same structure is found in each, a composition quite different from that of preceding diamonds. The basic form outlined by the black lines is a large vertical rectangle to the left of center, with its lower left corner and upper limits outside the pictorial surface. But within this construction another form is implied. The lower and right borders of the central area are equal in length, an equality which suggests a central square. This suggested element connects the Zürich painting with the Cabos diamond and relates it to the large, plane-dominated rectangular pictures as well.

Of course the square is only implied. Actually we are struck far more strongly by an opposing sensation due to the openness of the composition at the top and the continuous white at the right. This stands in

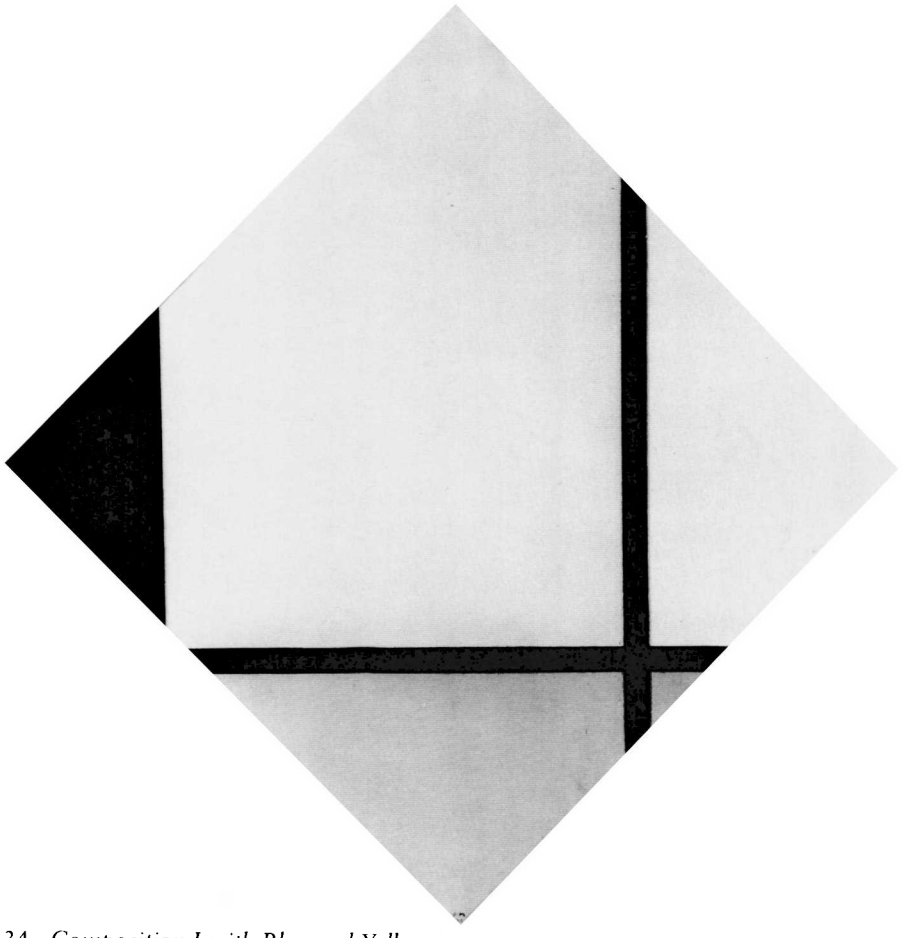


33. *Diamond Composition Drawing, Page C,* drawings cat. no. 8. Collection of Arnold and Milly Glimcher, New York (Photo courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York).

contrast to the other portions of the picture which are painted in darker hues; the left point is blue, while the triangle at the lower right is a primary yellow. The lower polygon between these two has been painted a gray which is quite blue in tonality and therefore unusual. Mondrian had earlier varied the grays in his compositions. For example, the Washington painting has three differing shades including one with a blue tonality, although this is a less intense hue than that found in the Zürich polygon. Here, even allowing for changes caused by aging of the paint, this area was clearly intended to stand apart from the white planes above, suggesting a connection with the shaded areas in the earlier drawings. All of this serves to make the painting closer to the previous diamonds in spite of its difference in structural terms, for the colored and shaded rectangles around the compositional center recall those of the Washington and Cabos paintings. However, the openness of the composition and the way its white areas extend to the edges indicate the direction of Mondrian's next paintings.

The "Mysterious Eighteenth Diamond"

Another diamond from this period, *Composition with Blue* (fig. 36), now in Philadelphia, can be related to both the drawings on *Pages B* and *C* as well as to the Zürich painting. While this connection appears somewhat obscure at first because of the openness of the structure in the Philadelphia work, it can be clarified by reference to another diamond image, *Composition,* 1926 (fig. 35). This work was only recently discovered in the form of a photograph in the S. B. Slijper Archives at the Gemeentemuseum. Called the "mysterious eighteenth diamond," *Com-*



34. *Composition I with Blue and Yellow,* paintings cat. no. 8. Kunsthaus Zürich, Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde.

position has been considered the second of two missing pictures (Seuphor no. 401 being the first).[55] But as William Leisher and I argue in this catalogue (Study B), the mysterious eighteenth diamond is in fact the Philadelphia painting in an earlier state.

This extraordinary discovery reveals other new information about this crucial period of change in Mondrian's work. The most surprising aspect of *Composition* is its construction. Allowing for some variations in proportions, the structure of this first state is the mirror image of that of the Zürich painting. We have seen earlier that Mondrian repeated a basic structural pattern in the first three diamonds, while changing the emphasis of the accented linear design. But this creation of a mirror image is unique in his work.[56]

From the black and white photograph of *Composition* (and our examination of the Philadelphia diamond in the laboratory) it seems that the initial state of the painting was far more stark than its parent Zürich diamond; the picture was painted entirely in black and white save for the small triangular area at the left which is here identified as sky blue (it appears as gray in the photograph). A similar color is found at the bottom of the Zürich picture. Mondrian was apparently satisfied with the first state of the painting, going so far as to sign and date the picture (fig. 70) "P M 26." At some point—probably the same year—he sent a photograph to Slijper, inscribing the title *Composition* on the reverse.

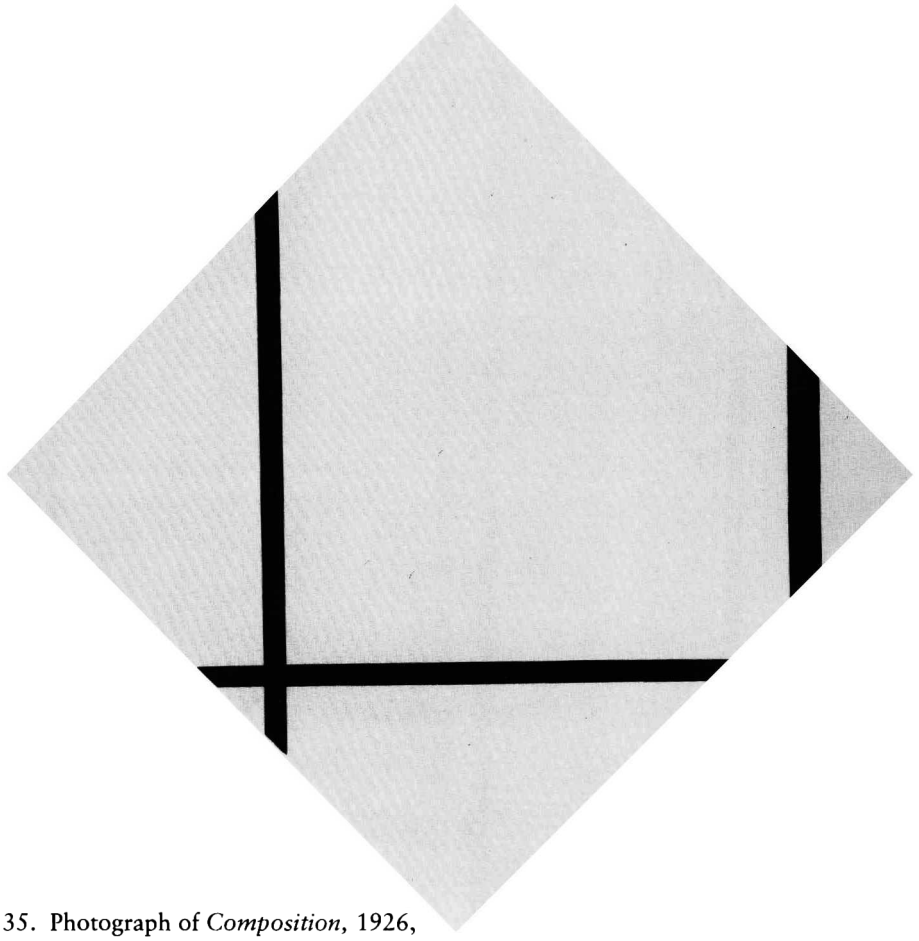
We know that Mondrian did make revisions to paintings left in his studio, sometimes years after their initial state was determined (see Study A). But the changes in the Philadelphia work were probably made the same year, as Mondrian reinscribed the picture "P M 26" (fig. 71). The nature of the changes reveals again how developments in his art are often progressive and conservative at once. Removal of the black line at the right creates a structure of only two crossing lines, as spare as Mondrian's compositions ever become. In this sense it connects with the two line drawings on *Pages B* and *C*; but in these sheets Mondrian varies the tonal values of the surface planes, where in the revised Philadelphia work the only variant plane is the dark blue triangle. This color area, small as it is, stylistically ties the work to the Chicago and Washington paintings and continues the "traditional" idea of a cut composition of juxtaposed rectangular elements.

Nevertheless, in total the Philadelphia picture is a radical creation. In the Washington work we noted the balance between the centralized or expanding linear composition and the cutting power of the diamond format. In the Philadelphia painting because of the reduction of compositional elements and the use of the stark white field this relationship is intensified. Virtually uninterrupted by the structure intersecting its perimeter, the diamond now begins to be seen more sharply as a field with a particular shape, while simul-

taneously the two linear elements, continuous except when they cross, have a directional force which is virtually unchecked by edges of the canvas.

In the works of an artist as precise as Mondrian details are often revealing. The increased role of the diamond format again calls our attention to the edges of the painting. As we have seen, beginning with the first diamonds, Mondrian set the framing strip back from the face of the canvas, thus emphasizing the surface and giving a greater graphic power to the exposed edge. During this period, the way in which the sides of the canvas are painted also changes. In the Chicago painting they were white, the color planes ending at the edge, and the black lines arrested where tangent. In the Zürich painting and probably in the Washington diamond (see Study A) again the color planes sat only on the surface. Here, however, the black lines not only cross the edge of the surface, but continue down approximately ½ inch on the sides, ending near the line of the setback framing strip; the remaining side surface is painted white. This not only supports the idea that the black structure is the essential aspect of the work, but also gives the image an increased density, as the structure seems bound to the physical presence of the canvas.

Interestingly in the Philadelphia painting Mondrian again makes a change in the edges. As before the blue plane lies only on the surface of the picture, but the black lines extend past the edges and through the bevel of the canvas, stopping only when the side of the painting begins. (Bevel here refers to that part of the picture which is the transitional area between the surface and the sides.) By running the black through this area Mondrian again gives a slightly greater density to the linear structure but does not bind the image to the canvas as tightly as he has previously.

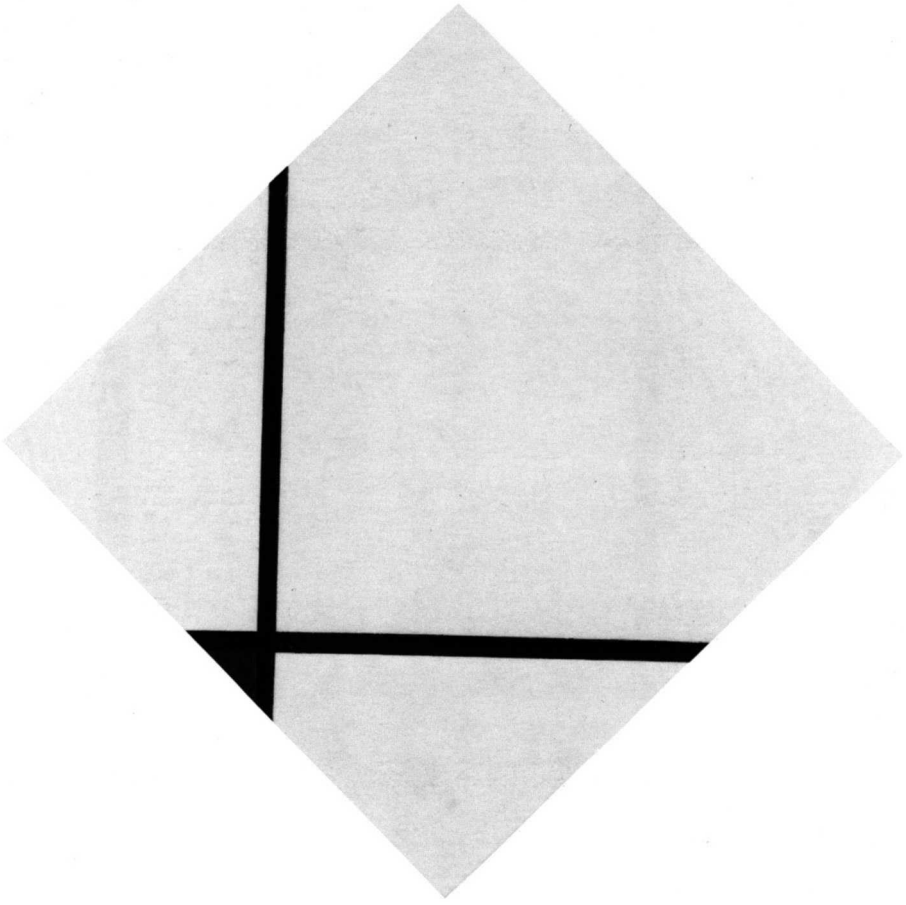


35. Photograph of *Composition,* 1926, paintings cat. no. 9 bis and document no. 3. Here identified as an early state of fig. 36. Private Collection.

Mondrian and Impressionism II

The issue of the cropped image and the potential extension of the structure is also present in the last of the 1925-1926 diamonds, *Painting I* at The Museum of Modern Art (fig. 37). But here the structure is in a different form, one that raises questions about continuing connections between the diamonds and impressionist conventions.

Painting I is close to the two open diamonds in certain aspects of style and probably dates from the first half of 1926. It was bought that year by Katherine S. Dreier, and this purchase along with those made by Friedrich and Enid Bienert represents the first important sales of Mondrian's mature paintings. Mrs. Dreier published *Painting I*, with a photograph, in her *Modern Art* of 1926 and included the painting in the 1926-1927 *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, organized by the Société Anonyme for the Brooklyn Museum.[57] Thus *Painting I* was the first Mondrian diamond shown in the United States (it was exhibited as either *Clarification I* or *II*, as Mrs. Dreier had the rather maddening habit of changing titles on paintings



36. *Composition with Blue,* paintings cat. no. 9. Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection.

to fit her personal interpretations).

Reversing the tendency of the previous two diamonds toward an opened composition, the Modern's painting is again composed around a centered rectangle, now placed slightly to the right of and below center. But unlike the structures of previous works, here three of the corners suggested by the lines lie outside the borders of the painting; only the fourth, to the upper left, is actually stated.

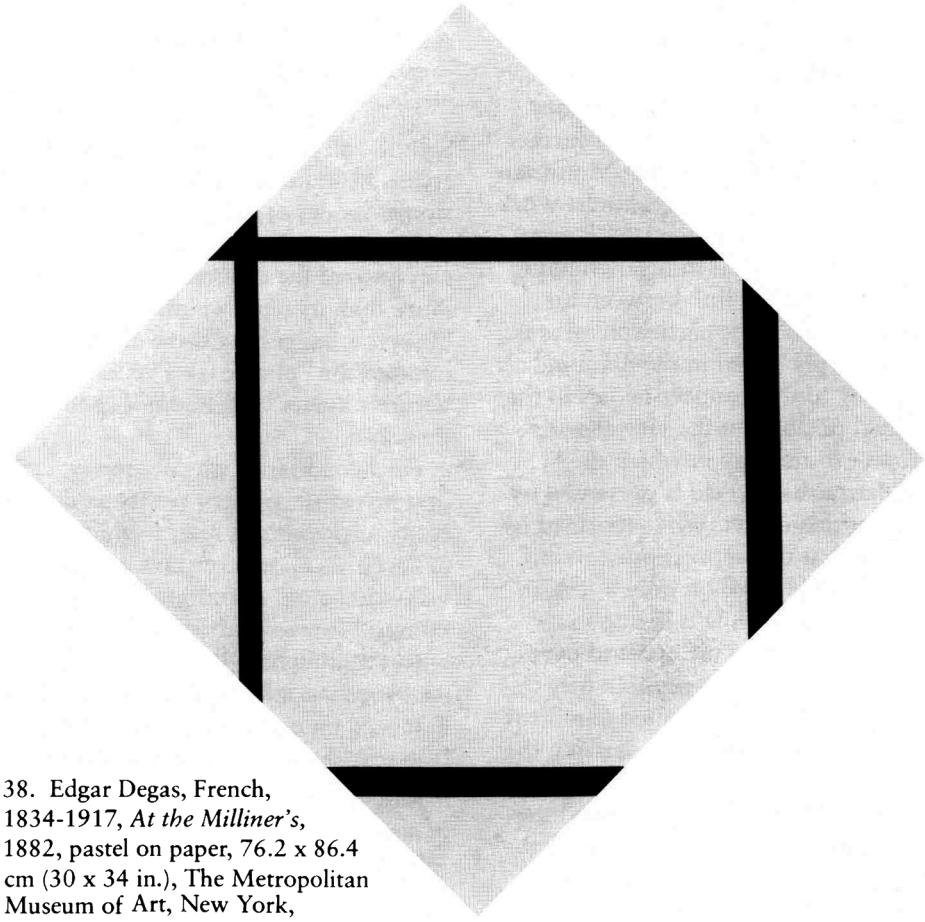
The Philadelphia diamond, despite its extreme compositional reduction to two crossing lines, does, through the presence of the blue triangle, continue to suggest that here a multiplaned composition is intersected by the diamond format. In *Painting I* a similar interpretation is suggested by the upper left corner where the lines cross and continue on, leaving a small triangle of white field; in the other implied corners we have no clear sense of extension or cessation. Thus the inscribed rectangle hangs, as it were, from this upper left corner. This stability is tense, but finds support in the triangle at the bottom of the painting. Painted a light gray, in contrast to the stark white areas above, this triangle thus introduces the possibility of a differing planar element. Still, because of the restricted palette and the use of implied corners, *Painting I* is perceptually more complex than the other works. The greater visual pressure is put on the structure alone, and, as these lines vary in width, a secondary tension is also introduced.

The composition and heritage of the Modern's painting have been profoundly discussed by Meyer Schapiro. Schapiro's connection of the painting's structure to impressionism is so complex and subtle that it must be quoted at length:

> The root of Mondrian's conception of asymmetrically grouped, segmented forms spanning the field will not be found, I believe, in his earlier paintings from nature nor in his Cubist works. . . . It is rather in the most advanced painting of the late nineteenth century—in works by Monet, Degas, Seurat, and Lautrec—that we find precedents for the pronounced asymmetries in Mondrian's paintings and his extension of foreground lines to the boundary on all sides, with their implied continuation beyond. By novel close-up views and by the cropping of objects, those painters make us aware of the actuality of a near and often peripheral observer, as in later photographs and films with odd perspectives which evoke the determining presence of a viewing eye. . . . By sighting the prominent foreground objects from nearby and cutting them abruptly at the edges of the canvas, painters brought the viewer close to the picture space—as if a participant—and marked the resulting strange silhouettes of the very near and incompletely seen as a truth to vision.
>
> An illuminating example is Degas's picture of a scene in a milliner's shop (1882) [fig. 38]. . . . Degas's picture . . . may be taken as a simile of the aesthetic perceptions and self-consciousness that preceded abstract art and prepared its way. . . . The segmenting of foreground objects at the edges of a field was practiced, of course, in much older Western and Middle Eastern art. But its specific form in the later nineteenth century, with pointed reference to a nearby spectator

whose perspective position determines an incomplete and sometimes oddly silhouetted form of a primary object was something new . . . . For Degas the pattern of a scene changed decidedly with the artist's distance and his angle of vision in sighting the objects. His virtual presence in the perspective of the pictured scene suggests an attitude towards what catches his eye, whether of detachment or aesthetic interest or cool curiosity in a casual encounter. The objects beheld in the painting intimate in their form both the boundary of that viewer's vision and their own existence in a larger field than is framed, including a space between the canvas and the implied spectator of the original scene. The painting embodies the contingent in a momentary envisionment of the real world, and requires for its reading our fuller knowledge of objects and the conditions of sighting.

I have . . . [compared] Mondrian's composition with certain features of Degas's in order to show the continuity of abstract painting with the preceding figurative art, a connection that is generally ignored. . . . The new abstract elements of his [Mondrian's] art are disposed on the canvas in asymmetric and open relationships that had been discovered by earlier painters in the course of a progressive searching of their perceptions



37. *Painting I,* paintings cat. no. 10. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953.

38. Edgar Degas, French, 1834-1917, *At the Milliner's,* 1882, pastel on paper, 76.2 x 86.4 cm (30 x 34 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929. The H. O. Havemeyer Collection.

of encountered objects in the ordinary world and had been selected for more than aesthetic reasons. In that art of representation, the asymmetry and openness of the whole, which distinguished a new aesthetic, also embodied allusively a way of experiencing directly and pointedly the everyday variable scene—a way significant of a changing outlook in norms of knowledge, freedom, and selfhood. So too one may ask whether Mondrian's use of those compositional relations, although applied to particular geometric units with a characteristic aspect of the elementary, the rigorous, and impersonal as features of an innovating rational aesthetic, perhaps springs from a positive attitude towards that liberating outlook.[58]

Schapiro's penetrating insight—that there is a relationship between impressionist painting and Mondrian's work not only in form, but also in content—is worthy of further examination. I believe that Mondrian came to see in the impressionist work a metaphysical position which was comparable to that in his own painting, and that the link between his painting and these earlier pictures is most deeply stated in the diamonds. The key to this connection lies in the formal position of the viewer with respect to the way in which the modern urban world is presented by the impressionists. What concerns us here is that the impressionist paintings often focused on only a section of the world. While it is true that cropping allowed the artist to emphasize an aspect of modern life, nevertheless the segmented composition was also a way of indicating that the scene presented was partial and that the world extended beyond the limits of the picture. Significantly the impressionists believed that reality was most clearly shown through such a fragment; thus a detail of the world in motion not only was a sufficient representation of the subject, but also was its closest visual approximation.

In this context it is important to realize that Mondrian saw his work as a continuation of existing artistic traditions.

> Modern art rejects the methods of expression used in the past, *but continues its real content. It continues what the art of the past began: the transformation of natural vision. What the art of the past accomplished more or less invisibly due to the oppression of the epoch, modern art accomplishes more visibly.*
>
> All the art of the past shows an exaggeration of the tension of lines and forms, changes in the natural colors and proportions: a transformation of reality's natural aspect. Art has never been a copy of nature, for such a copy would not have been strong enough to evoke human emotion. *The living beauty of nature* cannot be copied: it can only be *expressed.*[59]

Significantly, among these previous styles, Mondrian saw the impressionist modes of expression as close to his own painting. "Impressionism emphasized the impression of reality more than its representation,"[60] he observed, suggesting these artists had intuited the "plastic laws veiled in nature's aspect" but had not spelled them out.

For Mondrian it was necessary that his works present reality as directly as possible, a reality which he believed was both constant and always changing, a combination of immutable laws and continual energy. Painting had, in this sense, a problem; it could be composed and balanced on one hand, yet could not be particular or static on the other.

> Abstract Art emphasizes the fact that in plastic art the expression of reality cannot be similar to that of palpable reality. The dynamic movement established by the opposition of forms and their colors constitutes the expression of universal reality. In single forms, dynamic movement reveals itself through the continuous opposition of their composing elements: volumes, planes, determined by lines and colors. For this reason, the work appears as "living." But in relation to the environment, simple forms show a static balance. They appear as entities separated from the whole. In order to establish universal unity, their proper unity has to be destroyed: their particular expression has to be annihilated. In plastic art, the static balance has to be transformed into the dynamic equilibrium which the universe reveals.[61]

The solution to this problem is where Mondrian's art intersects that of the impressionists, in the idea that reality could be understood by a fragment. That Mondrian took this ontological position is most directly spelled out in a statement of 1926: ". . . my painting is an abstract surrogate of the whole. . . ."[62] His canvases are meant to be read in the same way an impressionist picture is read, as an integral creation which shows—or in Mondrian's case corresponds with—reality and emphasizes this metaphysical fact by containing only part of the whole, by being a cropped section of a continum.

In Mondrian's rectangular canvases this idea is more difficult to perceive, as the horizontals and verticals parallel the framing edges, a relationship which suggests repose and containment. But the cutting lines of the diamonds make the fragmenting of reality explicit. "I think the destructive element is too much neglected in art," Mondrian wrote to Sweeney in 1943.[63] The diamond edges served this purpose, they destroyed; as he said to Seuphor in the 1920s, their function was "to cut [*couper*]."[64]

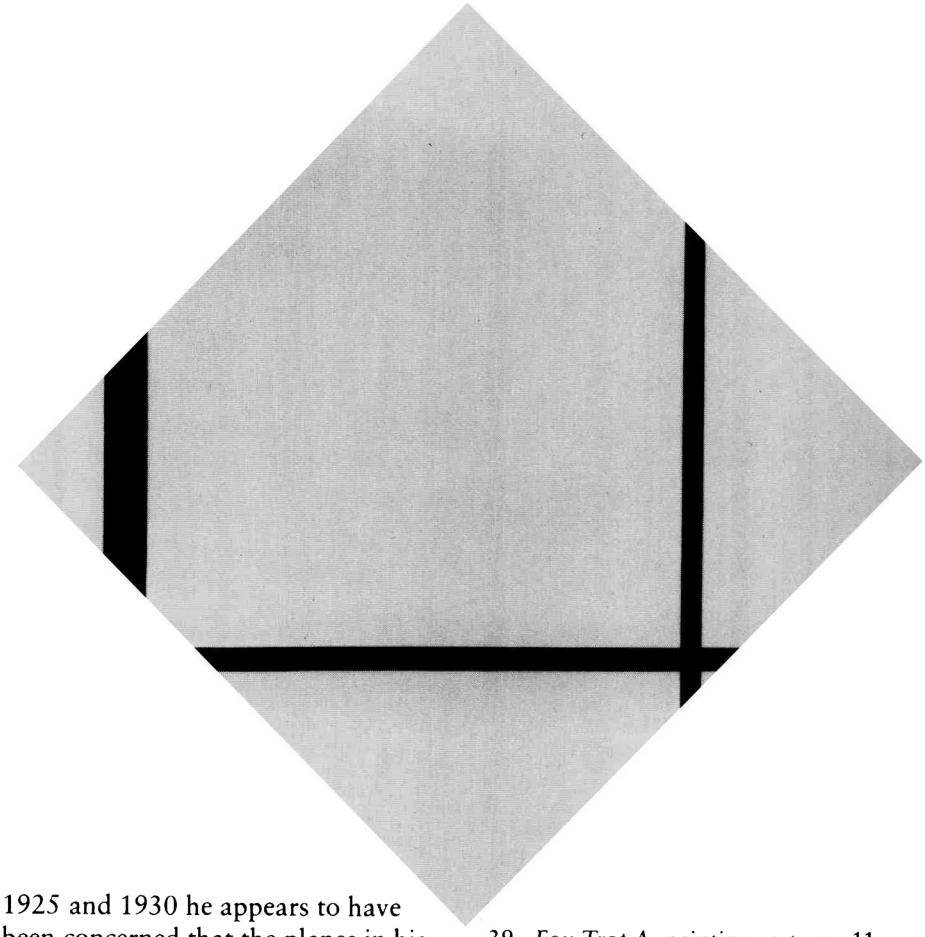
Dancing, Music, and Drawing

The seriousness of Mondrian's aesthetics (and metaphysics) and the rigid abstraction of his paintings accord with his personality. The artist's spartan living conditions in Paris, his dedication to his work—"There is so much to do," he would say[65]—and his rather stern physical appearance—thin and straight, dressed formally—create an image of him as a northern European puritan. There is, of course, a great deal of truth to this picture. But Mondrian was no hermit. He did participate in café life in Paris, even if distantly. And he could be seen at Cirque Medrano in Montmartre, or at the Café du Dome, La Coupole, or at Montparnasse parties.[66] Perhaps most surprising was his passion for modern music and dancing, a passion tempered by the seriousness with which he approached it.

Mondrian found jazz an equivalent to his paintings, especially the music's concentration on complex rhythms and contrapuntal structure rather than the tune.[67] "Let's sit down," he once said to a dancing partner, "I hear melody."[68] The modern social dance especially appealed to Mondrian. "He would have danced all night," recalls a friend. "I can tell you he danced just like his paintings . . . in straight lines and squares."[69] Mondrian took dancing seriously—he was enraged when the Charleston was banned in Holland—and, in spite of his near poverty income, took lessons in the new steps; by the 1920s he had given up the waltz for the fox trot.

The connection Mondrian felt between modern jazz and his own work is recorded in the titles of four paintings: two from the late 1920s–early 1930s entitled *Fox Trot A* (fig. 39) and *Fox Trot B*, and two from his New York period called *Boogie-Woogie* (figs. 54 and 56). Significantly, he had taken lessons in the fox trot in the 1920s and became acquainted with boogie-woogie music in the 1940s after his move to the United States. These two sets, each of which includes a diamond composition, reveal different aspects of Mondrian's interest and of his art.

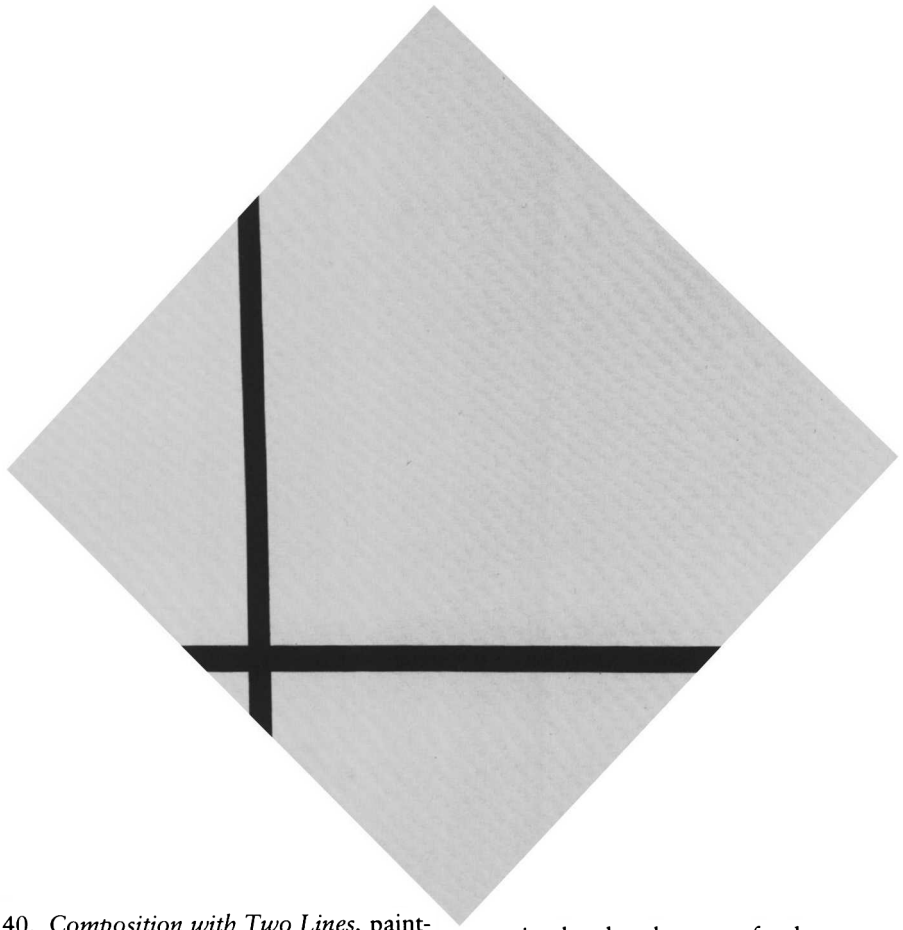
Painted in 1930, *Fox Trot A* is one of three diamond pictures from this period. Interestingly, this trio can be matched with the three open paintings from 1925-1926, and each represents in turn an extrapolation of the structural concerns of its counterpart. The shared feature of the later trio, and their greatest distinction from the earlier set, is their palette: the color or toned planes of 1925-1926 have been removed; the black structure remains, but now dramatically set against an all-white field. Mondrian also made significant variations in this structure. Between 1925 and 1930 he appears to have been concerned that the planes in his paintings would be seen as complete rectangles, particular shapes with individual identities that would create a focal point in the composition and thus destroy the overall dynamic balance. Mondrian invented the opened composition and the perimeter elements of 1925-1926 as a first step toward the alleviation of this problem; the later works are its complete resolution.



39. *Fox Trot A*, paintings cat. no. 11. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Gift of the artist for the Collection Société Anonyme.

Fox Trot A, now at the Yale University Art Gallery, is the first of the paired paintings. Its linear structure of thin, crossing vertical and horizontal elements on the right side and a thicker isolated vertical on the left is identical—save for proportions and specific locations—with that of the first open diamond at Zürich (and the reverse of that of the even more spare mysterious eighteenth diamond). Indeed, this connection is so strong that Seuphor initially assigned the Yale painting to 1927 on stylistic grounds. But both the presence of an inscription on the face of the work "P M 30" and the absence of any trace of color or gray tone under the white, which would suggest a state begun earlier, places the picture in 1930.[70]

The variations from the Zürich painting are slight. The crossed lines in *Fox Trot A* are narrower, while the isolated vertical appears to have been widened. This latter element is in approximately the same position, but the intersecting bands have each



40. *Composition with Two Lines,* paintings cat. no. 13. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, on loan from the Municipality of Hilversum, the Netherlands.

been moved further away from the center. This adjustment creates a wider central space; conversely the triangular area on the right is much reduced in size, making it closer in feeling to that in the Philadelphia diamond. It is interesting to note, however, that the right vertical bisects the right diagonal edges of the work, giving the painting a hidden geometric stability.

These changes, although small ones, do make *Fox Trot A*'s structure more dynamically balanced. The crisper and thinner character of the crossing lines is now in greater contrast to the wide vertical at the left. And this balance is made far more active by the absence of color or tone. As we discussed above, the starkness of the field and the reduction of compositional elements also emphasize the diamond format. Mondrian now increased this objective quality by adding another strip to the set-back frame, creating two steps from the surface and thus pushing the canvas further forward.

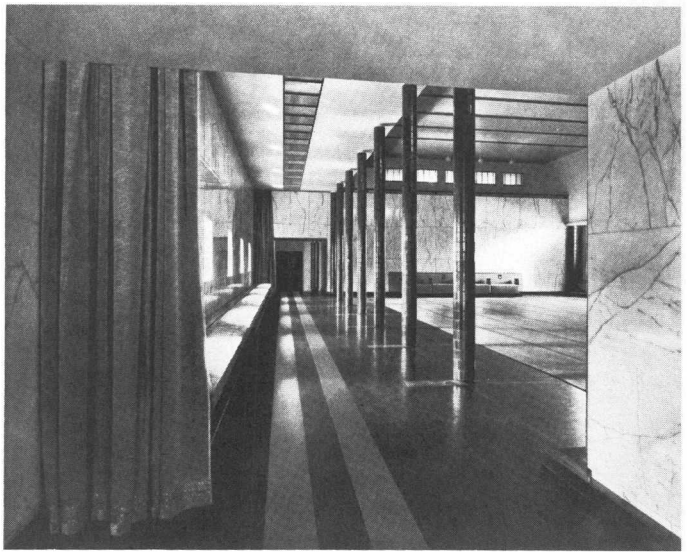
Fox Trot B, also at Yale, would seem by its title to be a companion to *Fox Trot A.* Actually it dates from the previous year, and as a large rectangular, color perimeter composition is not directly connected to the inventions in this diamond. Two rectangular pictures from 1930 do relate to *Fox Trot A,* however, *Composition I with Black Lines* and *Composition II with Black Lines.* Known as the "portraits," these two pictures—like the Yale diamond—are restricted to a black and white palette. Also using only three lines, the compositional form in each is roughly a cross, with the third element, a horizontal line, placed below the intersection and to the right. Because of its spareness this structure interacts more emphatically with the edges of the canvas, a relationship which also suggests the Yale diamond.

Questions of Architecture

Another diamond painting begun in this year, but completed in 1931, is the work owned by the Municipality of Hilversum, the Netherlands and on deposit with the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (fig. 40). It is derived from the open diamond at Philadelphia, with little variation in the position of the lines and only a small increase in their widths. Following the Zürich/Yale relationship, the Hilversum diamond is completely in black and white, without the blue triangle of its Philadelphia precedent. Thus the composition simply involves two lines crossing on a white diamond field; it is among the sparest of all Mondrian's works. However, its reductive character does not extend to its expression. Here the incredibly open feeling of the black construction, with lines capable of endless extension, is balanced by the increased presence of the diamond field itself.

The Hilversum diamond is the work cited by Schapiro, in reference to the diamond-shaped escutcheons in paintings of Dutch church interiors, such as those shown in Emanuel de Witte's pictures (fig. 41), where similar compositions exist.[71] As discussed above, any relationship between Modrian's paintings and diamond escutcheons is at best coincidental, since his invention of the format is derived from cubist and

41. Emanuel de Witte, Dutch, 1616/1618-1692, *The Interior of a Church,* oil on canvas, 79.3 x 69.5 cm (31¼ x 27⅜ in.), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel.



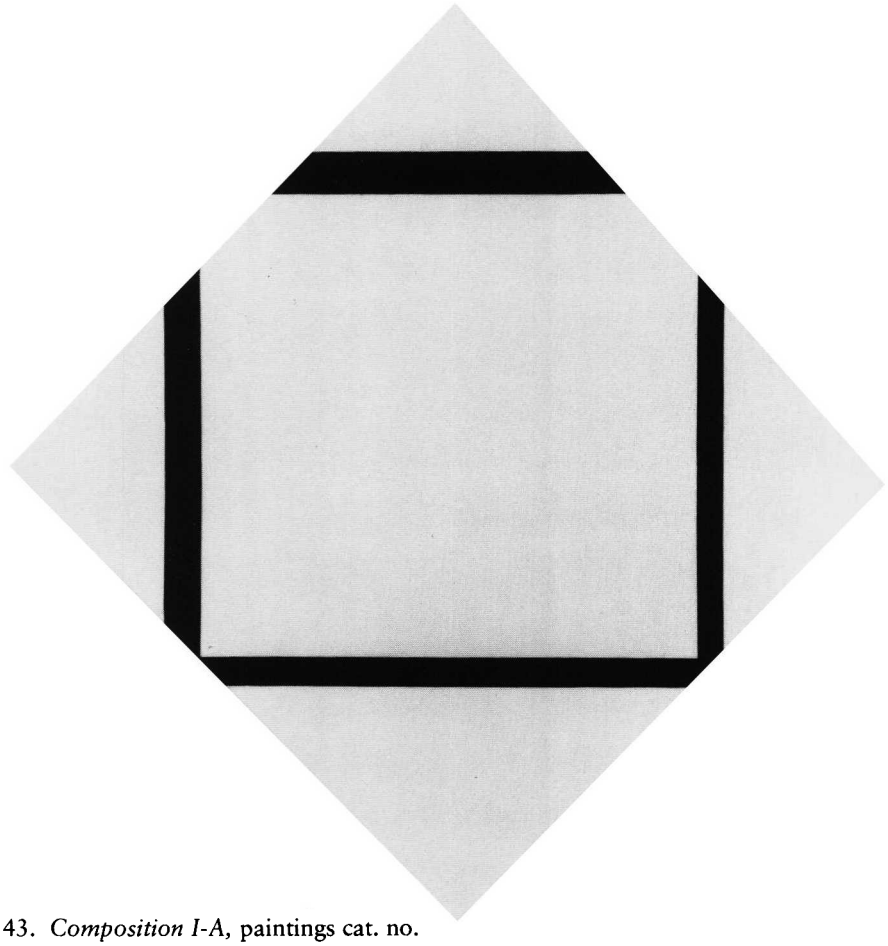
42. Photograph of the interior of the Hôtel de Ville, Municipality of Hilversum, the Netherlands, the intended room for fig. 40 (Photo by C. A. Deul, taken from H. K. Verkruysen, "Dudok, raadhuis Hilversum," *Wendingen, 11/12,* 1930).

impressionist sources. Furthermore, in the particular case of the Hilversum diamond and the de Witte escutcheon (or any actual one like it) the resemblance must be fortuitous as the composition is a descendant of the earlier, and more complex Zürich painting. Finally, the associations of the Dutch escutcheons, as heraldry for the deceased, are alien to Mondrian's optimistic art.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a relationship does exist. Although the diamond was not derived from an escutcheon, its superficial resemblance to this heraldic form might have influenced its subsequent career. This association is the result of certain special conditions surrounding the painting. *Composition with Two Lines* is the only diamond intended for a specific location, the town hall in Hilversum, designed by the architect Willem M. Dudok and finished in 1931, the same year the painting was completed. The record shows plainly that Mondrian and Dudok did not work together on this project. The design for the city hall dates to 1924 (and construction began in 1928), certainly before Dudok made contact with Mondrian (if indeed he ever did);[72] the diamond is a result of an internal evolution within Mondrian's art. Further, as Joosten has written: "As far as I know Dudok himself had no interest whatsoever in the work from Mondrian, and from the correspondence with Carola Giedion-Welcker one can gather that Mondrian sold the painting without any ulterior motive regarding the hanging etc."[73]

This does not close the case, however. While the painting was not a commission proper—it was purchased by a private society which supported artists by buying their works—it is possible that this society, which was Dutch, did on its own make the association with church escutcheons. Champa in his discussion of the escutcheon/diamond connection, observes: "Mondrian's permanent residence outside of Holland after the first World War removed him from an audience (namely a Dutch audience) for whom the lozenge was pictorially natural."[74] But the society which purchased the Hilversum painting was precisely that "Dutch audience." Aside from a possible resemblance between the diamond's composition and similar markings on actual escutcheons, there may have been two other reasons for linking these forms.

Firstly, if the escutcheons did influence Mondrian's diamonds at all, beyond being a general formal prototype, then the influence is reflected in Mondrian's way of hanging certain—if not all—of these paint-



43. *Composition I-A,* paintings cat. no. 12. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Hilla Rebay Collection.

ings. As we can see in a photograph of his studio in 1926, the initial diamond was hung very high on the wall (fig. 24). So too, however, are other, rectangular paintings. But on the verso of a later diamond at The Hague, Mondrian has written the following instructions:

> When hanging the picture, [place] the centre no lower than the eye-level of a man standing up and, if possible, with the bottom corner coming at eye-level. . . .[75]

Further, when showing the work in his studio, Mondrian placed it this way on his easel (frontispiece). This elevated location, of course, accords with the high position of the escutcheons in churches. Intended or not by Mondrian, this similarity might have been noticed by the purchasers of the painting.

Secondly, Dutch churches, as recorded by the old master painters, were colonnaded, with the escutcheons hung on the columns and piers. The room where Mondrian's diamond was to hang was also "a room with columns,"[76] and Mondrian's painting, although intended for a place on the wall, was to be the only work of art in this space. The plan was never carried out. However, imagining the picture in this room (fig. 42), hung high and surrounded by columns, does directly suggest the church interiors, a connection that might possibly have been intended in its selection by the Dutch committee. Nevertheless, we know of no recorded mention of this church relationship by Mondrian.

Black and White and Color

The third of the paired diamonds is *Composition I-A*, now at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (fig. 43). Like the Yale painting and the Hilversum canvas, the Guggenheim picture is restricted to a black and white palette. It too is related to an open painting of 1925-1926—the diamond at The Museum of Modern Art—but this pair's connections are less direct than those of the preceding sets. In The Museum of Modern Art's painting the black structure suggests a central rectangle with three implied corners beyond the edges of the canvas. By contrast, in the Guggenheim painting the rectangle is more defined, with the two lower corners completed within the picture (only the upper two are implied), giving the black structure and its suggested shape a more unified character. This holistic presence is relieved by the asymmetrical position of the form, to the left and high of center, and by the wider lines, again at the left and above for balance (in the earlier painting the wide bars are at the right and below).

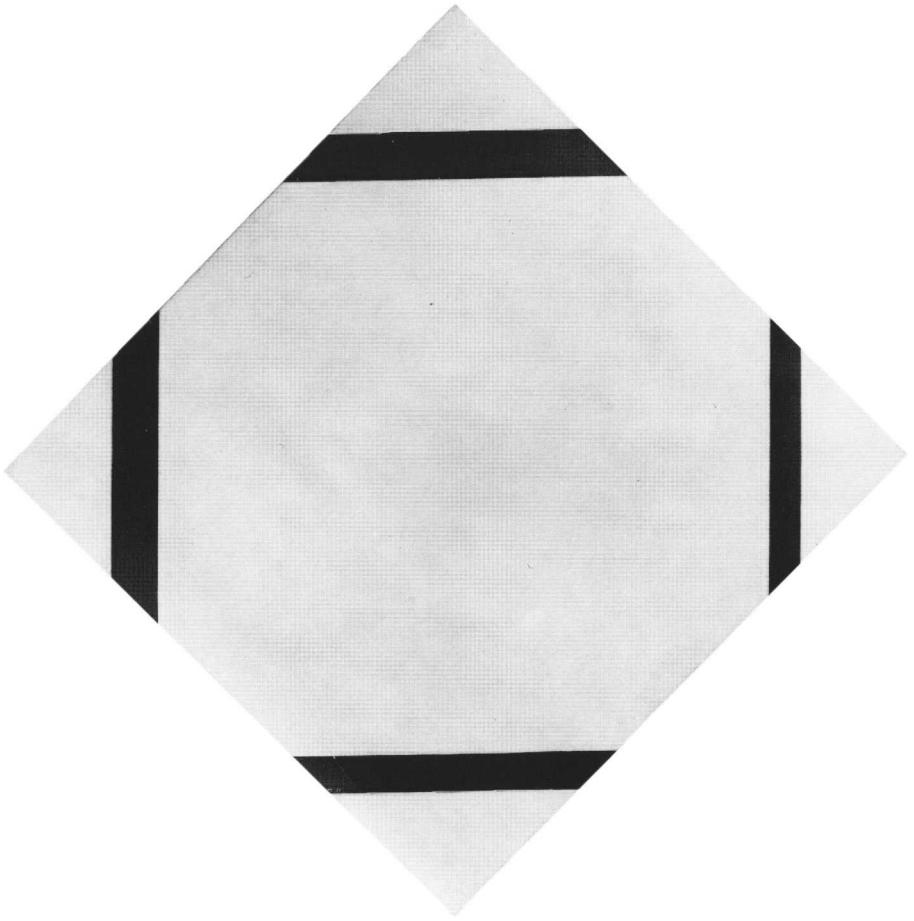
Taken together the three open diamonds at Yale, the Guggenheim, and Hilversum state in the barest terms possible Mondrian's three compositional devices—a dynamic balance of forms across the open field (Yale), the crossing and unrestricted linear configuration (Hilversum), and the asymmetrical closure (Guggenheim). As we have seen, structure more than color was primary in Mondrian's art during this time, and the three diamonds are essentially drawn structures working against the graphic shaping of the diamond format. In fact, Mondrian's rejection of color planes was success-

ful in these paintings because the diamond edge had a linear presence, equally strong but different in character. Contemporary black and white paintings in the rectangular format are much weaker because of the more dormant horizontal and vertical edges, which repeat the structure rather than contrasting with and cropping the interior drawing. Furthermore, in contrast to the stark white field the black lines take on certain coloristic qualities, inflecting the surface in a manner analagous to, but more elusive than, the primaries and grays used previously. Of course, the lines do not look like colors (save for certain shades created optically when they cross), but they do enrich the surface as color does.

This dialogue between color and linear elements is continued in Mondrian's next diamond, *Composition with Yellow Lines* of 1933 (fig. 44). In reference to this work Champa has written:

> This painting, which is in several basic ways a variant of the Guggenheim lozenge, literally declares Mondrian's intention to bond inside graphic color with definite outside hue by making the two notions optically and structurally synonymous in the form of the colored lines themselves. These both divide and unify inside and outside whites, while at the same time establishing colored planimetric weights and counterweights operating against the lozenge's usual eccentricity of shape.[77]

Now in The Hague, this painting is one of the most unusual of Mondrian's works. Like the two preceding diamonds presently in New York museums, it is constructed around a centered, implied rectangle, and like the Guggenheim work, the four points of the diamond each are in a triangular shape, albeit of varying surface area. But the composition in The Hague painting differs in two radical ways: none of the four structural lines intersect within the composition—the only picture with such a construction in Mondrian's oeuvre—and the lines, formerly black, are now yellow.

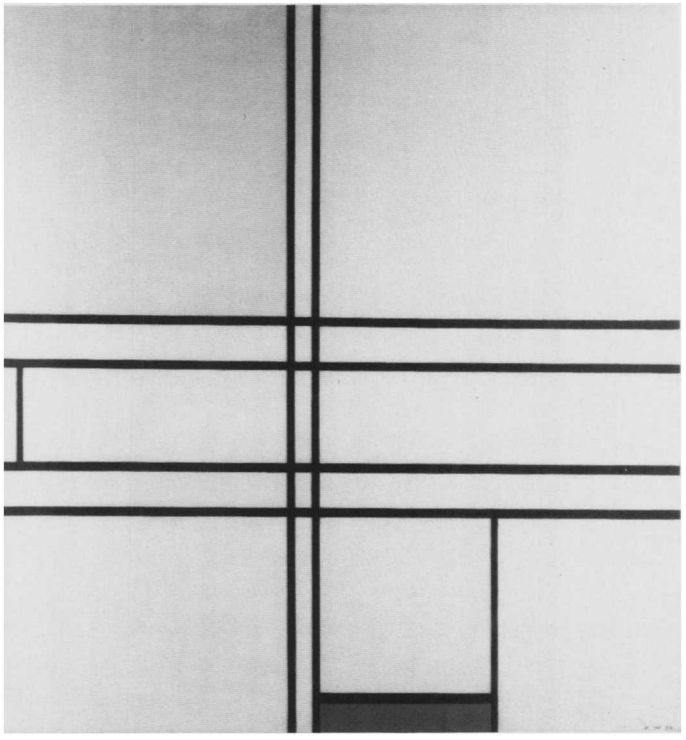


44. *Composition with Yellow Lines*, paintings cat. no. 14. Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, Gift by admirers of the artist, 1933.

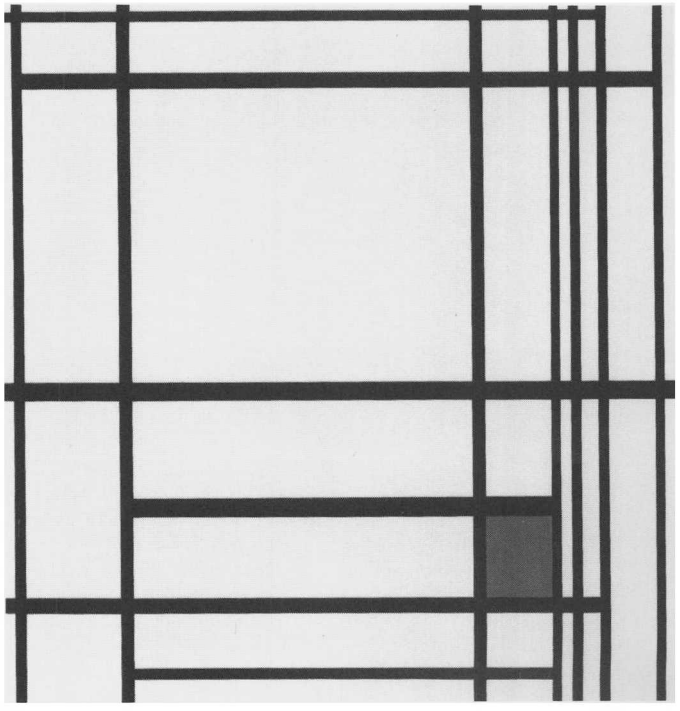
Further, as in The Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim diamonds, in The Hague painting we read the lines as extending to form a rectangle which is both inside and outside of the canvas surface. Welsh—and Max Bill—have observed that this implied rectangle is an extraordinary creation:

> In *Composition with Yellow Lines*, it is impossible for the viewer not to think of the four lines meeting at points outside the painting. Moreover, the distance between the outside edges of the vertical lines is greater than the diagonal dimension of the canvas, and the distance between the outside edges of the horizontal lines is equal to the diagonal dimension, so that Mondrian has dared here to imply a second picture space of greater area than the actual painting.[78]

As we have seen, in the previous two diamonds the inflections created by the crossing lines, their variations in width—and thus in visual density—and their interaction with the diamond shape had replaced the color elements used on the perimeter of earlier paintings. But The Hague composition was perhaps too stark and open—its closure too implied—for these graphic enrichments to be sufficient. Therefore Mondrian in-



45. *Composition with Blue and Yellow,* 1935, 72.4 x 69.2 cm (28½ x 27¼ in.), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.



46. *Composition with Blue,* 1937, 80.0 x 77.0 cm (31½ x 30¼ in.), Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

troduced the colored line, to provide the additional necessary factor. Curiously, he did not use colored lines again until his New York paintings and there under quite different compositional conditions.

Double Lines

The Hague picture is shown in the famous photograph (frontispiece) of Mondrian in his studio taken circa 1933. Below the diamond is another painting of this period, now lost. The juxtaposition of the two canvases is surely intentional, for as Welsh has observed, The Hague painting is the final picture with a wide line structure—and we might add the last of the spare and open compositions; the stylistic character of the work below represents an alternative response in the dialogue between color and drawing—the double-line structure.[79]

Although it was finished in 1933, records at the Gemeentemuseum indicate that The Hague diamond was commissioned from Mondrian the previous year.[80] Thus it was probably begun in 1932 when he introduced the double line. Mondrian may have borrowed this device from the work of another abstract painter named Marlow Moss, who introduced it circa 1930-1931. Welsh has observed of Mondrian's sudden shift to the double line that

> Although not mentioned as having constituted a fundamental change or breakthrough in his own published writings, a number of close artistic friends seem to have considered it just this, and the usage certainly entered his *oeuvre*, approximately 1932, rather abruptly, and as a pervasive habit of style.[81]

We need not here pursue this development step by step. Comparison of the now lost painting from circa 1933 with the 1935 painting now in the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (fig. 45) and with a 1937 painting now at The Hague (fig. 46) reveals the dramatic changes during this period, summarized by Welsh:

> . . . by circa 1936 . . . a development was in motion towards even more complex compositions, containing greater numbers of lines than had characterized [Mondrian's] paintings since the beginning of the 1920s. . . . Virtually all lines, whether or not part of a pair, now must be read as functioning simultaneously as space dividers, and as boundary edges of various rectangular planar units, both white and coloured.[82]

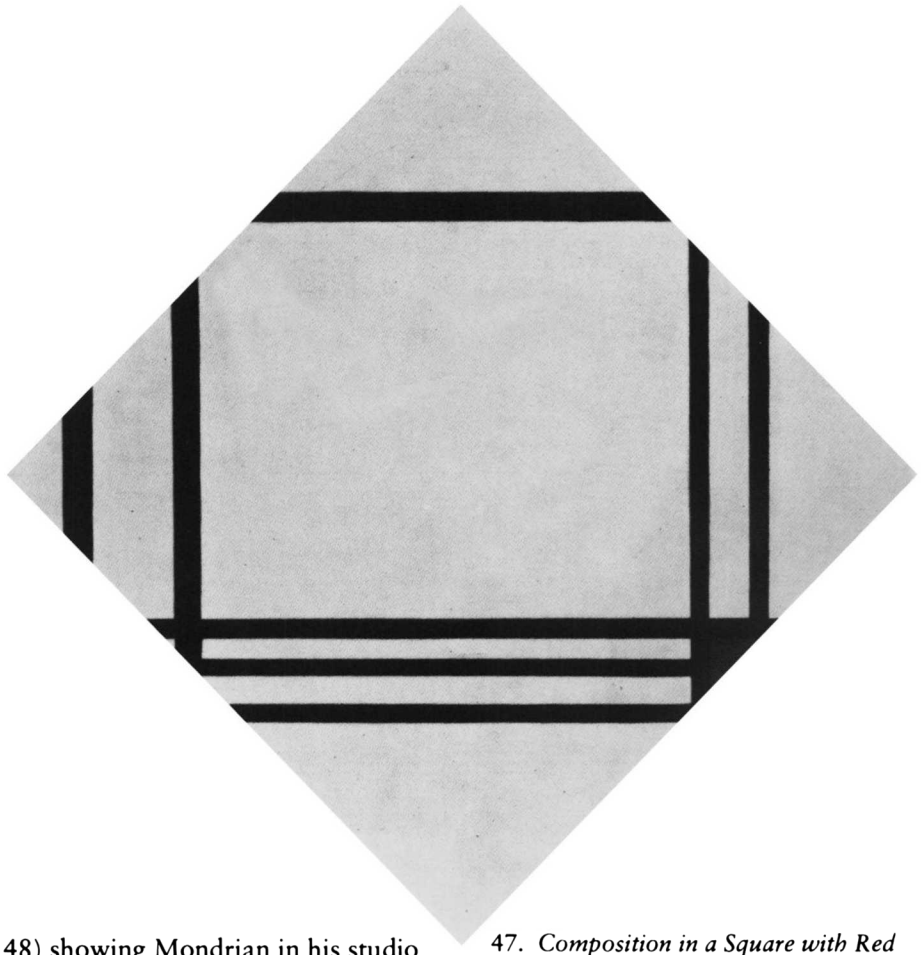
It is curious that no diamond paintings—save The Hague work begun earlier—date from this dramatic period of development, 1932-1937. This is the only instance of a significant stylistic and expressive in-

vention in Mondrian's art in which a diamond does not participate. Perhaps this is because the expressive powers of the diamond-shaped paintings could now be paralleled by certain elements in rectangular-format pictures. For example, as Champa has noted of the Hirshhorn painting:

> Two vertical line segments, lower right and center left, score the structure with just enough abrasiveness to recall the often dramatic scoring of Mondrian's lozenge edges.[83]

Moreover, the general cruciform layout of these paintings and the energetic reach and visual speed of the paired lines do recall the similar elements in the earlier open diamonds.

But in 1937, after this direction is established, Mondrian does use this new formal vocabulary in a diamond painting; a mixture of complex drawing and the cropping format produces the magnificent *Composition in a Square with Red Corner*, formerly in the collection of James Johnson Sweeney (fig. 47).

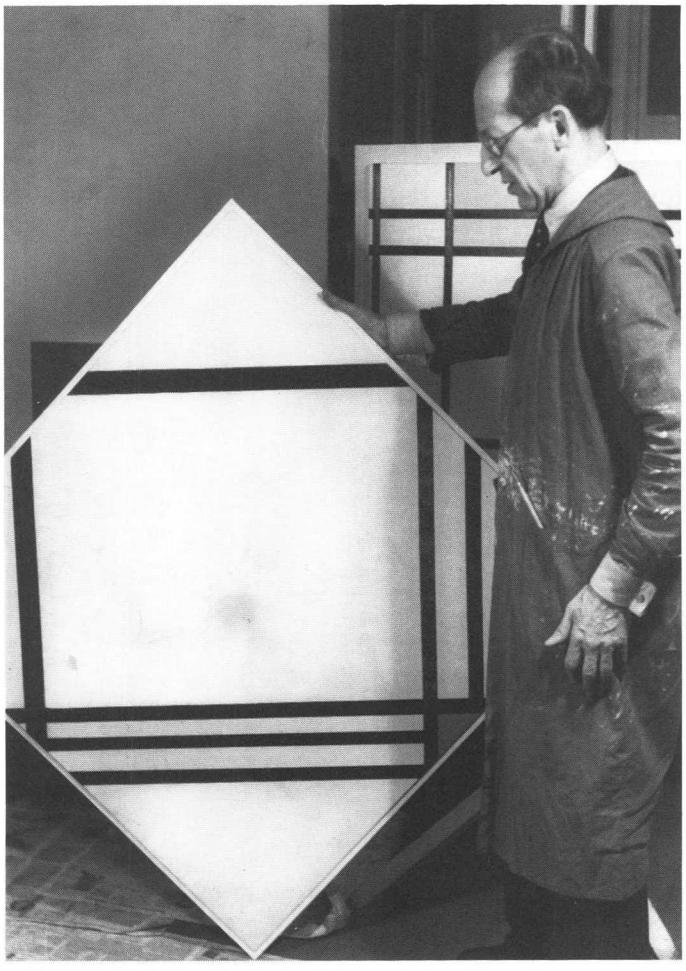


47. *Composition in a Square with Red Corner*, paintings cat. no. 15. Private Collection.

The Sweeney painting is generally considered to date from 1943: Seuphor in his 1956 complete catalogue assigns it to this year, and Ottolenghi in the recently revised catalogue (1974) prefers this date to that of 1938 offered by Ragghianti in 1962. But Sweeney has recently recalled first seeing the painting in an early charcoal state in Mondrian's Paris studio in 1936 or 1937.[84] The work is here dated 1937 on stylistic grounds, as it shares the multiple lines, clear white surface, and single, small, bounded color plane typical of that year (although it may not have been finished until 1938). Conversely, the color lines and the freely positioned color planes which develop in the 1940s are not present in the Sweeney picture.

The Seuphor dating may derive from a photograph of circa 1943 (fig. 48) showing Mondrian in his studio with the Sweeney diamond. But this document does not indicate a date for the work. The candid nature of the photograph suggests Mondrian was merely showing one of his diamond paintings for the record; certainly no evidence is visible that indicates he is working on this painting, rather the fact that it is framed suggests the work is complete. (In fact, this document raises the question of whether Mondrian was photographed only with completed paintings.)[85] Certainly, it is possible that Mondrian made adjustments to this earlier work in 1943—six other paintings are known to have been started in the 1930s and then revised in the early 1940s. But if Mondrian altered the Sweeney painting the changes must have been minor ones, in keeping with the 1937 style. Thus the diamond, in either 1943 or its present state, looks largely, if not completely, as it did in 1937-1938.

As has frequently been the case with previous diamonds, *Composition in a Square with Red Corner* makes certain allusions to Mondrian's earlier diamond paintings. The Sweeney picture is based roughly on the implied, centered rectangle layout we have seen in various forms in The Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim, and The Hague paintings. If we ignore the two outer vertical lines we find a suggested rectangular area—nearly square—with three corners located outside of the canvas and the fourth at lower

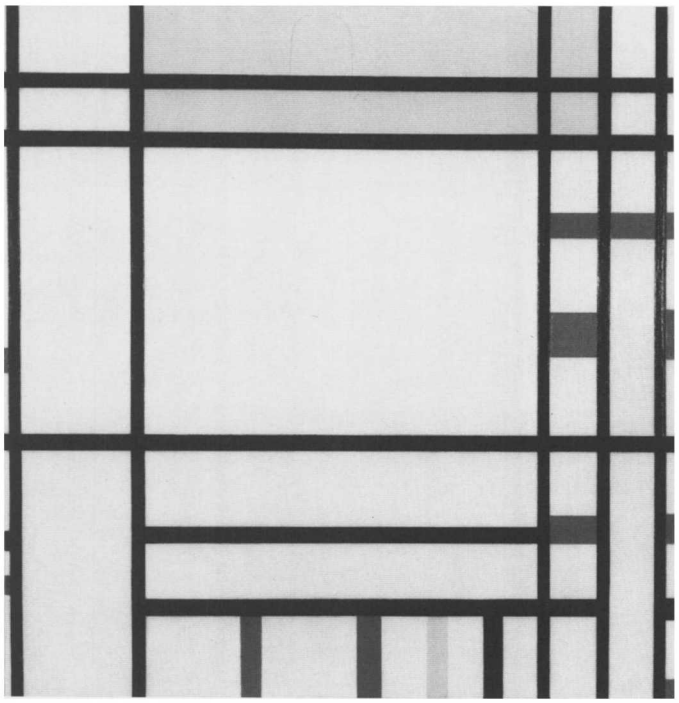


48. Photograph of Mondrian in his New York studio on First Avenue holding *Composition in a Square with Red Corner,* 1943, document no. 6. Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris.

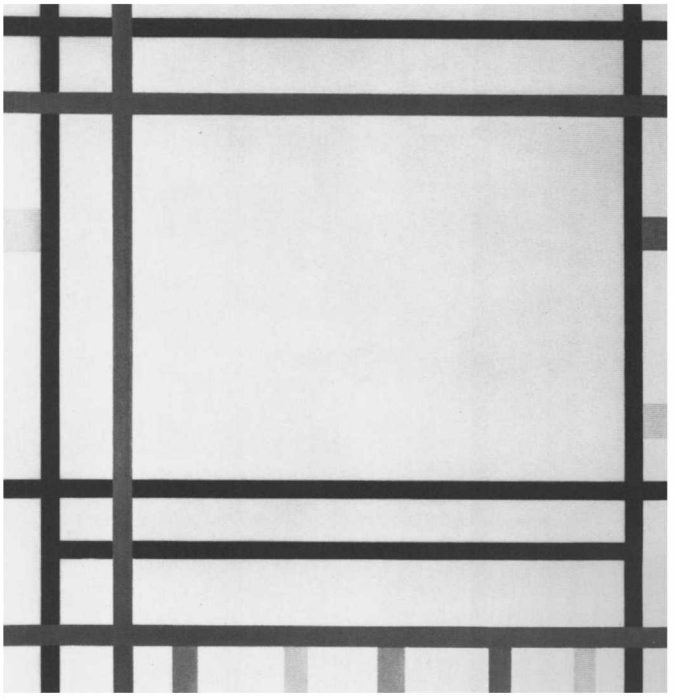
right tangent to the edge. In addition, the broader vertical lines at the left and the triangle to the right suggest the Zürich/Yale compositions; while the central rectangle created by the four innermost lines and connected to the edges of the painting by the extensions of its structure recalls The Museum of Modern Art's painting. Clearly this canvas suggests a series of different rectangular configurations, each leading to another. The coherence of the work—the way these numerous configurations fit together—is brilliant, especially as its dynamics derive from a multiplicity of compositional contrasts.

For example, the triple horizontal lines at the bottom have numerous compositional possibilities. In one reading the longest of these lines can be seen as a module for the structure; its length is almost exactly equal to the measure of the diagonal sides, giving the canvas a geometrical unity, one which is based on line and edge as in The Hague picture. Nevertheless, this long horizontal is in no fashion dominant. It is crossed by the two inner verticals, as they extend the center rectangle to form a near square with the lower band, a shape whose authority is strengthened by the tangent corner at the right. The middle horizontal line is the most optically active. Joined with the lines above and below, it sets up an optical vibration with the white ground, creating a visual inflection which enriches the composition in a dynamic manner analogous to color interactions. But it too is bound to the center rectangle by its tangential intersection with the left inner vertical. Further, the way in which this line terminates on the right, by stopping when it meets the innermost band, is endemic to the 1937 style and is seen in rectangular format pictures from this period. This element is matched by the termination of the outer vertical on the right, which ends at, rather than crossing, the horizontal line. The red plane, therefore, although small, has a measure of unity. In the end, the multiple lines in this painting bring a new complexity to the diamonds, as extension, isolation, and closure all exist simultaneously in the composition. Thus, *Composition in a Square with Red Corner* has a visual richness comparable to that of the Washington painting.

The open center of the Sweeney diamond marks the work as quite different in style from the multiple-line, rectangular paintings which precede it, where a roughly cruciform layout is used, filling the center. This same structure is characteristic of multiple-line paintings made after 1936, although it is no longer the only possible construction. In 1937 Mondrian painted *Composition with Blue* (fig. 46) in which a large open rectangle appears. Is it possible that this work—so different from the preceding pictures—was inspired by the Sweeney diamond?[86] Certainly the open plane suggests so, as does the basic composition, with its long, wider, and dominant horizontal near center, its multiple lines below, and a single color plane at the lower left. In fact the influence of the Sweeney



49. *Place de la Concorde,* 1938-1943, oil on canvas, 94.0 x 95.3 cm (37 x 37½ in.), Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clark, Dallas.



50. *New York,* 1941-1942, oil on canvas, 95.3 x 92.1 cm (37½ x 36¼ in.), Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Diamond, New York.

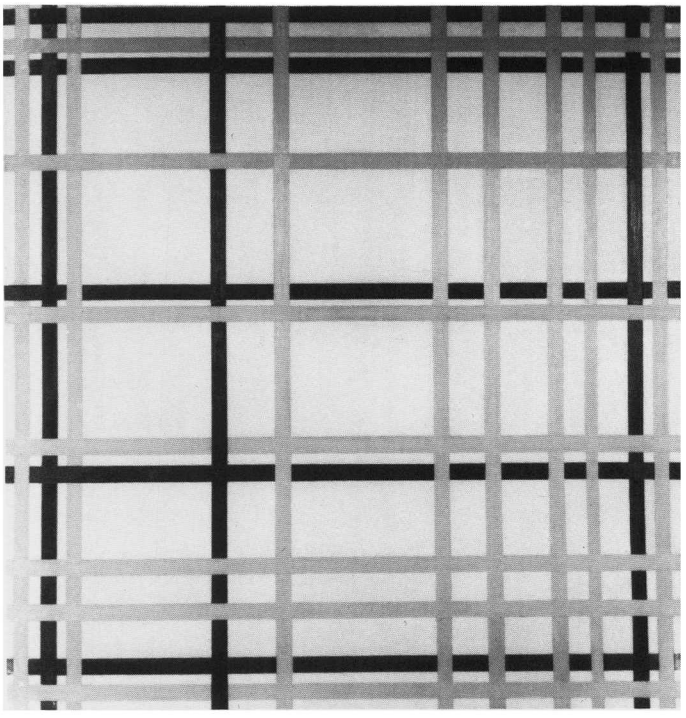
diamond may continue. One of the next major works, *Place de la Concorde* (fig. 49) begun the following year (but finished in New York in 1943) also has a composition reminiscent of the Sweeney painting. Moreover, the first major New York painting—called *New York*—again refers to the 1937-1938 diamond. But within this lineage other aspects of these works change as new developments in Mondrian's art now rapidly begin to emerge.

New York

The coming of the war interrupted Mondrian's life in Paris, and in September of 1938 he left France for London. This stay was to be brief, however. When the building next to his Hampstead studio was blown up in the bombings of October 1940, Mondrian sailed for New York. He took a studio on East 52nd Street for three years, moving to East 59th in October 1943, where he remained until his death on February 1 of the following year.

In spite of the difficulties caused by the war, Mondrian appears to have been happy in New York, perhaps more so than at any time in his life. In addition to his friendship with Harry Holtzman—who had helped him to escape to America—Mondrian became the colleague of several other, younger abstract painters, such as Charmion von Wiegand, Fritz Glarner and Carl Holty. New York was host to many major European artists at this time—Ernst, Leger, and Masson for example—and Mondrian was regarded by the younger American artists as equal in stature to these masters (a recognition he did not have in Paris). There was considerable interest in his work; two one-man exhibitions were held at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery in 1942 and 1943 respectively, and he was able to write and publish new essays.

Most of all, Mondrian was delighted with the sights and sounds of New York. He was drawn to the flashing lights and activity of Broadway; "How beautiful—if only I couldn't read English!"[87] he is supposed to have said on seeing Times Square's neon signs. In the company of friends he also went to cafés to listen and dance to jazz music. He was especially interested in boogie-woogie music, a form which had originated in Chicago, but was then popular in New York. This particular interest was supplemented by boogie-woogie recordings which Mondrian played in his studio. Finally the modernity of New York itself—its skyscrapers were unlike anything he could have known in Paris or London—was a partial realization of Mondrian's own earlier ideas and aesthetic principles. Thus his personal situation was greatly changed in a direction more welcoming to him and his goals.



51. *New York City I,* 1942, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 114.3 cm (47 x 45 in.), Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

In this new environment it is not surprising that Mondrian's art also changed, although in certain ways these innovations had already been implied by the vocabulary of his earlier paintings. What is surprising is how rapidly Mondrian, at seventy, made these alterations. Three major aspects characterize his New York style: the increasing role of color, the greater use of optical inflections, and the evolution of an ever more complicated and intricate composition. This development is arrested in his last work, the incredibly complex diamond picture *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (fig. 56).

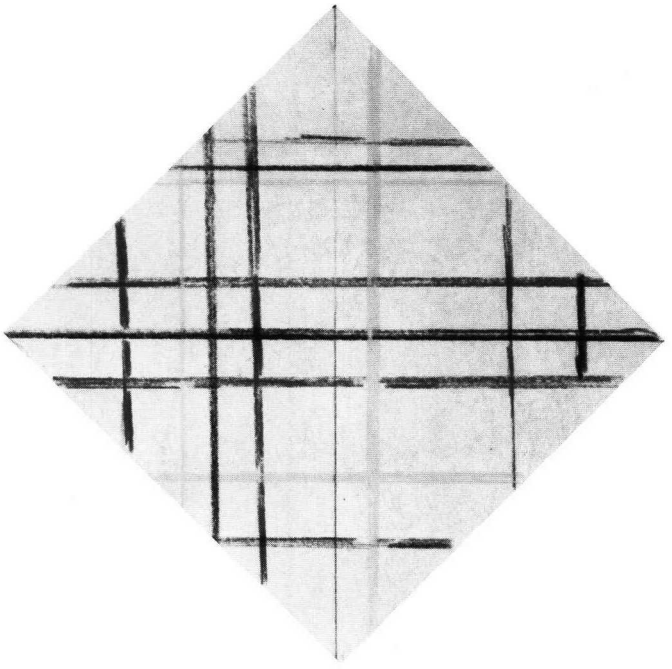
A painting which well typifies Mondrian's style soon after his arrival in Manhattan is the appropiately entitled *New York*. This large, nearly square canvas (fig. 50) is constructed around a central rectangle, as was the Sweeney diamond. Around the perimeter of the work on three sides are the freely positioned unbordered color elements in red, yellow and blue which were developed at this time. Inserted between structure and frame they give a new staccato pace to the composition, while also acting as a secondary border. Significantly, Mondrian does not use here any of the large color areas from his earlier paintings; rather color is now kept at the approximate scale of the linear structure which it supplements and supports. The greatest change in *New York* is in this structure itself, for in the composition Mondrian reintroduces colored lines; in *New York* we find continuous red lines as well as black. Inflection of the pictorial surface which had previously been the result of double (or triple) black lines is now caused directly by a colored structure.

In subsequent paintings Mondrian used an increasing number of colored bands (see, for example, *New York City I,* fig. 51), often visually interweaving the lines to tie the compositional structure together more tightly. These interlaced colored bands are believed to have one immediate source: Mondrian's technical discovery and use of colored tapes which originated in New York, after he saw Harry Holtzman using black tape on his own paintings.[88] But although the literature on the New York paintings states that this procedure was new in Mondrian's art, we have already seen how in the 1920s he created his pictures by using strips of transparent paper. Structure in these works was black and therefore could be represented by a neutral notation during its development process. But in the New York paintings Mondrian wanted to use color lines as the structure, and the complex mixture of three hues could not be developed from a neutral graphic notation. Color had to be present at the early stages of the painting in order for Mondrian to create the work, both in terms of placement of hues within the field as well as their respective positions when crossing (a solidly black structure, of course, did not have these intersection problems). The tapes, in this sense, made the New York series possible, but did not by any means determine it. Nevertheless, the interweaving of the painted lines may have been a result of using the tape itself, an effect that Mondrian became aware of while working with the materials.

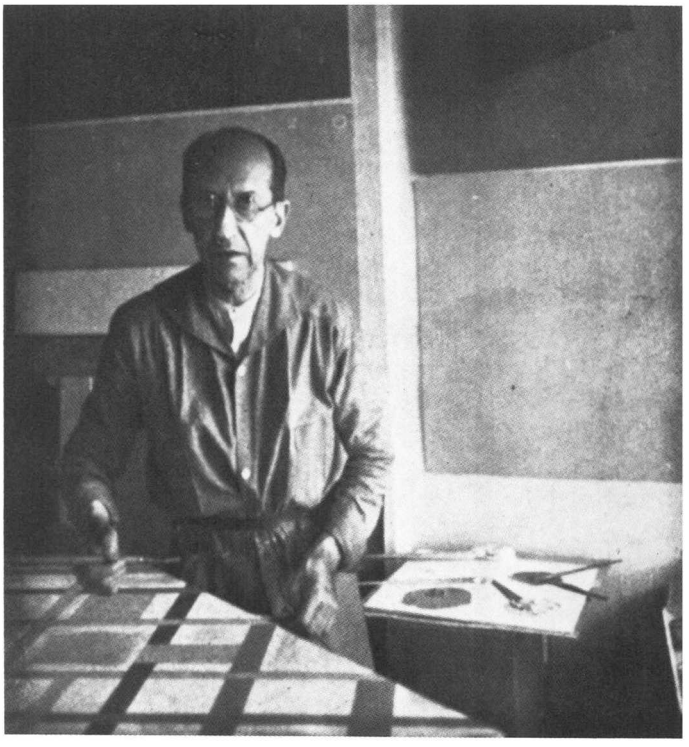
Boogie-Woogies

New York City I was completed by January 1942 and was included in Mondrian's first New York exhibition that month. Sidney Janis in an article on the exhibition and in reference to this painting wrote:

> In his last canvas, where colored lines supplant the usual black ones, there is a complex counterplay of light and color, and Mondrian, long an appreciator of jazz and since coming to America a de-



52. Charmion von Wiegand, American, born 1899, *Sketch of "Victory Boogie-Woogie"* (fig. 56), in its initial state after the first day of work, June 13, 1942. Document no. 7. Collection of Charmion von Wiegand.



53. Mondrian painting (?) *Victory Boogie- Woogie,* near its first "finished" state, in his First Avenue studio, document no. 8. (Photo taken from Robert P. Welsh, "Landscape into Music: Mondrian's New York Period," *Arts* [February 1966], 40).

votee of boogie woogie, feels he has created here corresponding mood and rhythm. In reply to my comment that he had made changes in his first New York picture since I had previously seen it, he said, "Yes, now it has more boogie woogie." [89]

New York City I (shown as *Boogie-Woogie*) was the only one of five paintings in the so-called New York series finished by the time of the exhibition.[90] Mondrian appears to have never returned to the remaining works. In the months after the January 1942 exhibition new ideas entered his work, leading to the two final boogie-woogie pictures.

The first of these was *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* (fig. 54). Charmion von Wiegand recalls Mondrian showing her a (now lost) drawing of the preliminary concept of the work:

It was in colored lines which were very wiggly and light. It had something of the same effect as *New York City I,* but it was more open in the center and Mondrian had added small block rectangles.[91]

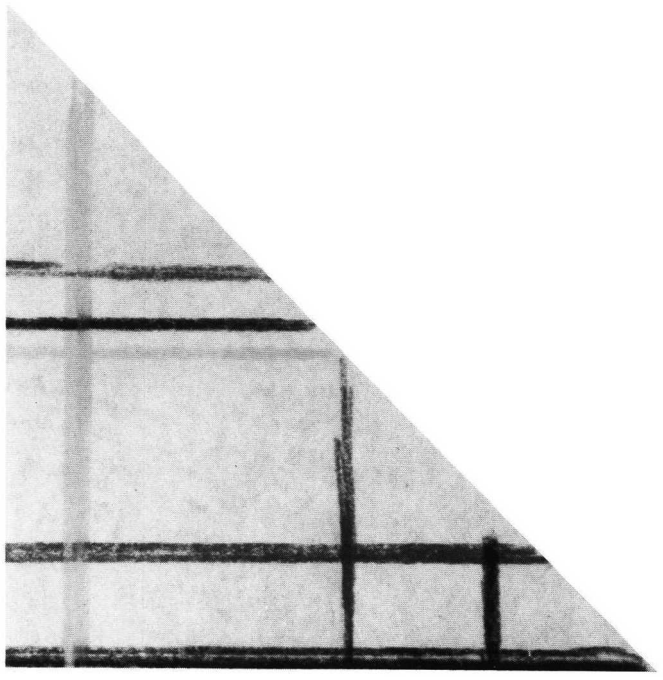
Three points should be emphasized here: first, that the composition at that initial stage was "open in the center," thus relating to the earlier *New York* and to the Sweeney diamond; secondly, that with this painting Mondrian had probably begun to use interior color rectangles as well as color lines—the clearest indication of what he saw as the next step after the all-linear New York City works; and thirdly, that Mondrian had a drawing of the work before beginning the painting and therefore a preexisting concept which included the new elements.

Victory Boogie-Woogie (figs. 52, 53, 55, and 56) apparently was conceived shortly after *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, but under possibly unusual circumstances. Again, Charmion von Wiegand was there:

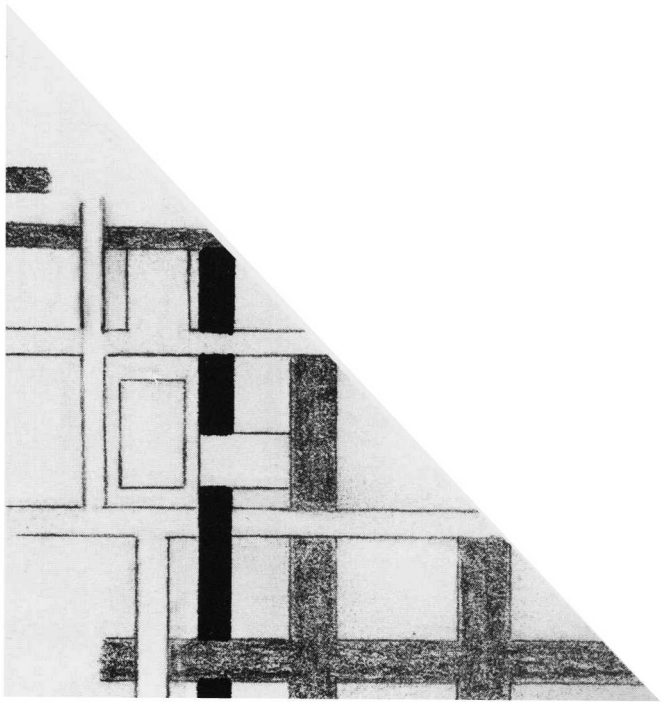
I went to visit Mondrian and he came pattering down the corridor to greet me, waving a little piece of paper. "I dreamed a lovely composition last night," he said, thrusting the piece of paper before my eyes. It was the beginning sketch for *Victory Boogie Woogie.* That was in early 1942.[92]

We should note that *Victory Boogie-Woogie* also existed as a sketch, however rudimentary, before any taping was begun.

We have no record of when Mondrian started taping *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, but we can assume this happened in the spring or summer of 1942, as the painting was generally worked on simultaneously with *Victory Boogie-Woogie.* The latter was begun on June 13,



Detail of fig. 52, upper right quadrant.



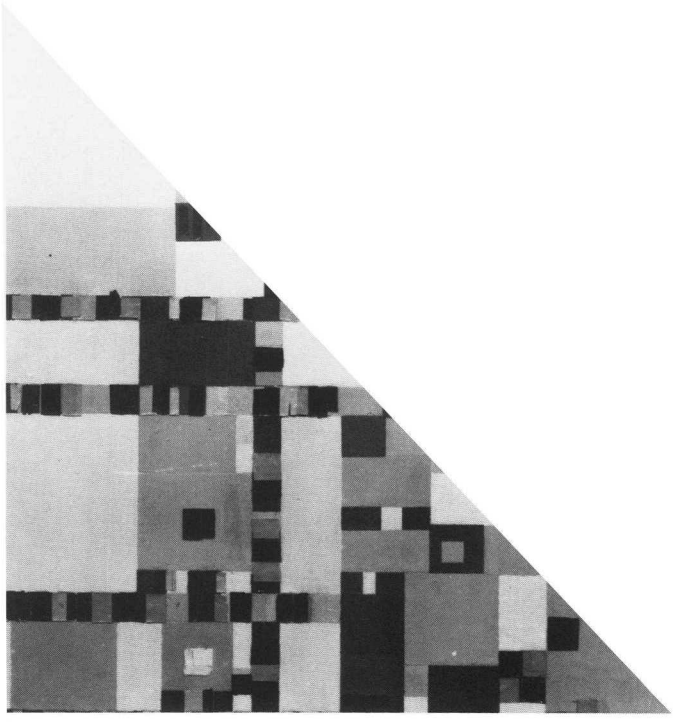
c. Diagrammatic reconstruction of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* as seen in fig. 53. Dark value indicates red; middle, blue; light, yellow.

Mondrian having already determined the size of the painting and having prepared a stretched, but unprimed, canvas. Charmion von Wiegand was present that first day:

> I remember (I recorded it in my notes) that it was on June 13, 1942, that I first saw Mondrian actually working on the *Victory Boogie Woogie.* A big diamond-shaped canvas stood against the south wall, but it had not yet been painted white. We began to discuss it. "I want to balance things too much," he said, pointing to earlier canvases around his studio.
>
> Then he began moving tapes on the new diamond one. It was close and sticky in the studio and at first I was confused by his approach. After an hour, I got into it, and was able to follow what he was doing and suggested he move the picture into the alcove where we could observe the painting from a greater distance. Back and forth he trudged, laying down the colored lines and sticking little tapes at the intersections, changing the lines so they went over or under. The left corner ended with a yellow bar. That came off. The two red crosses next to it were changed to yellow, to blue, back to red. The horizontals were run *over* the next long yellow line. The right corner gave the most trouble: a blue cross with enclosing red horizontals. He found a solution in cutting off the blue lines top and bottom and leaving empty space above and below the cross. It was difficult and subtle, in the way the lines interwove and the differences created by crossing an intersection on the horizontal or on the vertical axis. Each small dab of tape changing a color at the intersection changed all the relationships.
>
> Mondrian wanted it to be free, asymmetrical, and equilibrated, but without classic balance. "How I make you work," he would say. I made suggestions freely and he tried all of them. "No, I don't like that, it's less victorious," he said, when the long red vertical balancing the yellow central axis was changed.
>
> This first stage of the *Victory Boogie Woogie* was in colored lines in red, blue and yellow and at the end of that day (June 13, 1942) he said it was complete.[93]

Fortunately before leaving the studio she made a sketch of the painting as it then was, giving us at least an approximation of this early state of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (fig. 52). The relationship of this sketch to the final state of the painting has never been discussed.

Mondrian clearly began the *Victory Boogie-Woogie* in the general style of the recently completed *New York City I.* Again long color lines, running horizontally and vertically across the diamond surface, interweave with each other. Now, however, the composition fills the center and is much more dense. At this stage the painting appears not to involve the stylistic changes used in *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, especially the introduction of color bars. But the truncated vertical at the right (in blue) serves as an even newer element, a combination of structure and plane. During the summer and fall Mondrian made numerous revisions to the picture, while working on



Detail of fig. 56, upper right quadrant.

Broadway Boogie-Woogie at the same time. Nevertheless *Victory Boogie-Woogie* must have been in a more realized state than *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, and at some point in the winter, probably December or January, it was declared complete.

We know that Mondrian made major revisions to *Victory Boogie-Woogie* after this initial completion; but how did it look in the winter of 1942/43? A photograph exists, taken by Fritz Glarner which shows Mondrian at work on *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (fig. 53). This document has been largely dismissed as just a record of Mondrian applying his tapes. But close examination reveals that this is not the case at all. Although rolls of tape are visible on the table behind the artist, Mondrian is certainly holding a brush in his hand. Furthermore, the painting is clearly painted, not taped. What we see here is Mondrian making the last touches to the canvas, or posing with an already finished painting. This photograph then records the second state of *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, although less than a quarter of the picture is visible.

While the photograph is in black and white, it is possible to decode the image on the basis of how Mondrian's primary colors register in photographic grays: yellow the lightest, blue the middle, and red the darkest tone. Reading the photograph in this way, we have made a diagram (dia. c) which approximates the composition. In the plan shown here, two horizontal blue lines are at the top, with another running laterally near the center. Two vertical blues are at the right. Yellow and red lines are also present. Two yellow horizontals are indicated, here running over the vertical blues, which terminate at this point rather than emerging from under the yellows to touch the diagonal edge. A red vertical is woven behind the blues, but emerges above to meet the edge and below to pass over and under the yellows. A smaller yellow horizontal is shown next to the red, but it meets the lowest yellow horizontal and ends.

The independent planes described in *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* are also present. Here three different kinds, all in yellow, are shown. A broad rectangle in the upper section lies between the blue and yellow lines. Below is a new element, a color rectangle which is free of the structure and is surrounded by white ground. To the right of this floating plane, but aligned with its lower edge, is a third rectangle which abuts the blue lines on the right—like the bars of the 1930s-1942 paintings—while on the left it overlaps the red, thus gaining a greater independence.

With this image of *Victory Boogie-Woogie*'s second state in hand, even if in diagrammatic form, let us return to the Charmion von Wiegand diagram of the painting's initial state, in order to determine, if possible, which quarter of the canvas we have discovered. The answer is not only clear, but also reveals some interesting information about Mondrian's methods. Our plan represents the upper right quadrant of the diamond. Certain lines are the same in each state: the two blue horizontals at the top, the yellow horizontal below, the long blue horizontal near the center, the long yellow vertical near the center, and the shorter blue vertical at the far right—now broadened to be tangent to the edge. Indeed, aside from the introduction of the independent yellow planes, only three major changes have been made (we must leave aside questions of minor adjustments as neither image is accurate); each can be seen as a product of Mondrian's moving tapes. The horizontal red line is removed—perhaps because of its too symmetrical relationship with its lower counterpart—though the verti-

cal one remains. However, this line has been moved toward the center and now intersects a blue horizontal. Taking its place and lying tangent to the yellow horizontal is a new blue vertical.

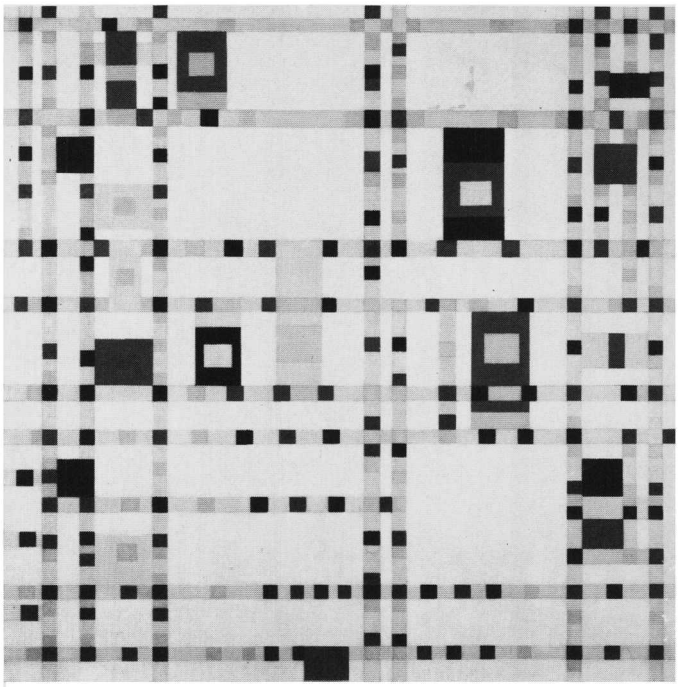
Thus it is not surprising that Charmion von Wiegand describes Mondrian's process as involving the testing and repositioning of tapes (although it is not clear how great a role was played by the preexisting sketch). What is surprising is the close relationship between this "completed" state and the initial one, even after six months of work. This closeness suggests that the great evolutionary role ascribed to the tapes is exaggerated, at least in this painting *at this stage.*

Inventions

Although *Victory Boogie-Woogie* was "finished" in late 1942, Mondrian was not satisfied with the painting. Charmion von Wiegand recalls another studio visit:

> [the] next time I saw the picture, it had been destroyed and was in process toward "a new solution." The white plane bore the marks of struggle; the long colored lines were broken up into small rectangles, cut by various large planes, and tiny pieces of tape were superimposed everywhere on the surface.[94]

We should recall that during this period Mondrian was simultaneously working on *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, although we have no record of its changing appearance. The compositional evolution in each Boogie-Woogie may have emerged as a dialogue between the two paintings, inventions in one suggesting changes in the other. Indeed, shortly after revisions were begun on *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, Mondrian began to make changes in *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*. Again Charmion von Wiegand remembers:



54. *Broadway Boogie-Woogie,* 1942-1943, oil on canvas, 127.0 x 127.0 cm (50 x 50 in.), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Given Anonymously.

> Weeks later I found him painting on *Broadway Boogie*, and he was just putting a yellow rectangle in the center of a red plane. "But that doesn't go with your theory," I exclaimed.
>
> "Does it work?" he asked, and standing back to look he said, "Yes, it works." After an interval of painting he continued, "You should know that all my paintings were done first and the theory was derived from them. So, perhaps now we will have to change the theory."[95]

While Mondrian's statement can be seen as applicable to his art as a whole—which, in fact, did often undergo radical revisions—nevertheless the kinds of changes we see in these two paintings are unprecedented, as far as we know, in the artist's work. Mondrian had earlier made stylistic changes between one painting and the next, or in certain paintings in the same canvas (see Studies A and B), but in the Boogie-Woogies major stylistic changes take place on top of previous inventions at an unprecedented pace. "Under *Victory Boogie-Woogie* lie buried six or seven different solutions, each of which might have been a complete picture,"[96] states Charmion von Wiegand.

Broadway Boogie-Woogie was completed and shown in Mondrian's second New York exhibition at Dudensing in March of 1943. As Welsh has noted, although the exhibition was entitled *New Works* only *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* was created completely in New York; the other works were European pictures which had been revised in New York.[97] Two of these, *Trafalgar Square* and *Place de la Concorde*, were given unbounded color planes and probably new names, thus linking them to the new style; Mondrian suggested that Place de la Concorde, Trafalgar Square, and Broadway were the centers of each city which he had lived in successively in the preceding five years. *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* received more attention than any

other painting in the exhibition. Advocates of Mondrian's classical compositions were put off by the new Boogie-Woogie style, which was also found confusing by critics. There is no doubt that Mondrian had broken into a new area.

Victory Boogie-Woogie

After the March 1943 exhibition Mondrian returned to work on *Victory Boogie-Woogie* and worked on it until his death eleven months later. This large diamond canvas appears to be his only painting in progress during this period: certainly no new pictures were begun and the earlier works left unfinished at Mondrian's death show no aspects of the Boogie-Woogie vocabulary.

The interim steps between *Victory Boogie-Woogie*'s "completed" state in 1942-1943 and its final composition remain uncharted. No photographs or accurate sketches exist to give us any indication. The painting was unfinished when Mondrian changed studios in October 1943, but was nearing a second final state in January 1944. Agnes Saalfield, in her study of the work, records that:

> Sidney Janis speaks of visiting Mondrian three weeks before he died. He describes the strong impression of coming through the narrow hall and seeing the *Victory Boogie Woogie* suspended on an easel in the far corner of the studio. Mondrian had completed the painting and wanted to know how Janis felt about the lower left, center area. Janis believed the painting to be complete and without need of further work.[98]

The Janis viewing would date approximately January 10. A week later Charmion von Wiegand visited the studio:

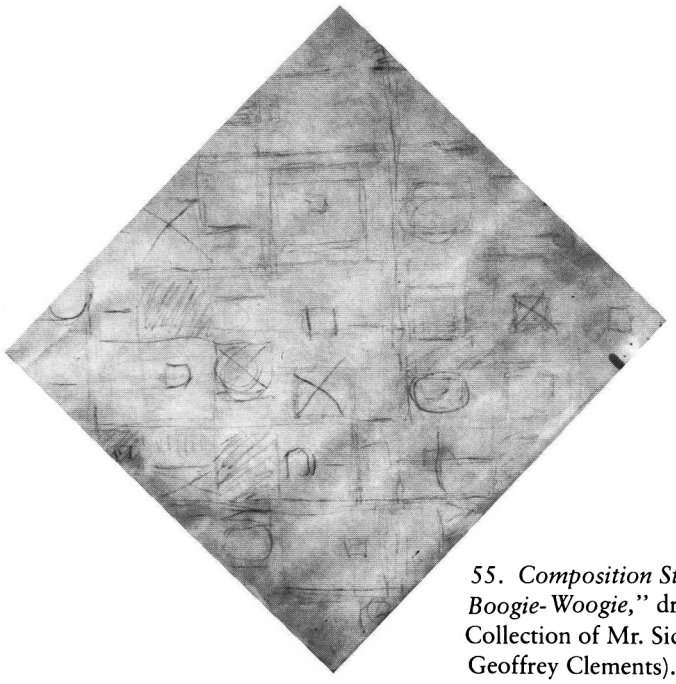
> [it] was a Monday when I dropped in without notice and, finding him with a bad cold and not looking well, I did not stay long. We looked at the *Victory Boogie Woogie* together. I found it very wonderful and it seemed to me to be finished; I asked him how much he was going to do on it further. He said he felt that it was all right except the very top. As I recall the top part, it had gray planes with a pale yellow.
>
> On Wednesday of the following week, I went up to see him again and I found Glarner present and Mondrian in bed. He told me that Harry Holtzman had gone for a doctor. While they were busy in the room, I was asked to wait in the studio, where I saw the *Victory Boogie Woogie* in its final stage. That was the day Mondrian was taken to the hospital. He was never to work on the *Victory* again.
>
> Later I realized what a radical change had taken place in the *Victory* during those last ten days. The picture which had seemed to me complete was covered once again with small tapes and looked as though he'd been working on it in fever and with great intensity. It had a more dynamic quality and there seemed to be more little squares in various colors. The earlier picture seemed in retrospect more classical, more serene and less complicated. The effect of a more dynamic intensity and restlessness was certainly due to the addition of colored tapes and papers, because there were practically no papers on the canvas when I had seen it the time before. It was all painted except for one or two small papers; now these were superimposed with tiny squares. Some of the larger single color planes seemed to have been divided into two colors. But fundamentally, there was little change except for a more intense staccato movement.[99]

Mondrian had fallen ill earlier, for by Saturday, January 22 he had declined an invitation because of his health,[100] so any revisions had to be made before this date. Fortunately Harry Holtzman visited Mondrian on Thursday, January 20 or Friday, January 21. There he saw the painting *en point* on Mondrian's easel in its present, taped, revised state: "Now I have only to paint it," said Mondrian (fig. 57).[101]

Thus *Victory Boogie-Woogie*'s third, present state must have been realized between January 17 and January 20 or 21, a period of five working days at most. Mondrian had an incredibly short period in which to make the numerous changes described by Charmion von Wiegand. This time element accounts for the "rough" character of the picture. Many of the tape rectangles are irregular, torn to form new sizes and placed atop one another, for given the complex give-and-take of Mondrian's style, every shift would require other shifts to balance.

What kind of changes were made in that dramatic five-day period? After the Janis visit Mondrian probably did revise the area at the lower left diagonal edge, which he had discussed with him. The additions there, near the blue plane with the red rectangle, are the most extensive in the painting, as he extended the white to the right over the yellow and also extended the yellow to the right. (The tapes do not match the painted area, and Mondrian did not intend them to, as this is the state before painting. Had Mondrian lived to finish the picture the color of these areas would have matched the adjacent painted planes. By looking at reproductions of this work or by squinting at it one is given some idea of its intended painted appearance.) Charmion von Wiegand recalls that the work in its second "finished" state "was all painted except for one or two small papers." Surely these must have been the Janis revisions, which are different in character from the other changes.

The other, more major revisions in the painting are of two kinds. Firstly, certain isolated rectangles are either enlarged, reduced, or eliminated. Mondrian accomplished this by taking pieces of tape matching the color of the surrounding plane and placing them on both sides of a specific rectangle (this is the clearest in the two



55. Composition Study for "Victory Boogie-Woogie," drawings cat. no. 9. Collection of Mr. Sidney Janis (Photo by Geoffrey Clements).

blue planes on the left). Secondly, Mondrian greatly altered the horizontal and vertical lines. Although in *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* shorter elements had been amalgamated into each band, now Mondrian increased their number, adding plane next to plane until each line reads as a series of rectangular "beads." This staccato movement over the surface is the most radical change Mondrian introduced in *Victory Boogie-Woogie.* Now structural and planar divisions have the same character and are in a new dynamic balance. Furthermore the white planes—and here the gray ones as well—no longer read as ground as they did in the color-line pictures of the early 1940s; they have been restored to the pictorial status they enjoyed in the 1920s.

We should note that Mondrian made these last changes principally along the structural lines—the lines themselves change character, but their positions remain constant. "Fundamentally"—that is *structurally*—"there was little change," said Charmion von Wiegand. Thus the construction under the "beaded" lines is that of the second "finished" state.

Moreover this construction is virtually identical—at least in the upper right quadrant—with that of the first "finished" state, as seen in the photograph and diagrammatic reconstruction. Comparing these two quarters we see that the four "beaded" horizontal lines match four diagrammed lines (the lower blue, the two yellows above it, and the blue above them). No "beaded" line is present to correspond to the upper blue line, but the division in the final state between the upper gray and white areas and the adjacent red plane marks its former presence. The earlier vertical lines are still in place as well, except the innermost yellow. The long red line has become the long vertical, "beaded" line; the neighboring broad blue line can be detected in the blue and red vertical pattern; and the outer blue can be traced under the broken white vertical with the two smaller inserted sets of diagonally opposed colors.

When we recall that the compositional structure of the first "finished" state was partially present on the first day of taping *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* eighteen months earlier, we see that the painting evolved in essentially the same format. This view runs contrary to traditional opinions of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* which suggest a more random development. However, that the structure remains a constant and a primary determinant is consistent with Mondrian's way of painting since the initial 1918 diamond.

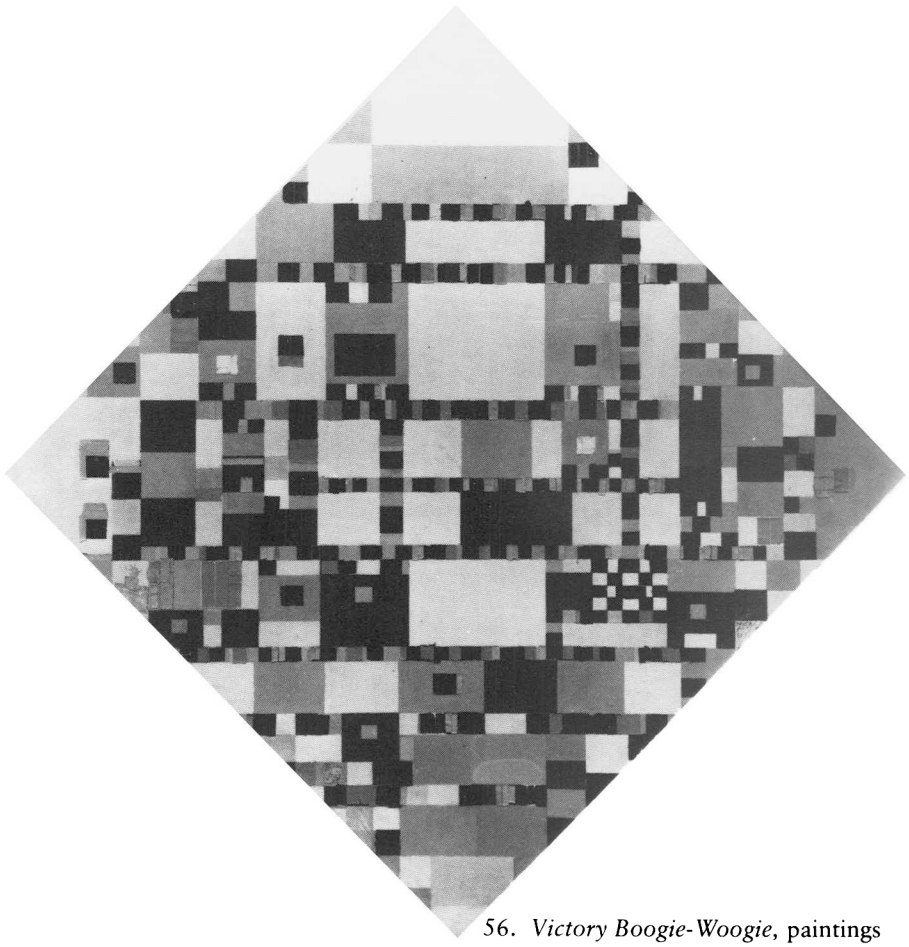
Because the final taping was done mostly along the lines, we can propose that the planes as we see them were that same way when Janis saw the picture and further that they are the result of the changes made between the first and second "completed" states while Mondrian was simultaneously working on *Broadway Boogie-Woogie.* Certainly some planes do resemble elements from that painting, for example, rectangles of color inside larger color rectangles. But other areas are new, as Mondrian filled out the space between the structural elements with planes that were larger and tangent to either the lines or adjacent planes. A diamond drawing exists (fig. 55) which is here related to this intermediate state. The linear structure indicated on this sketch is somewhere between that of the first "completed" state and the final construction. But structure is less emphasized in the drawing than are the planes; Mondrian has made them much more prominent, larger, and occasionally marked with circles and X's indicating some form of notation. Interestingly, the more spare areas at each vertical point are also present in this drawing.[102]

With its bits of tape still present on

the surface, *Victory Boogie-Woogie* is clearly unfinished as a painting. The question remains, however, is it finished as a composition, one that "only needs to be painted"? Opinions are decidedly divided. Janis is on record as stating: "the *Broadway Boogie Woogie* is a greater painting, because Mondrian was tampering with a completed work in his last picture and left the *Victory Boogie Woogie* unrealized and weakened." Masheck describes it as "an interrupted overhaul that never settled down to the definiteness required for translation to paint. . . . [It] is formidably muddled." Jaffé calls it "half-finished"; Seuphor and Ottolenghi merely "unfinished"; and Welsh says that Mondrian "still was revising at [the] time of death."[103]

We can never be sure about the status of the painting. The irregular edges and layers are disconcerting to Mondrian-trained eyes, but acceptable, even welcome, in their directness after our experience of abstract expressionism. Seeing the work as "in progress" has an appeal for those interested in "process aesthetics."[104] But however seen the picture is not "muddled." The rhythms here are most complex, not only because of the internal balances between the large planar areas as well as those within the "beaded" and implied structure, but also because these differing balances overlay each other. The slow pace which starts at the bottom leads into an intense contrast of openness (white planes) and activity (the structure) such as never seen before in Mondrian's work.

This is not to say that *Victory Boogie-Woogie* is divorced from Mondrian's previous pictures. Indeed, on the contrary, it has remarkable connections with earlier paintings. Sweeney, who was in close contact with Mondrian between 1940 and 1944, has written



56. *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* paintings cat. no. 16. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine.

And in the last few years of his life Mondrian began to see the approach of his 1917 work—which he had once abandoned as "vague," "confused" and "weak in structure"—as a means to bring a suggestion of dynamic movement to the solidly organized, but too "static" compositions of his middle period, without being forced to abandon any of their strength of organization.[105]

Victory Boogie-Woogie's connection with the 1917 plus-and-minus paintings has often been noted; the visual spotting in the structure also recalls that in the first diamond of 1918. Finally, with the expansion of the planes in *Victory Boogie-Woogie* Mondrian also connects the canvas to the third and fourth diamonds, as well as to the subtle balancing of areas in the Washington painting.

Victory

The title *Victory Boogie-Woogie* is significant of Mondrian's expressive intentions in the painting. *Boogie-Woogie,* like the earlier *Fox Trot* title, certainly refers to the music Mondrian so favored. But as Welsh and others have written, the painting itself also relates to Boogie-Woogie.[106] We can see this in the syncopated rhythm of the small and large planes, the process of improvising on a structure, and the emphatic, all-over unfocused character. As with the other Boogie-Woogies, the title here suggests as well the painting's New York origin. Various aspects of New York have been suggested as visual sources for the painting: the

grid layout, street plan of Manhattan, the façades of modern skyscrapers, blinking traffic lights, and the illuminated signs of Broadway. Nevertheless it should be clear from the evolution of each Boogie-Woogie that the composition is not drawn from an external visual source, as were the Paris façade works of 1911-1914 for example. New York is present in the Boogie-Woogies, but in the manner in which the painted composition is analogous to the vibrant pace and organization of the city.

In the *Broadway* title Mondrian suggests this Manhattan identity more clearly (indeed, as suggested above, it corresponds with *Place de la Concorde* and *Trafalgar Square* as a symbolic "heart of the city"). But the *Victory* of the Tremaine diamond is not so particular. Many opinions have been offered that the *Victory* title refers to the expected Allies' victory in World War II. But if Charmion von Wiegand's recollection of Mondrian's questioning of the composition in June 1942 is correct—"No, I don't like that. It's less victorious"—then the title cannot be linked to any preliminary military celebration. Not that Mondrian was unmoved by the war—after all, he had twice been a refugee—but his beliefs were centered on his art:

> Art has been used for immediate and personal purposes: it described events, persons, battlefields; war camouflage and propaganda were made. But the function of plastic art is neither descriptive nor cinematic. It is not merely a means of enjoyment amidst an incomplete life, or a simple expression of that life even in its beautiful aspect. All this is incidental.
>
> Art is the aesthetic establishment of complete life—unity and equilibrium—free from all oppression. For this reason it can reveal the evil of oppression and show the way to combat it.[107]

The victory in this painting is the victory of modernism, more fully realized in the modernity of New York's style and architecture than it had been in the nineteenth-century worlds of Paris and London.[108] Mondrian's pleasure in Manhattan is the cause of his exuberant victory celebration in the painting's composition. This *joie de vivre* is like the impressionists' celebration of the world and suggests that Mondrian's impressionist links continue in New York, as seen in his approach, the analagous images, even the all-over composition as symbolic of urban life.

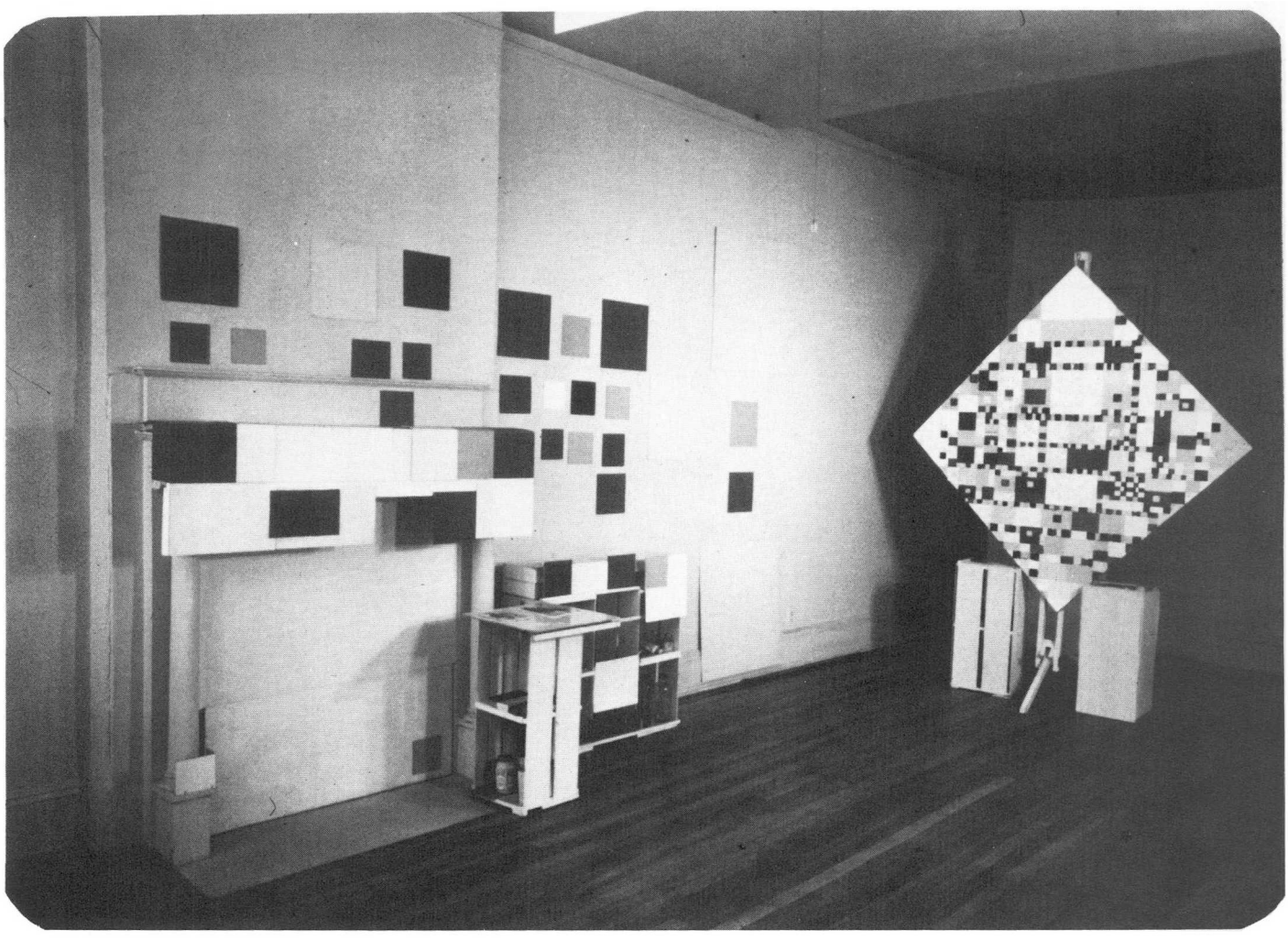
The dynamic equilibrium in *Victory Boogie-Woogie* is more complex than that in any of Mondrian's other paintings, as it is more intricate and dense and extends over the entire field. This multiplicity of balance is quite distinct from the opposition of two or three elements to the graphic diamond shape as seen in the open works of 1930-1931. Mondrian eventually became disillusioned with these paintings, primarily, I feel, for what they say about life and art. The dynamic equilibrium in the Hilversum diamond is like a balanced union between two creative and independent people, an equilibrium which when present is brilliant, but also is impossible to maintain. "Tragic" is the word Mondrian eventually used to refer to the meaning of this composition. He said in his most haunting statement:

> Our subjective vision and experience make it impossible to be happy. But we can escape the tragical oppression through a clear vision of true reality, which exists, but which is veiled. If we cannot free *ourselves,* we can free our *vision.*[109]

But the Boogie-Woogies state a different theme, celebrating the victory of the modern world, of New York:

> The metropolis reveals itself as imperfect but concrete space-determination. It is the expression of modern life. It produced Abstract Art: the establishment of the splendor of dynamic movement.
>
> The expression of pure vitality which reality reveals through the manifestation of dynamic movement is the real content of art. The expression of life in the surrounding reality makes us feel living and from this feeling art arises. But a work of art is only "art" insofar as it establishes life in its unchangeable aspect: as pure vitality.[110]

The splendor of that pure vitality is the theme of *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* realized in the diamond composition, in itself the dynamic form closest to Mondrian's ambitions.



57. Photograph of Mondrian's studio on 59th Street, New York, showing *Victory Boogie-Woogie en point* on his easel, document no. 10. Collection of Mr. Harry Holtzman.

NOTES

1. See the Selected Chronology and Bibliography in this publication. James Johnson Sweeney's writings on the artist in the 1930s and 1940s are the earliest serious essays on Mondrian, although Sweeney's approach is more biographical than art historical.

2. This phrase appears in Mondrian's handwriting as the title of a diamond painting—*Tableau losangique II,* now called *Composition in a Square* (paintings cat. no. 7)—on the verso of a photograph of the work (document no. 1).

3. Michel Seuphor in conversation with the author, January 26, 1979.

4. See the inscriptions on the versos of the Yale and Guggenheim paintings (paintings cat. nos. 11 and 12). Curiously, none of the diamond paintings is currently known by the *losangique* title. Instead they are generally called *Composition* or *Composition in a Square (Composition dans le Carré).* While the latter does describe the equal-sided, 90°-angled form Mondrian used, it does not provide a key to its all important orientation. *Composition dans le Carreau* used for early diamonds (paintings cat. nos. 1, 2, and 4) suggests in French *(carreaux)* small squares, referring to the grid pattern of these works, as well as meaning, in the context of card games, "diamonds." For a brief discussion of the titles see Max Bill, "*Composition I with Blue and Yellow,* 1925 by Piet Mondrian" in *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971), 74. This catalogue is hereafter cited as Guggenheim.

5. This discussion is adapted from the author's "Kenneth Noland and the Compositional Cut," *Arts, 50* (December 1975), 80-81.

6. For example Joos van Cleve, *Madonna and Child* reproduced as fig. 61a in Max J. Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting,* vol. IX, part 1 (Leyden, 1972). John O. Hand kindly brought this work to my attention.

7. See Meyer Schapiro, "Mondrian" in *Modern Art, 19th and 20th Centuries: Selected Papers* (New York, 1978), note 7, p. 259 and Budd Hopkins, "Letters to the Editor," *Artforum, 13* (March 1975), 8. Robert Rosenblum drew the same analogy in his Oxford lectures in 1972.

8. Robert P. Welsh, *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1966), 54 (hereafter cited as Welsh, Toronto).

9. Guillaume Apollinaire quoted by Hans L. C. Jaffé in *Piet Mondrian* (New York, 1970), 114 (hereafter cited as Jaffé).

10. Welsh, Toronto, 150.

11. William S. Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition, Part V," *Artforum, 5* (April 1967), 21.

12. This argument follows Rubin's discussion of the relationship of impressionism to the work of Jackson Pollock, in "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition, Part III," *Artforum, 5* (March 1967), 28-32. Rubin does not discuss at any length the relationship of Mondrian's work to impressionism.

13. Rubin, "Pollock, Part V," 22.

14. Braque quoted by Heinz Berggruen in conversation with the author, January 15, 1979. Braque also noted the oval allowed him "to rediscover a sense of the verticals and horizontals" in Douglas Cooper, *The Cubist Epoch* (New York, 1971), 53. We should note that Picasso's solution in *Still Life with Chair Caning* (Estate of the Artist), the first collage, was to identify the oval with the top of a table, thus giving a *raison d'être* to the pictorial surface.

15. Robert P. Welsh, "The Birth of de Stijl, Part I: Piet Mondrian: The Subject Matter of Abstraction," *Artforum, 11* (April 1973), 53.

16. Rubin, "Pollock, Part V," 22.

17. This tendency toward the diamond was first observed by Welsh, Toronto, 163.

18. Welsh, Toronto, 162.

19. Welsh, Toronto, 162.

20. Jaffé, 122.

21. "Getting rid" of the unneeded surface is exactly what Frank Stella would do forty years later when making his first shaped canvases, partially in response to problems in Pollock's cubist-based abstractions. See William S. Rubin, *Frank Stella* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 48-53.

22. Mondrian, "Toward the True Vision of Reality," in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art and Other Essays,* editor Robert Motherwell (New York, 1945), 13.

23. Mondrian in a letter to van Doesburg, cited by Robert P. Welsh, "The Place of *Composition 12 with Small Blue Square* in the Art of Piet Mondrian," *Bulletin* (The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa) *29* (1977), note 25, p. 30 (hereafter cited as Welsh, Ottawa). An interesting untitled drawing by Mondrian was recently discovered in the Haags Gemeentemuseum's collection. A square compostion divided into an eight-by-eight grid, it alternates eight-pointed stars with empty spaces. Whether this drawing is preliminary to the diamond paintings or a suggested translation of them into the later, but more cubist, grids is unclear. See Tim Threlfall, "Piet Mondrian: An Untitled and Unknown Drawing circa 1918," *Art History, 1* (June 1978), 229-234, with illustration, plate 41.

24. Welsh, "The Birth of de Stijl," 53.

25. Mondrian, "Toward the True Vision of Reality," 13.

26. Mondrian, "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: An Essay in Dialogue Form (1919-1920)," in Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* (New York, 1956), 313.

27. See Joop M. Joosten's fascinating article on this subject, "Abstraction and Conceptual Innovation," *Artforum, 11* (April 1973), 54-59.

28. Mondrian, in "Eleven Europeans in America," *Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art, 13* (October 1946), 35-36.

29. Seuphor recalled Mondrian saying he took the first train to Paris in February 1919. Conversation, January 26, 1979.

30. See for example Braque's *Still Life,* 1919, in the Rupf Collection now at the Kunstmuseum, Bern.

31. The changes in cubism after the war create virtually a third style which continues to develop until 1927 or 1928. As this aspect of the movement is uncharted, its relationship to Mondrian's art is difficult to detect with any precision. For example, it is possible that certain of Picasso's more abstract still lifes of 1921, which feature a screen of black lines over a field of rectangular color planes, were influenced by Mondrian's paintings.

32. See Maria Grazia Ottolenghi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Mondrian* (Paris, 1976), cat. no. 305, p. 108.

33. Nancy Troy, "Piet Mondrian's Atelier," *Arts, 53* (December 1978), 84.

34. Mondrian, "Toward the True Vision of Reality," 13.

35. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

36. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

37. Jaffé, 134.

38. During our research, both Miss Clark and I learned that several other art historians also proposed that Seuphor no. 401 and the Washington painting were the same work, but questioned Mondrian's authorship of the alterations.

39. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

40. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

41. See Nancy Troy, 84.

42. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

43. Hans L. C. Jaffé, "The Diagonal Principle in the Works of van Doesburg and Mondrian," *The Structuralist, 9* (1969), 21.

44. In the *International Exhibition of Modern Art, Assembled by the Société Anonyme,* Brooklyn Museum, November 19, 1926–January 1, 1927, cat. nos. 117 and 118. Another possible example of a "changeable" painting is one of Mondrian's own works, a vertical, rectangular grid picture shown hanging next to fig. 9 in the photograph of his Paris studio (fig. 24). This work is *Composition in Gray* (Collection, Marlborough Gallery, New York), Seuphor no. 295 and Ottolenghi no. 311. Curiously the painting in the studio photograph reverses the picture's present orientation, which is based on the artist's monogram and date. While this at first suggests that Mondrian considered various orientations for his paintings, the more plausible explanation is that the inscription, "P.M. 1915," is spurious, which the incorrect date itself suggests. By a different hand, this inscription was added to a work for which there was no written indication of direction, and which in its all-over vertical grid offered no compositional, directional clue.

45. Certain of van Doesburg's early *labile* paintings are based on a grid pattern like that of Mondrian's first two diamonds, which van Doesburg knew in 1919 (see note 23) and which were hung in the artist's Paris studio (fig. 24).

46. Seuphor conversation, January 26, 1979.

47. Seuphor in conversation with the author, January 26, February 8, and April 19, 1979.

48. Charmion von Wiegand in conversation with Trinkett Clark, January 21, 1979.

49. This should not imply that Mondrian's works are based upon a mathematically derived geometric system. Seuphor recalls that Vantongerloo once brought Mondrian a notebook with pages of calculations designed to show Mondrian's geometric systems. "This is very interesting," said Mondrian, "but it is not how I paint." (Conversation, April 19, 1979.)

50. Seuphor conversation, February 8, 1979.

51. Seuphor conversation, February 8, 1979.

52. Seuphor conversation, January 26, 1979.

53. Welsh, Toronto, 194.

54. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

55. Susan Denker generously brought this to my attention.

56. Mondrian's creation of a mirror image indicates the extreme abstraction of his art. Traditionally pictures are composed for a left to right scanning, creating what is called compensatory balance. Rubin has suggested, in his discussion of Stella's work, that this western tendency derives from the practice of reading texts and is strongest where a narrative tradition dominates. Calling attention to the nonnarrative character of modern art, Rubin stresses that it would naturally challenge that convention, as it has also challenged the tendency to read a fictive depth into paintings (in his *Stella,* note 32, p. 152). While Mondrian's works differ from the holistic Stella compositions which are the focus of Rubin's comments, nevertheless this pair of reversed images is part of the same modern movement.

57. *International Exhibition of Modern Art, Assembled by the Société Anonyme,* Brooklyn Museum, November 19, 1926–January 1, 1927.

58. Schapiro, 238-242 (with deletions).

59. Mondrian, "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life" in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art,* 42.

60. Mondrian, "Liberation," 47.

61. Mondrian, "A New Realism" in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art,* 25.

62. Troy, 84.

63. Mondrian in a letter to James Johnson Sweeney, May 24, 1943, document no. 9.

64. Seuphor conversation, April 19, 1979.

65. Seuphor conversation, April 19, 1979.

66. Seuphor recalls that Mondrian was especially taken by Josephine Baker and went to see her dance whenever he could. Conversation, April 19, 1979.

67. Mondrian had expressed his interest in jazz and modern dances and their relationship to dynamic equilibrium as early as 1919 in his "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality":

> For instance, take the modern dance, I mean the regular dance steps of couples. Formerly, the music and the dancing couple flowed in some way into each other: the curved line was a synthetic expression of this fact. Today the dance, the dance which has some subtlety, as well as the music, to which, or rather *against* which one dances, expresses a duality of two equivalent elements. The straight line is the plastic expression of this fact. In music, the various rhythms oppose each other, as they

oppose the melody, and as the steps of the dance oppose each other.
In Seuphor, 319-320.

68. Charmion von Weigand, "Mondrian: A Memoir of His New York Period," *Arts Yearbook, 4* (1961), 60.

69. Johanna Slijper in "Mondrian," *Holland Herald, 7* (January 1965), 24.

70. Seuphor, entry 407. Nancy Troy and Robert L. Herbert of Yale University kindly examined the painting for these characteristics.

71. Schapiro, note 7, p. 259.

72. Joosten in letter to Trinkett Clark, February 28, 1979.

73. Joosten/Clark letter, February 28, 1979.

74. Kermit Champa, "Piet Mondrian's *Painting Number II: Composition with Grey and Black*," *Arts, 53* (January 1979), note 1, p. 88.

75. See paintings cat. no. 14 for full text of this inscription.

76. Interestingly, Mondrian made a point of describing the columns in the room to Seuphor. Conversation, January 26, 1979.

77. Kermit Champa, "Piet Mondrian's *Composition with Blue and Yellow*," *Arts, 52* (January 1978), 138.

78. Welsh, Toronto, 198.

79. Welsh, Ottawa, 27. Champa also discusses this aspect of the creation of the double-line structure in *"Composition with Blue and Yellow."*

80. Herbert Henkels of the Gemeentemuseum researched this material, in Welsh, Ottawa, note 33, p. 31.

81. Welsh, Ottawa, 26.

82. Welsh, Ottawa, 27.

83. Champa, *"Composition with Blue and Yellow,"* 138.

84. Seuphor, 432; Ottolenghi, entry 465, 116; and Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, *Mondrian e l'arte del XX secolo* (Milan, 1962), entry 763, p. 371. James Johnson Sweeney in conversation with the author, May 25, 1979. Sweeney further recalled that he saw the painting in Mondrian's rue du Départ studio. As Mondrian moved to the boulevard Raspail in March 1936, the painting must have been started before then (see the discussion of this work, paintings cat. no. 15).

85. Both Susan Denker and Nancy Troy suggested in conversation with the author that Mondrian may have posed only with finished paintings. This issue is also important for our discussion of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* and fig. 53.

86. The point could be made that this development is in the reverse direction, with *Composition with Blue* serving as the source for the diamond. But the central openness is typical of the preceding diamonds and not of the rectangular works leading up to *Composition with Blue.*

87. Robert P. Welsh, "Landscape into Music: Mondrian's New York Period," *Arts, 40* (February 1966), 37.

88. See Joseph Masheck, "Mondrian the New Yorker," *Artforum, 13* (October 1974), 161.

89. Quoted by Welsh in "Landscape into Music," 33.

90. See Welsh on the dating, titles, and exhibition of Mondrian's New York paintings, "Landscape into Music," 33.

91. Charmion von Wiegand (interview with Margit Rowell, June 20, 1971) in Guggenheim, 83.

92. Von Wiegand interview, Guggenheim, 83.

93. Von Wiegand interview, Guggenheim, 83-84. The word "complete" in this account is difficult to interpret: did Mondrian mean to indicate the end of the first day's work or that he felt the composition was resolved?

94. Von Wiegand, "Memoir," 64.

95. Von Wiegand, "Memoir," 64.

96. Von Wiegand, "Memoir," 64-65.

97. See Welsh, "Landscape into Music," 35.

98. Agnes Saalfield, "Piet Mondrian's *Victory Boogie-Woogie*," unpublished paper, Harvard University, 4.

99. Von Wiegand interview, Guggenheim, 84.

100. Hans Richter received a postal card from Mondrian on Monday, January 24, in which Mondrian wrote: "I have been suffering from bronchitis." Given delivery time, the note would have been written and sent on Saturday, the 22nd. See Seuphor, 188.

101. Harry Holtzman in conversation with Trinkett Clark and the author, April 12, 1979.

102. For a different view see Welsh, Toronto, 224.

103. Janis, in Saalfield, 1; Mashek, 65; Jaffé, 158; Seuphor, entry 411; Ottolenghi, entry 472 (inachevé); Welsh, Ottawa, 21.

104. See Mashek on this point. The Pace Gallery, New York, in 1971 organized an exhibition of Mondrian's drawings (including drawings cat. nos. 2-8) and a post-creation of an architectural project for the Bienerts using the title *The Process Works.*

105. James Johnson Sweeney, "Mondrian, The Dutch and de Stijl," *Art News, 50* (June-July-August 1951), 62.

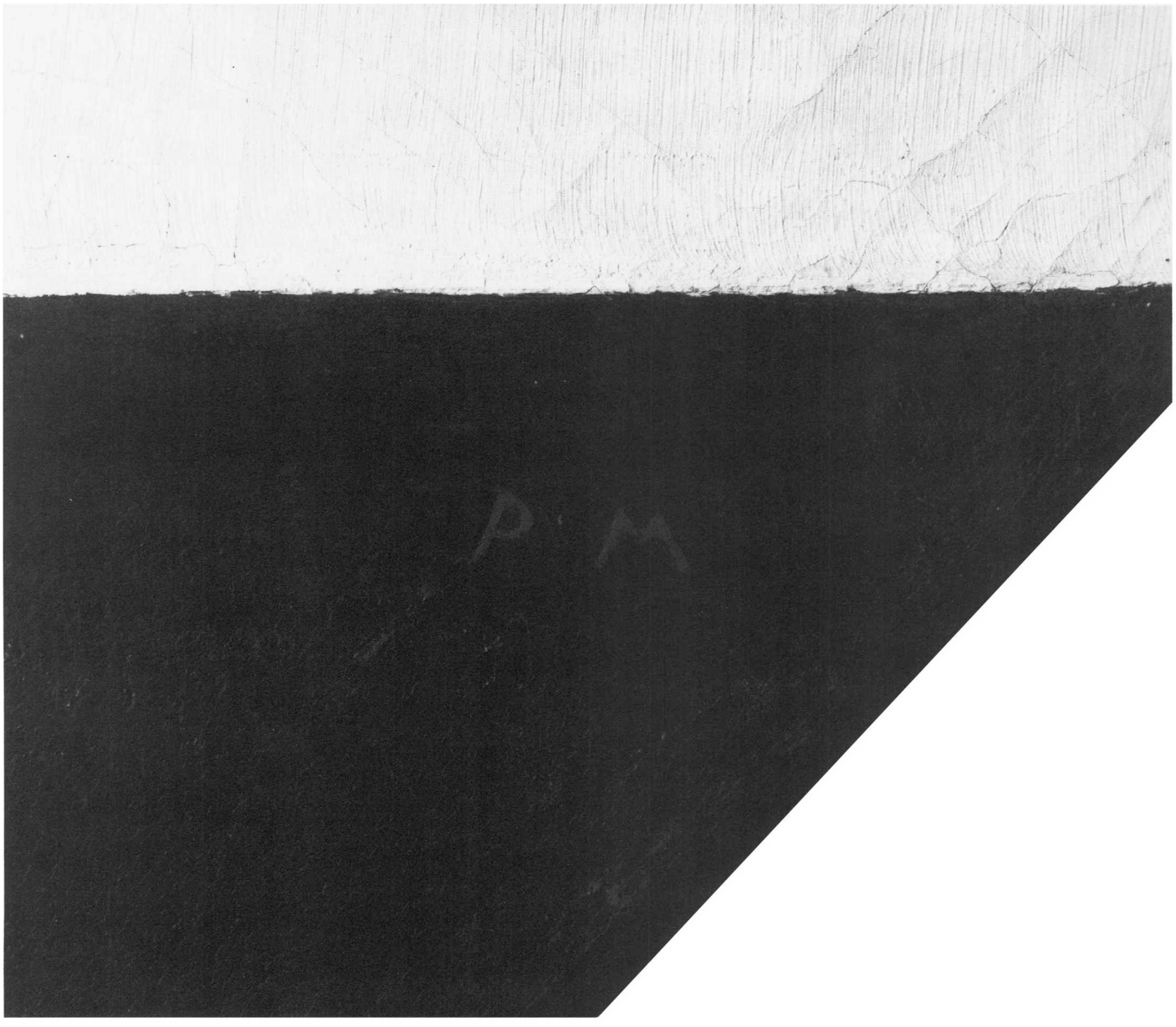
106. See Welsh, "Landscape into Music" and Toronto, 220.

107. Mondrian, "Liberation from Oppression," 39.

108. In a letter to Jean Gorin written from England on January 26, 1939 Mondrian said: "La situation artistique ici ne differe pas beaucoup de celle de Paris. Mais on est encore plus "libre"—London est grand. Paris plus intime." We can speculate that Mondrian would have later added that New York is "modern." Full text of the letter is in "Lettres à Jean Gorin," *Macula, 2* (1978), 133.

109. Mondrian, "Toward the True Vision of Reality," 15. This essay was written in 1942 before the Boogie-Woogies assumed their later style.

110. Mondrian, "A New Realism," 20.



Detail of lower right edge of fig. 60, showing Mondrian's monogram.

STUDY SECTION

E. A. Carmean, Jr. and William R. Leisher

THIS SECTION OF THE CATALOGUE examines in detail two diamonds, *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue,* now in Washington, and *Composition in Blue,* now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. We were led to examine these pictures because each bears a resemblance to a "missing" diamond composition. In each case we have discovered what we believe to be a reasonable solution to the "missing" diamond question. This solution is proposed in the form of a hypothesis supported by specific laboratory and art historical evidence. Because of their more speculative and technical character these two studies have been separated from the general essay on the diamond paintings.

William Leisher and I want to emphasize that the evidence discussed in these studies should not be considered representative of Mondrian's methods in general. Just as the preceding study of the diamond compositions concentrates on only a core sample of Mondrian's oeuvre, albeit a crucial portion, so the following reports focus on particular questions about two paintings. While no comparable clues have come to light for the other fourteen paintings, given the information gained in the following studies, we believe that only with similar examinations of the other pictures will we approach a more complete understanding of the diamonds.

EAC, Jr.

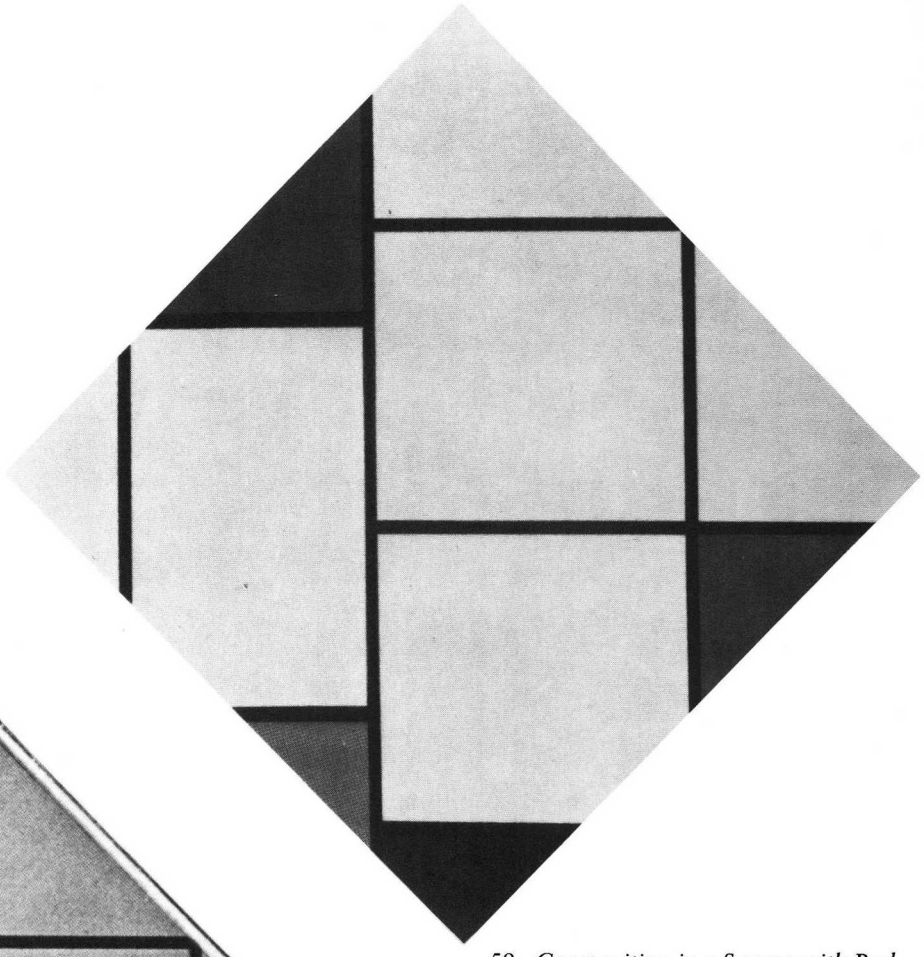
Study A

Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue, 1921-1925

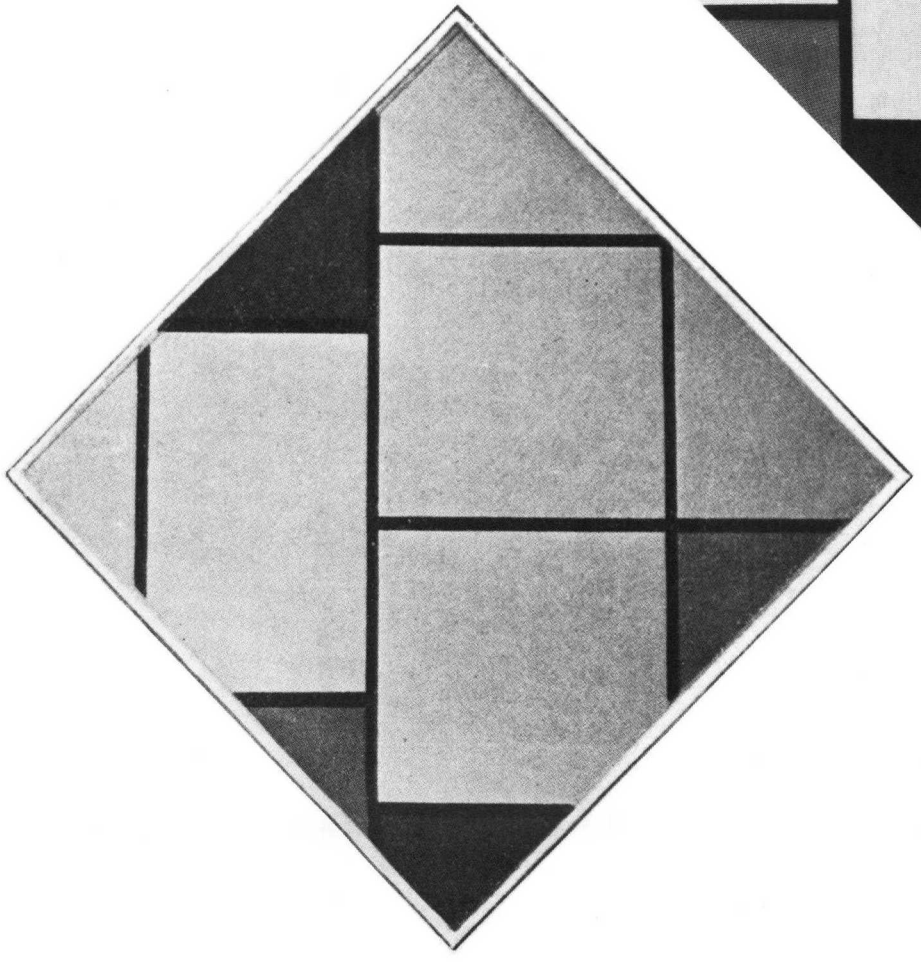
History

In the art historical literature on Mondrian's oeuvre two diamond paintings have repeatedly been paired. They make their first joint appearance in Michel Seuphor's catalogue raisonné (1956) as nos. 401 (fig. 59) and 404 (fig. 60).[1] Illustrated with no. 401 placed above no. 404, they are given the same title, *Composition dans le Carré avec Rouge, Jaune et Bleu* and dated c.1925 and 1926 respectively. Frank Elgar's 1968 monograph on Mondrian publishes both paintings with much larger illustrations, as nos. 112 and 130 and follows Seuphor's titles and dates.[2] The more recent catalogue raisonné (1974 Italy, 1976 France) by Maria Grazia Ottolenghi lists the paintings sequentially as nos. 358 and 359, illustrating the latter.[3] Again Seuphor's titles are followed, but no. 404 is here redated 1925. In all three publications dimensions are given only for no. 404.

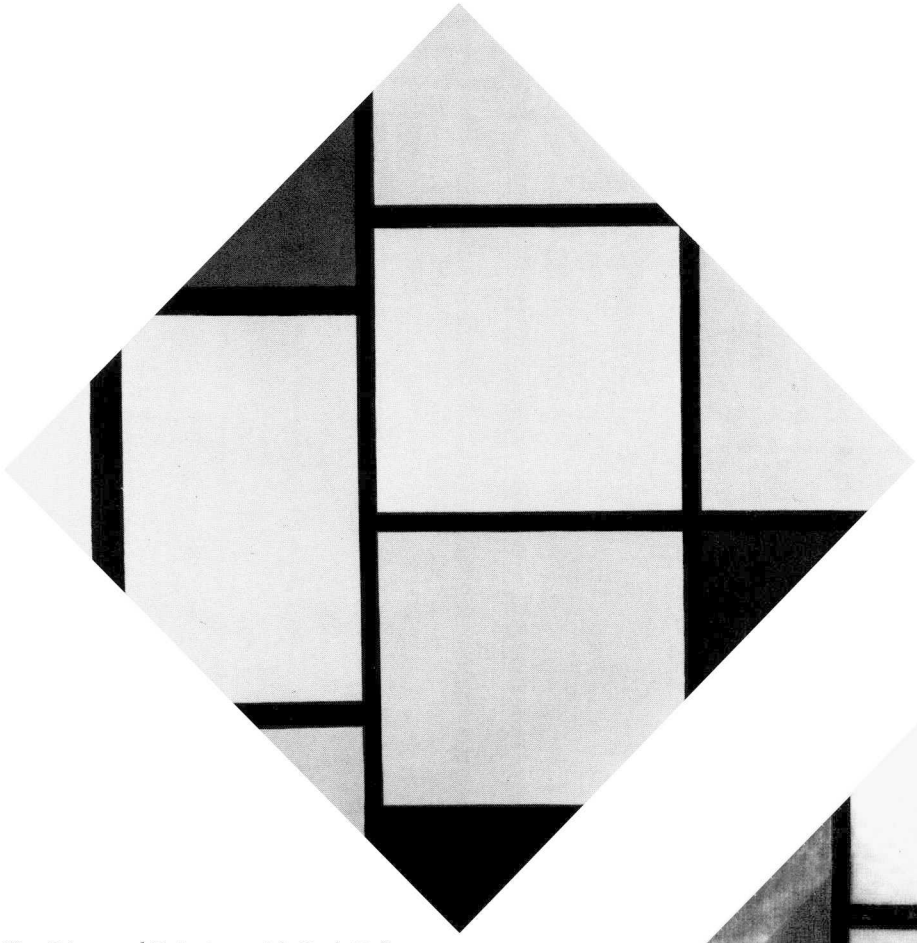
The second diamond, no. 404 (paintings cat. no. 6), is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Art. Originally purchased from the artist or the Kühl and Kühn Gallery of Dresden by Mr. and Mrs. Friedrich Bienert, it passed through various hands until it was acquired by Herbert and Nannette Rothschild who presented it to the National Gallery in 1971. Along with *Composition with Yellow Lines* (paintings cat. no. 14) and *Victory Boogie-Woogie*



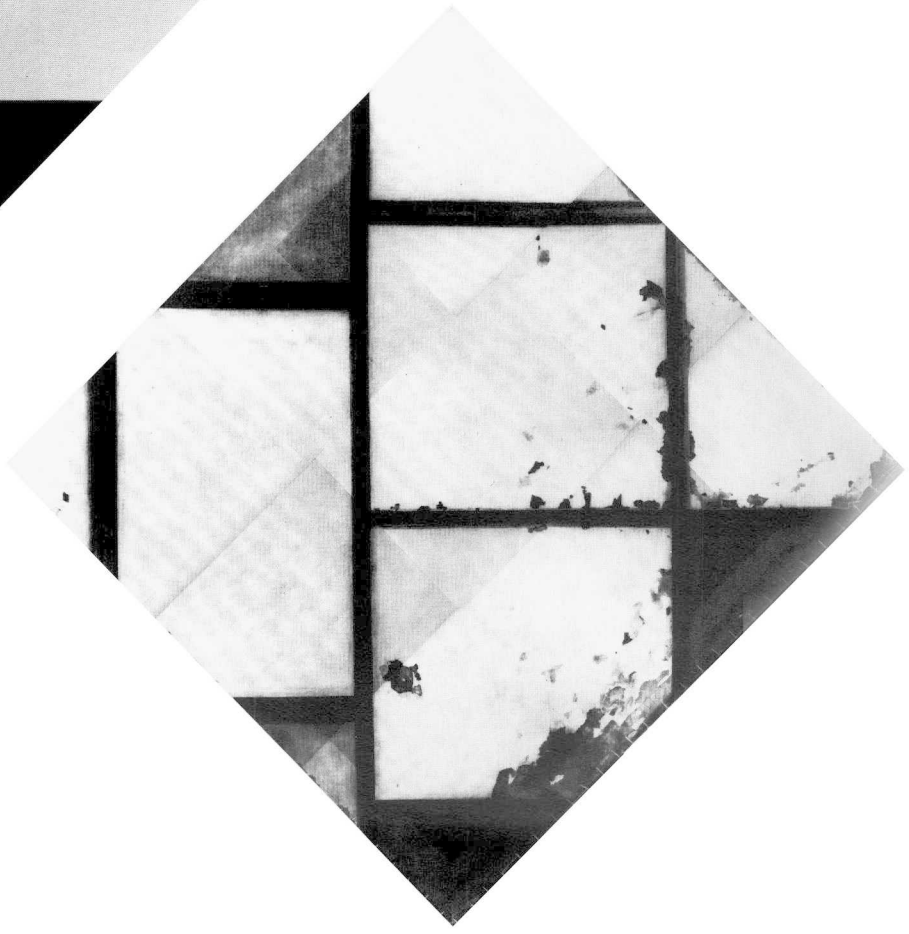
59. *Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue* illustrated in Elgar, *Mondrian* (1968), here proposed as a middle state, dating 1922-1924, of paintings cat. no. 6 (fig. 60) (Photo taken from Elgar, p. 112).



58. *Bild* illustrated in *Jahrbuch der jungen Kunst* (1924), here proposed as an early state, dating 1921, of paintings cat. no. 6 (fig. 60) (Photo taken from *Jahrbuch der jungen Kunst*).



60. *Diamond Painting with Red, Yellow and Blue,* 1921-1925, paintings cat. no. 6. Present state of the painting. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1971.



61. Composite x-radiograph of fig. 60.

(paintings cat. no. 16), it is one of the most famous diamonds.

The other diamond, no. 401, has quite a different history. Although all three publications list the painting as being in Harry Holtzman's collection, Mr. Holtzman has never owned it. All efforts to locate the picture have failed. Indeed, the only known record of its existence aside from the published listings and the Seuphor and Elgar illustrations is a reproduction in the *Jahrbuch der jungen Kunst* of 1924 (fig. 58). (This publication also makes it clear that no. 401 should be dated before 1925.) Art historical discussion of the first painting is also almost nonexistent. Robert Welsh in his 1966 catalogue stated that the Washington painting "is related compositionally to a smaller [?] version (S[euphor] C[lassified] C[atalogue no.] 401)."[4] Ottolenghi merely repeats Welsh's comment.

When we began to examine the Washington diamond, naturally we were eager to locate no. 401 and compare it to the National Gallery's painting. Then as we began to study the reproductions of it in conjunction with the actual Washington diamond we realized that no. 401 could represent an earlier state of the Washington picture.[5]

Just looking at the surface of the Washington painting supported this hypothesis. One significant way in which no. 401 differs from the Washington diamond is in the narrower width of its lines. And a visual examination of the National Gallery painting reveals that the black lines were originally thinner. The later additions which increase their width have a matte finish in comparison to the glossy surface of the initial black bands. If we isolate the glossy portions of the construction we see that they precisely match the structure of no. 401 (pl. 8 and fig. 59). Furthermore the vertical plane at the left in no. 401 is smaller than its counterpart in the Washington painting, a difference most easily seen in the tighter juxtaposition of the top horizontal and the left vertical along the diagonal edge. This difference is reflected in the painting where the original horizontal at the top left can be seen now as running under the white paint (pl. 8). (These changes are also visible in x-radiographs of the picture [figs. 61 and 64].)

Questions

The almost certain existence of no. 401 under the Washington painting still left many questions which, at this early stage in our consideration of the National Gallery's picture, we could not answer. For example, in the reproduction in the 1924 *Jahrbuch der jungen Kunst* it seems that the triangular area at the bottom is more properly read as a gray or color tone rather than black, as it now exists in the painting. Curiously in both the Seuphor and Elgar publications this area also seems to be black. Further, in these reproductions this tone differs slightly in value from that of the horizontal line above; a similar tonal change exists today in the Washington painting. The signature "P M" on the Washington painting (fig. 62) presented yet another puzzle, as the red of the inscription is markedly different from the color in the triangle above. Two art historical questions also existed. Under what conditions were these changes made, and how had the two diamonds come to be accepted as independent works?

At this point the painting entered the conservation laboratory to begin the first of many technical examinations, while simultaneously we began to search for art historical evidence relevant to the problems. In the following months a discovery in one area would either confirm previous theories and account for the evidence, or open up new directions for each department to pursue. The results of this detection are presented here.

Hypothesis

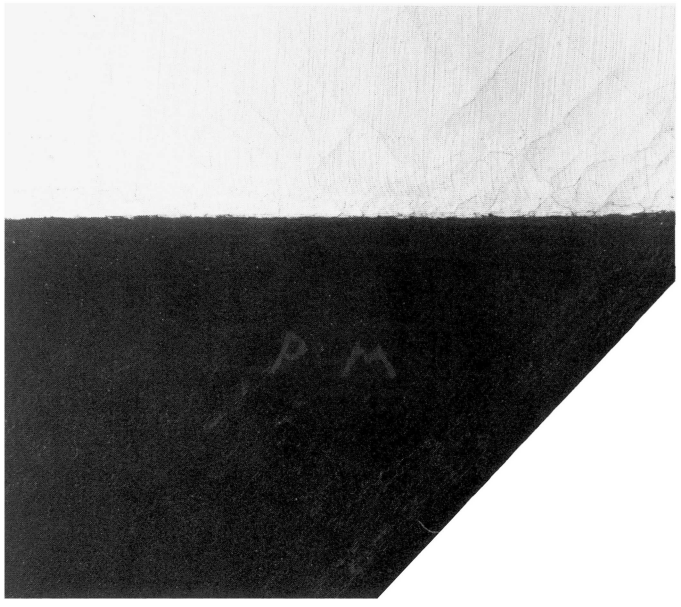
No. 401 and the Washington painting are the same work; the *Jahrbuch* and Elgar reproductions record earlier states of the National Gallery diamond. Furthermore, the painting as we see it today has been changed at least four times, and all of the earlier and major alterations were made by Mondrian himself.

Evidence: State One

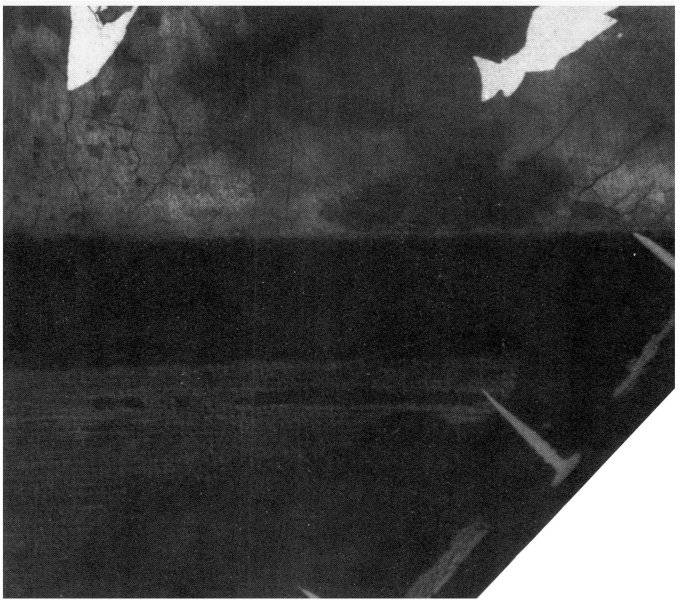
How the Washington painting looked in its first state is still unclear. Our technical examination reveals that the compositional divisions as we see them in fig. 58 were in place, as were the color planes. For these reasons we have redated this state of the painting to 1921 (see essay). However, laboratory evidence also suggests that the remaining areas of the painting may have been very different: the planes which are now in varying shades of blue-gray may have been all white, and the triangle at the bottom was at one point gray.

At first we were surprised to find a gray hue in this area. But simultaneously we learned of the 1924 *Jahrbuch* reproduction[6], in which, as noted above, the bottom triangle also reads as a color or a gray tone. Furthermore a detail x-radiograph (fig. 63) revealed that originally a black border existed on the right of this plane. Such a border would have been necessary only if the triangle was itself not black but a color.[7]

It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that the *Jahrbuch* reproduction is a record of this state. Whether such an illustration implies the picture is finished or not is unclear. In



62. Detail of lower right edge of fig. 60, showing Mondrian's monogram.



63. Detail of the x-radiograph of fig. 60, lower right edge, showing original gray area and black vertical line. This is the same area shown in fig. 62.

this regard it should be noted that Mondrian's habit was to continue to work on paintings left in his studio, even if they could be considered completed.

State Two

The second state of the painting is recorded by the Seuphor and Elgar photographs (fig. 59). Now the lower triangle is black. This revision makes a decided difference in the work's appearance. In state one the gray area bordered by the two black verticals reads as just another compositional unit. But by painting this area solid black, Mondrian ties it visually to the structure which it reinforces, giving the composition a solid base.[8]

State Three

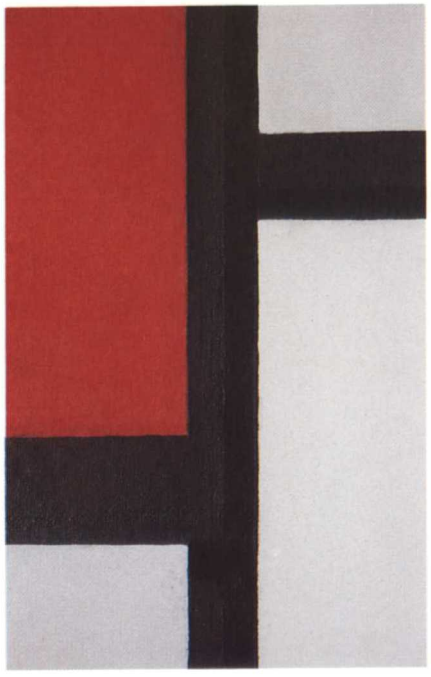
Mondrian made notable changes between states two and three. He widened the black lines and increased the size of the vertical area at the left. From the character of the lines and from the fact that this painting probably went to Dresden in 1925, we assigned this state to that year. The existence of two rectangular paintings which are dated by the artist "1921-25" supports this chronology of revision.[9]

Since in Mondrian's works the white areas are much thicker than the lines, to expand the black into a previously white area it would be necessary for him to scrape down the white paint so as to avoid a great shift in levels within the black. He would then have to rebuild the adjoining white plane. Significantly, both types of revisions were found in the Washington painting.

But a different procedure was followed when extending the black into the color areas. Here we found that Mondrian did not scrape down the colored paint, but merely widened the lines over it. This was possible because the color layers are considerably thinner than the white areas. We first discovered this technique early in our laboratory examination; when we looked through a minute fissure in a black line with a microscope a brilliant red was visible. This fact in turn brought a new puzzle to light. The red area beneath the black was a different color from the adjacent dark transparent red panel; moreover, it matched the orange red of the signature.

We next examined the blue plane to the right by inserting tiny probes into the surface and extracting a core sample of pigments. These reveal the paint layers in the area. Our samples were from both the blue plane itself and from a section where a black line had been expanded over the blue (pls. 9 and 10). We were pleased and puzzled with the results. Under the widened black line we found evidence of three layers of paint: white, then a sky blue, then a medium blue. This medium blue was surely the original color in the area, matching the red seen through the black fissure on the other side. Furthermore, the layers of sky blue and medium blue were like those visible at the edges of the Chicago diamond of 1921 (paintings cat. no. 5), again supporting our date for the making of the Washington painting.

The core sample in the blue area



8. Detail of upper left edge of fig. 60, showing changes in black lines.

was a great surprise. There we discovered at least seven layers of blue paints. Fortunately the combination of white/sky blue/medium blue found under the black extension was also the base of this sample, reinforcing our belief that these were the original layers. But above this first section were other layers, in order: medium blue/medium blue/medium blue/ dark blue/medium blue. Why would Mondrian have painted this many layers? And why the dark blue? Is there a connection with the darker, different red now present on the surface?

Changes

Mondrian's studio procedures are little known. But, as the essay indicates, we do know that his major concerns during this 1925-1926 period were with structure. The diamond drawings (drawings cat. nos. 2-8) also show that Mondrian conceived of his paintings as structures, with colors added later as notations. Thus in making changes in a work's construction Mondrian would not necessarily make changes in the colors. Our theory is that in this painting—*at this stage*—he did continue to use the same hues in building up the color areas adjacent to the newly widened lines in the blue plane. This practice is represented by the three layers of medium blue. The remaining two layers thus belong to a later state.

We also examined the red areas using the same technique. Under the black extension we find two layers of red, an orangish tone atop a lighter color. In the uncovered area we begin with the same base, with three layers of red above, thus corresponding to the middle blue strata. A darker red is the top, now visible, color, suggesting again a later state.

There is another reason for separating these upper layers of blue and red from the paint beneath. Some tentative evidence of traces of dirt on top of the medium blue and the orange red indicated a chronological division between them and the upper paint stata. Thus we have three sets of color layers in the blue and red areas, each separated in time.

We still must explain the top color layers of the fourth state which involve shifts in hue from the original two paint strata. Are these layers the work of a restorer? The answer is yes, but fortunately the character of the brush strokes, the age of the paint, and other factors argue that Mondrian himself performed this restoration.

Conservation and the Fourth State

The Washington painting was damaged in the blue area sometime after the revisions of 1925. Although this might have happened while the painting was in transit to Dresden, the possible presence of a dirt layer (discussed above)—which would require time to develop—argues for a slightly later date.[10] The damage extends from the top of the three medium blues through to the canvas and has been filled with white pigment. Over this a new layer of medium blue has been painted, matching the color of the prerestoration surface. As our cross section shows, then a darker blue was applied over which the original medium blue was repainted (pl. 11).

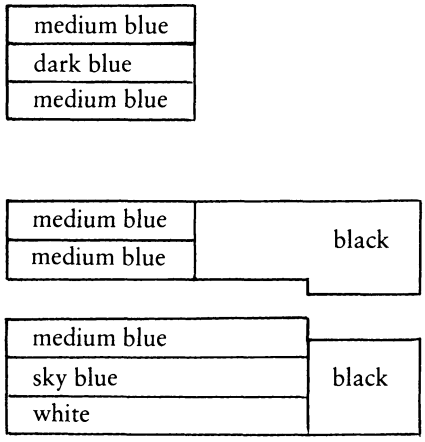
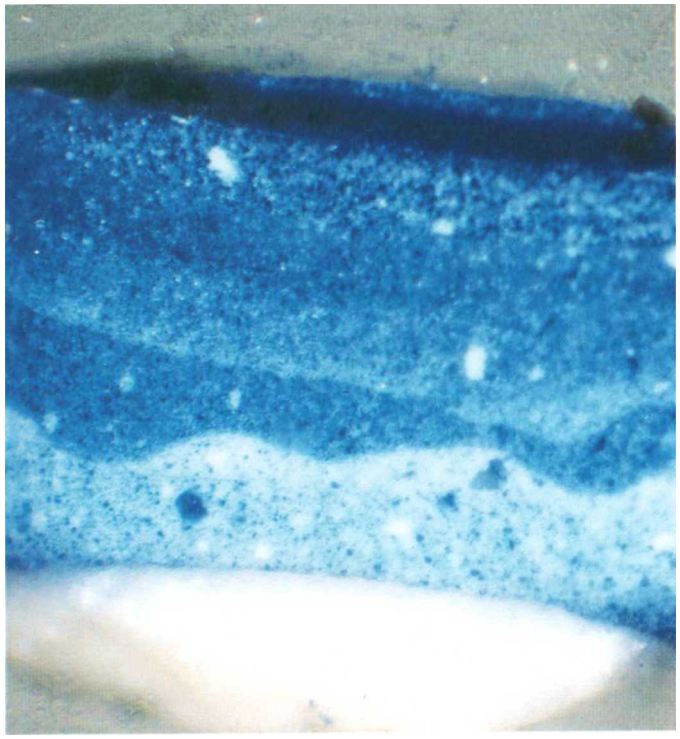
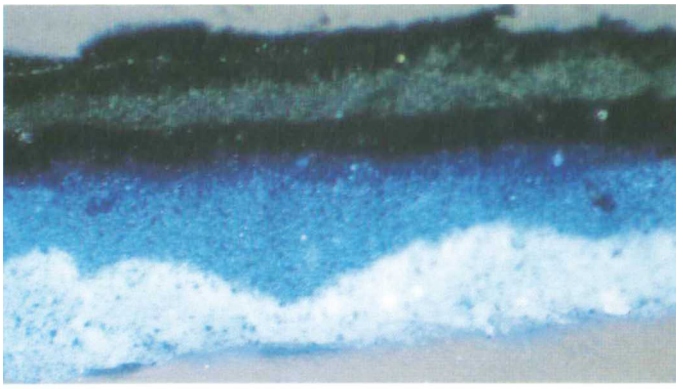


Diagram: cross section of blue area and black line, showing *below:* initial state; *middle:* revisions in 1925, with extension of black line; *top:* revision c. 1927.

After this restoration was identified we asked Michel Seuphor, who was often in Mondrian's studio during the 1920s, if he recalled whether the Washington diamond was returned to Mondrian for repair. Seuphor did not remember any painting, let alone this picture, being returned; "But I was not there all the time," he cautioned. However, Seuphor did recall that "sometimes a painting would come back with fingerprints along the edges from handling. When this happened Mondrian would repaint the whole picture, rather than trying to clean it."[11]



9. Cross section of undamaged portion of blue area of fig. 60 showing: 1) medium blue (top layer), 2) dark blue, 3) medium blue, 4) medium blue, 5) medium blue, 6) medium blue, 7) light blue, 8) ground.



10. Above: Cross section of black extension over blue area of fig. 60 showing: 1) dense black (top layer), 2) dirt, 3) dense black, 4) black, 5) dense black, 6) medium blue, 7) light blue, 8) ground.

11. Below: Cross section of damaged portion of blue area of fig. 60, showing: 1) medium blue, 2) dark blue, 3) medium blue (similar to number 1), 4) white ground/fill paint.

The fact that the entire picture was again repainted suggests that Mondrian himself made these changes, as Seuphor's observations also imply. After all, while a conservator could have repainted the blue, he would have had little reason to paint—and to alter—the remaining undamaged areas.

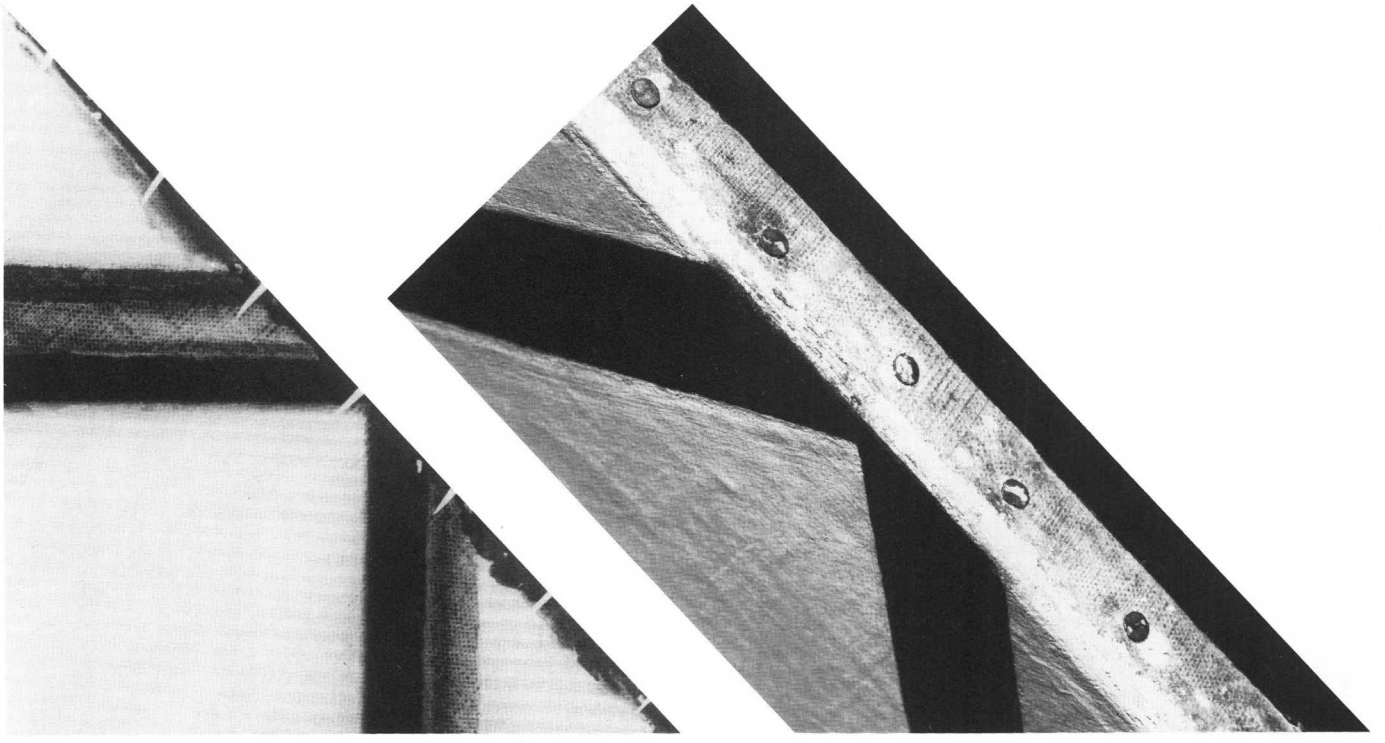
This further suggests that in revising the blue Mondrian repainted the red area as well, perhaps changing it to a darker tone to correspond to the darker blue. Although the blue area was subsequently repainted with a medium tone, the darker red was kept. Thus this red does not match that of the underlayers or the signature. Further support for this theory is provided by Seuphor who noted that Mondrian "had problems finding a satisfactory red paint and was always trying new ones."[12]

Our examination indicates that other sections of the painting—the yellow and the white-gray areas—where there was no damage were also repainted at this time. Apparently, it was at this stage that the variations in the blue-gray tones were added to the painting. As mentioned above, laboratory analysis has indicated that these areas of the painting were originally white or white-gray.

Present Condition

Sometime after this, but before entering the Rothschild collection, the painting was again restored.[13] This restoration involved some minor inpainting of a few small losses. The canvas was relined and, unfortunately, was damaged at this stage.

As is shown in the essay, in Mondrian's compositions of this period the black bands extend over the edge of the canvas, while the color planes stop right at this line. But during the repainting and restretching processes, this precise edge was lost; the picture may have been extended ⅛ to ¼ inch on each side. More unfortunately, Mondrian's original white paint along the sides of the canvas was scraped away (fig. 65), and the painting was reframed in a manner which denied his intentions: the frame covered the entire sides of the painting. For the purpose of this exhibition the Washington painting will be shown



64. Detail of x-radiograph of fig. 60, upper right edge, showing revisions in the black lines.

65. Detail of upper right edge of fig. 60, showing lateral side of the canvas; the same area as shown in fig. 64.

in an appropriate frame. The now scraped side areas will be masked by white tape. We have not restretched the work to its proper size. One of the lessons we hope to learn from the exhibition is how to restore this area.

Accounting

How is it possible that the earlier state of the Washington painting come to be Seuphor no. 401 and thus acquire a separate identity? We must recall that the only known form in which this work existed was as a Seuphor reproduction, used again by Elgar. This photograph was probably taken by Marc Vaux, a professional photographer who recorded most of Mondrian's paintings during this period.[14] In compiling his catalogue Seuphor drew on several sources, chiefly his own collection of photographs and documents from before World War II, as well as reproductions and data supplied by owners and dealers after this period. What seems most plausible is that no. 401 was a Vaux photograph of the early state which had come into Seuphor's possession earlier, and that the record of the painting's present appearance was later provided by the Sidney Janis Gallery. Being different in linear structure, each state was considered by Seuphor as a different work and was enrolled with its own catalogue number.

Qualities

The discovery of the above changes in the Washington painting, as well as those made in the Philadelphia *Composition with Blue* (Study B), and our knowledge of the number of states of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (see essay) give a different picture of Mondrian's working methods. In his 1966 catalogue entry for the Washington picture Robert Welsh described this painting as having "both grandeur and an infinitely subtle balance."[15] This study shows the difficult processes necessary to achieve such qualities.

Chronology

1921
Mondrian paints *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue* after or at same time as the Chicago diamond.

1922-1924
Mondrian paints the gray triangle at the bottom of the painting black.

1925
Mondrian widens the black lines and increases the size of the vertical white area on the left. The now-smaller red, yellow and blue areas are repainted their original colors.

After 1925-1927?
The painting is damaged in the blue area and restored by Mondrian. He tries a new darker blue, but returns to the original. Mondrian repaints the red and yellow areas, using darker cadmium red and cadmium yellow. He also increases the blue tonality of certain white planes.

1950s?
The painting is restored in small areas. While being relined the precise edges are shifted, and the sides of the work are scraped of original paint. The picture is put in a new frame, unsuitable for Mondrian's style.

1979
The edges of the painting are taped as a temporary measure, and it is put into an appropriate frame.

NOTES

1. Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* (New York, 1956).

2. Frank Elgar, *Mondrian* (London, 1968).

3. Maria Grazia Ottolenghi, *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Mondrian* (Paris, 1976).

4. Robert Welsh, *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1966). Welsh's use of the term "smaller" probably refers to the fact that Seuphor no. 401 reads as a cropped or smaller version of no. 404.

5. During our research we learned that several other art historians also proposed this connection, but questioned Mondrian's authorship of the alterations.

6. Susan Denker kindly brought this to our attention.

7. Photographic enlargements of the *Jahrbuch* illustration reveal one other unexpected characteristic of the painting at this stage. This reproduction seems to include portions of the picture's frame, and, astonishingly, areas on the frame appear to be painted so as to continue the composition.

We can only speculate about what this evidence could indicate, since we are dealing here with a reproduction made from a photograph recording the original, and in both photographing and printing misleading factors may creep into the image. Furthermore, the elements we are considering cannot now be examined in the laboratory due to later changes made along the edges. At best what follows can only be theory.

For compositional reasons we have proposed that the Washington picture should be dated 1921, contemporary with the Chicago diamond. But unlike the lines in the Chicago painting, which stop short of the edge, those in the Washington picture must have continued to the border. This is suggested both by the lowest right vertical which would exist only with continuous lines and by the fact that no evidence of an earlier point of termination can be found in the painting (although it is now damaged in these areas). The *Jahrbuch* photo further implies that Mondrian decided to extend these structural lines beyond the edge onto the frame while similarly expanding the color areas.

At first this suggestion sounds bizarre, but as Joop M. Joosten has shown, in 1915 Mondrian was painting the composition out to the edge of a frame set flush with the surface (Joosten, "Abstraction and Conceptual Innovation," *Artforum, 11* (April 1973), 54-59). After this (as discussed in the essay) Mondrian began to use a set-back strip frame which emphasized the diamonds' graphic shape. It is reasonable to wonder how this frame looked in the first two diamonds. If it was dark in color—or even painted black or gray—then it would simultaneously indicate the limits of the work and add an exterior line parallel to those on the painted surface. Unfortunately the reproduction of these two paintings hanging in Mondrian's studio in Paris is not clear enough to provide any relevant information (fig. 24).

The third, fourth, and fifth diamonds interestingly avoid this issue directly, as the compositional elements in the first two and the lines in the latter are arrested at the edge rather than continuous. Perhaps in extending the lines in the sixth diamond, the Washington painting, Mondrian experimented with continuing the composition onto the frame itself. The results of this experiment—if this is what we see at the upper left in the red triangle in the *Jahrbuch* reproduction—appear quite unsatisfactory. Perhaps this is why other sections of the *Jahrbuch* image read as if extensions on the frame were painted out with white, suggesting Mondrian's dissatisfaction with them. So the question remains: does this neglected reproduction record the process of Mondrian inventing the extended-line diamond?

8. Mondrian probably used a different black in making this change. The lower horizontal and the short vertical line on the right are still barely visible in the Elgar reproduction and thus are registering in a slightly different tone.

9. They are *Tableau No. I* (Moser-Schindler Collection, Zürich) and

Tableau No. II (Bill Collection, Zürich), in Ottolenghi nos. 350 and 351. These paintings presumably were also sent to Dresden in 1925 (see fig. 75). Their titles reinforce our speculation that Mondrian's title for the Washington painting was indeed *Tableau losangique I,* matching the Cabos diamond which as we know was *Tableau losangique II.* (See paintings cat. nos. 6 and 7.) The fact that three paintings from these two pairs were begun in 1921 and revised in 1925 further suggests that the Cabos picture might actually have been painted as early as 1921 and then changed in 1925.

10. As noted below in the technical examination, the red and yellow paints used in the top layers may have been commercially available only in 1926 and 1927 respectively.

11. Conversation between Michel Seuphor and E. A. Carmean, Jr., April 19, 1979. Interestingly Seuphor did recall the Bienerts returning a drawing to Mondrian around 1927.

12. Seuphor in conversation with E. A. Carmean, Jr., January 26, 1979. This might explain the possible use of a newly developed commercial red, different from the other reds. See note 10 above.

13. The painting was relined and put on a new stretcher. The earliest label present is one from the Sidney Janis Gallery, thus indicating the work was done before the Rothschilds owned the picture. The absence of any earlier labels suggests that Janis was responsible for the relining.

14. See Robert P. Welsh, "The Place of *Composition 12 with Small Blue Square* in the Art of Piet Mondrian," *Bulletin* (The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa), *29* (1977), note 34, p. 31.

15. Welsh, Toronto, 186.

Technical Report

Construction

The support is a moderate weight, twill linen fabric which has been lined with a plain, woven linen of similar weight. A wax/resin compound was used to adhere the two fabrics. The support and lining linen are backed with a masonite board.

The ground is thin and consists of a mixture of chalk and white lead. The design is oil paint which has been applied very thickly and in many layers. The black lines separating the geometric shapes have been applied in several thin layers and are recessed from the shapes.

A protective coating consisting of a very thin layer of synthetic varnish is present on the surface.

Condition

Close examination of the edges indicates that the painting's design surface was extended ⅛ to ¼ inches beyond its original edges. The extension was probably made after the wax lining was completed in order to mount the painting onto a slightly larger stretcher.

Under ultraviolet light the painting surface exhibits a uniform fluorescence. Indications of surface damage are relatively minimal. The overpaint covering the extended edges is clearly evident as a deep purple. Retouchings over scattered areas of wide aperatured crackle and two small losses in the blue triangle all fluoresce in the same manner as the edge overpaint. They all appear to date from about the same time as the wax lining.

The fluorescence characteristics of the gray and white shapes are distinctive of their pigment compositions. The gray shapes fluoresce a bright lemon yellow typical of zinc white. The lavender/purple fluorescence of the white shapes identifies titanium white. A yellow fluorescence along the edges of the white shapes indicates that the titanium white was painted over a layer of zinc white. The presence of these pigments was verified by x-ray fluorescence analysis.

X-radiographs of the painting reveal a number of artist's changes to the design. Most of the changes involve the adjustment of proportions by increasing the width of the black lines and reducing the size of the geometric shapes. With the exception of the blue and red triangles, the paint adjacent to the black lines was scraped down and then painted over with black. The original black has remained glossy. The extended portion of the black lines has become dull perhaps as a result of the rough texture of the scraped underpaint. Without exception, the presence of dull black on the painting delineates a change from its first state. In several instances the original black lines were painted over by the gray and white shapes to either enlarge or maintain their size. The former type of change is particularly evident at the top of the gray rectangle and can be seen both in the x-radiograph (figs. 61 and 63) and with the naked eye.

The x-radiographs also revealed a disturbing number of major losses along the bottom and right side of the diamond, an apparent contradiction to the ultraviolet fluorescence analysis. The left side of the diamond is undamaged. A study of the paint structure and the x-radiographic densities in the losses point to interlayer cleavage as the cause of the damage. The uniform fluorescence of the surface under ultraviolet indicates that the damaged areas were restored by repainting the entire design. The paint layering, brush stroking and fluorescence characteristics of the re-

stored paint surface are remarkably similar to those of the surfaces of other undamaged Mondrians. One is led to conclude that the restoration is the artist's.

A comparison of the cross sections taken from the blue and red triangles further supports this hypothesis. Three samples were taken from the blue triangle: in the undamaged area, the damaged area, and through the black extension over the blue.

Damaged

1. Medium blue (top layer)
2. Dark blue
3. Medium blue (similar to no. 1)
4. White ground/fill paint

Undamaged

1. Medium blue
2. Dark blue
3. Medium blue
4. Medium blue
5. Medium blue
6. Medium blue
7. Light blue
8. Ground

Black Extension

1. Dense black
2. Dirt layer
3. Dense black
4. Black
5. Dense black
6. Medium blue
7. Light blue
8. Ground

Layers six and seven in the black extension are quite similar to layers six and seven in the undamaged area. These layers probably represent the first state of the painting since the dark blue and medium blue of the restoration are not present under the black extension. Layers three, four and five of the undamaged blue appear to have been applied at the same time or shortly after the expansion of the black lines. The medium blue of layer three in the damaged section is the initial restoration color painted in to match layer three of the undamaged area. A very dark blue paint was applied over the entire triangle, damaged and undamaged sections alike. The top layer is a return to a blue that is characteristic of those under the dark blue layer. The return to the original blue, the similarity of this layering sequence to those of other Mondrians, and the character of the brush strokes tend to identify the restoration, the dark blue, and the surface layers as Mondrian's own work.

An analysis of the cross sections taken from the red triangle shows the same type of relationship between the red under the extension black and the red of the triangle as was found in the comparable blue areas:

Black Extension

1. Dense black (top layer)
2. Black
3. Dense black
4. Orange red
5. Light red
6. White ground

Red

1. Dark transparent red (top layer)
2. Orange red
3. Red
4. Red
5. Orange red
6. Light red
7. White ground

Again layers five and six in the red sample represent the first state. Layers two through four of the red area were applied with the extension of the black. The dark transparent red may have been applied at the time of the dark blue restoration layer.

A cross section through the undamaged portion of the black triangle at the base of the painting reveals a dark gray layer (no. 8) next to the ground:

Black Triangle

1. Dense black (top layer)
2. Dirt/varnish
3. Black
4. Dense black
5. Black
6. Dense black
7. Black
8. Dark gray
9. Ground (not shown in cross section)

The dark gray layer appears to be from an early state of the painting. The top black layer (no. 1) has the appearance of a late restoration (1950s ?) because of its presence over a definite dirt/varnish layer and because it can be clearly seen that it was painted around the signature initials.

The varying blue/gray tones of the rectangle, the bottom square, and the triangular shape at the right point appear to have been added at the time of Mondrian's restoration. Cross sections through damaged and undamaged areas reveal the same layering sequence:

Undamaged

1. Cream white (thin layer)
2. White with blue pigments
3. Dirt/varnish layer
4. White
5. White
6. White

} exact layering difficult to determine

Damaged

1. Cream white (thin layer)
2. White with blue pigments
3. White filling material

The brush stroking and fluorescence characteristics of the blue/gray layers are very similar to those of other Mondrians. The top layer of the

white shapes, however, which consists of a thin wash of titanium white may be 1950s restoration.

Intense sky blue flecks can be observed in a number of locations on the surface of the blue/gray rectangle. An immediate assumption was that the gray surface layer was painted over a sky blue layer, a color used by Mondrian in other compositions. However, an intense sky blue layer was completely absent from the cross sections of the rectangle. Examination of the surface under high magnification revealed that these flecks were actually paint fragments in the interstices of the brush strokes. Perhaps Mondrian experimented with a sky blue color for the rectangle and then removed it. The significance of the flecks is unclear.

Another puzzle arises from the difference in the pigments used for the red triangle and the red signature initials. The former is a cadmium red whereas the latter is a red iron oxide. Furthermore, a high content of barium sulphate detected in the cadmium red may indicate that the upper layers are cadmium red lithopone, a pigment in use only since 1926. The presence of barium sulphate may also be explained by its use as a paint extender, in which case the cadmium red could be one which was available from 1910 on. In addition barium sulphate was detected in the yellow triangle which is also painted with a cadmium pigment. Cadmium yellow lithopone was first manufactured in 1927. Again, if the barium sulphate is used as an extender, the yellow could be a cadmium which was available as early as 1851. Further examination is necessary before this question can be resolved.

WRL with Barbara Miller

Study B

Composition with Blue, 1926

The "Mysterious Eighteenth Diamond"

Recently a photograph showing an unknown Mondrian diamond painting was found in the S. B. Slijper Archives at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague (fig. 66). Absent from any discussion in the Mondrian literature and existing only in reproductions, this painting has virtually an underground reputation among scholars of the artist's work. Counting the sixteen located paintings and the "missing" Seuphor no. 401 (see Study A), this recent discovery becomes the "mysterious eighteenth diamond."

Interestingly the painting was actually published much earlier as the illustration to an article "De l'Art Abstrait: Réponse de Piet Mondrian" in *Cahiers d'Art, 6,* 1931 (fig. 73). Not referred to in the text, the reproduction is captioned "Piet Mondrian, 1930. *Composition de la Ligne Droite.*" But this is an incorrect date and title. On the Slijper photograph of the work it is possible to read the artist's monogram and date quite clearly—"P M 26"—located on the horizontal line to the right of its intersection with the vertical element (fig. 70). Furthermore, on the back of the photograph we find written *Composition,* 1926 in Mondrian's hand, providing not only the correct title but convincing evidence for the authenticity of the image. The verso is also marked *haut* and *bas*, indicating the orientation of the work, a device we find on other autograph photographs (document

no. 1, fig. 75) and on the artist's drawings (drawings cat. nos. 2 and 3, figs. 25 and 26). There is no photographer's stamp on the print.

Why has this painting after its publication in 1931 been ignored in the literature? One reason is that in structure it is virtually the mirror image of the two diamonds at Yale and Zürich (figs. 69 and 34). Since the signature and date on the face of the painting are not visible in the *Cahiers d'Art* illustration, the image was interpreted as a reversed reproduction of the Yale painting, *Fox Trot A*. Furthermore, the date published for this composition in *Cahiers d'Art,* 1930, is also the date of *Fox Trot A,* which tended to corroborate this assignment. There are, however, differences in proportion between these two compositions—especially in the width of the independent line—which rule out the possibility of such a reversal. More importantly, the existence of the photograph with its visible inscription concludes the case.

Connections and Differences

There is one other painting from 1926 which is of interest to us here. While the mysterious diamond is roughly a mirror image of the Zürich and Yale pictures, parts of its general composition are *repeated* in the Philadelphia diamond, *Composition with Blue* (fig. 68). In the latter there are two crossing black lines in virtually the same position as those in the missing picture; however, the isolated black vertical is not present, and the triangular area, which is painted a light color in *Composition*, is here a dark blue. (The color triangle is not visible in the *Cahiers d'Art* reproduction or in the photograph printed here, but in the original Slijper photo the triangular area differs in value from the white field.) Nevertheless this similarity introduces the possibility that the relationship between Seuphor no. 401 and the Washington painting (see Study A) is here repeated; the mysterious eighteenth diamond could be an earlier state of the Philadelphia work.

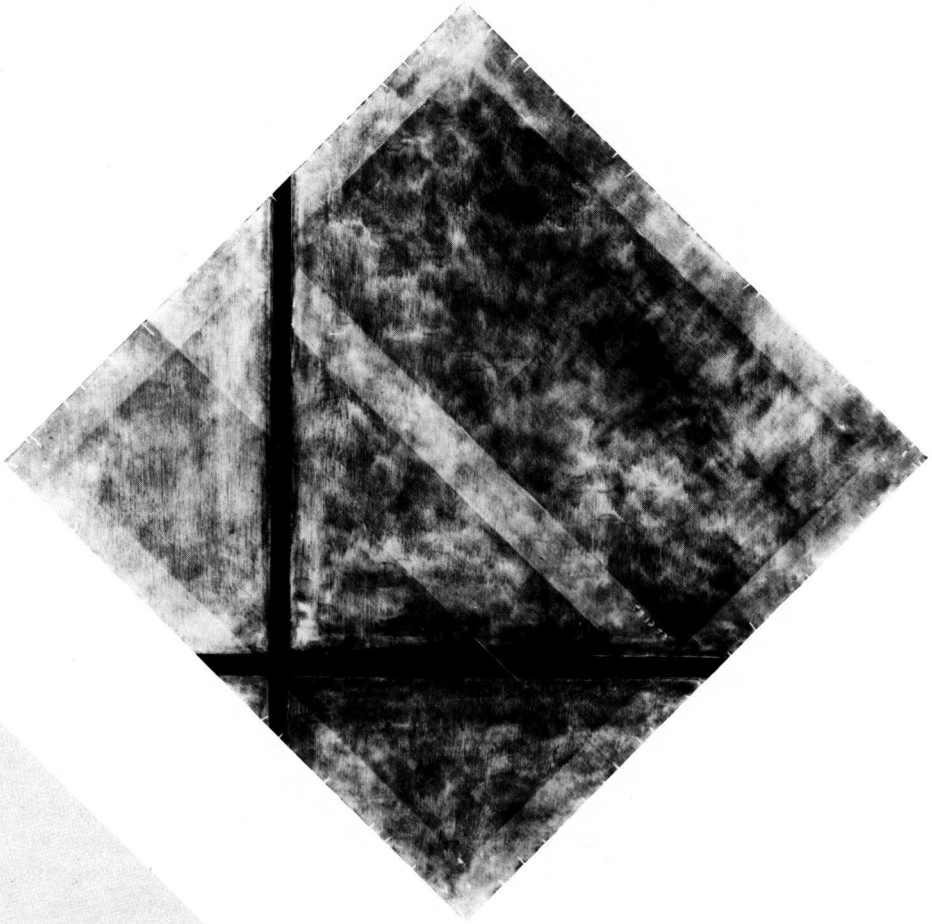
When we began to consider this possibility, another correspondence between the two images seemed at first to support the idea of linkage: the inscriptions. The Philadelphia painting is signed and dated (in red) in the same manner "P M 26" and in virtually the same location as is the missing work. However, close analysis of each inscription shows they are not the same. Comparing the Philadelphia date and monogram with a magnification of the missing work's inscription (figs. 70 and 71) reveals that in each the letter and numbers are clearly formed in a different way. The 6 for example is curved and looping in the Philadelphia picture in comparison with the straighter and more upright character of the other's number. This distinction between the inscriptions and the difference in the proportions of the crossing vertical line—slightly wider in the unknown composition—have led other art historians to the conclusion that the two compositions are not the same painting.

Evidence

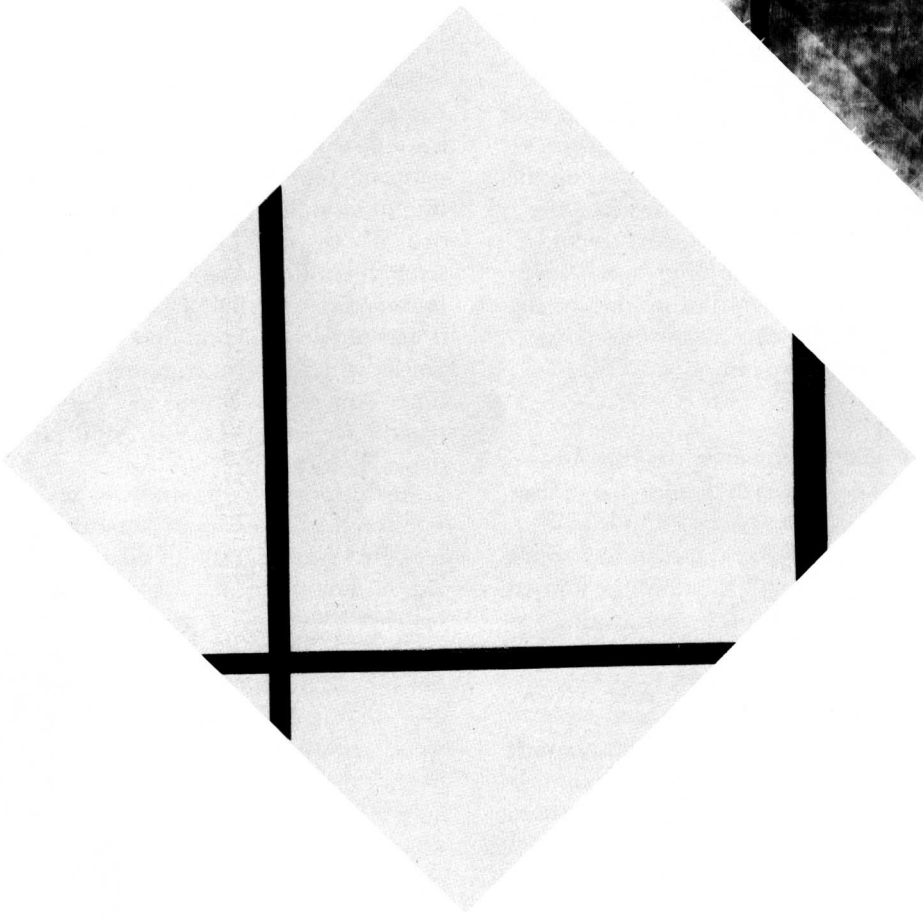
We believe, however, that the mysterious eighteenth diamond is indeed an earlier state of the Philadelphia painting and that traces of its former presence are still found in the known work. The first of the connecting clues is the triangular area at the lower left. Now a dark blue, this shape was originally painted a sky blue-gray which is still visible around the outer frame edge of the area. It is this sky blue-gray—which the camera records as a very pale gray—that is documented in the Slijper photograph.

The second link between the two works is at once more direct and yet still curiously unexplained. To facilitate comparing the inscriptions we made an enlargement of both the Slijper photograph (fig. 70) and a color transparency of the Philadelphia picture. While the inscriptions do differ, as discussed above, there is one common element. In both images a diagonal division runs through the horizontal line at the 2, crossing to the left and dividing the vertical line as well. In both cases the camera has recorded a tonal shift at the diagonal with the black darker toward the intersection of the lines. Curiously, neither this line nor any tonal modulation is visible to the eye when looking at the Philadelphia painting itself. Also, we cannot account for the existence of the line. The weave of the fabric which is stretched diagonally does follow this pattern, but there are numerous parallel threads at this point. Perhaps there is a subtle shift in the surface of the painting, visible only as a tonal modulation in a photographic record. The discovery of the line strengthened our opinion that the two images were the same painting: it was too coincidental that two works with identical compositions—one of which was missing—could have a diagonal tonal shift at the same location.

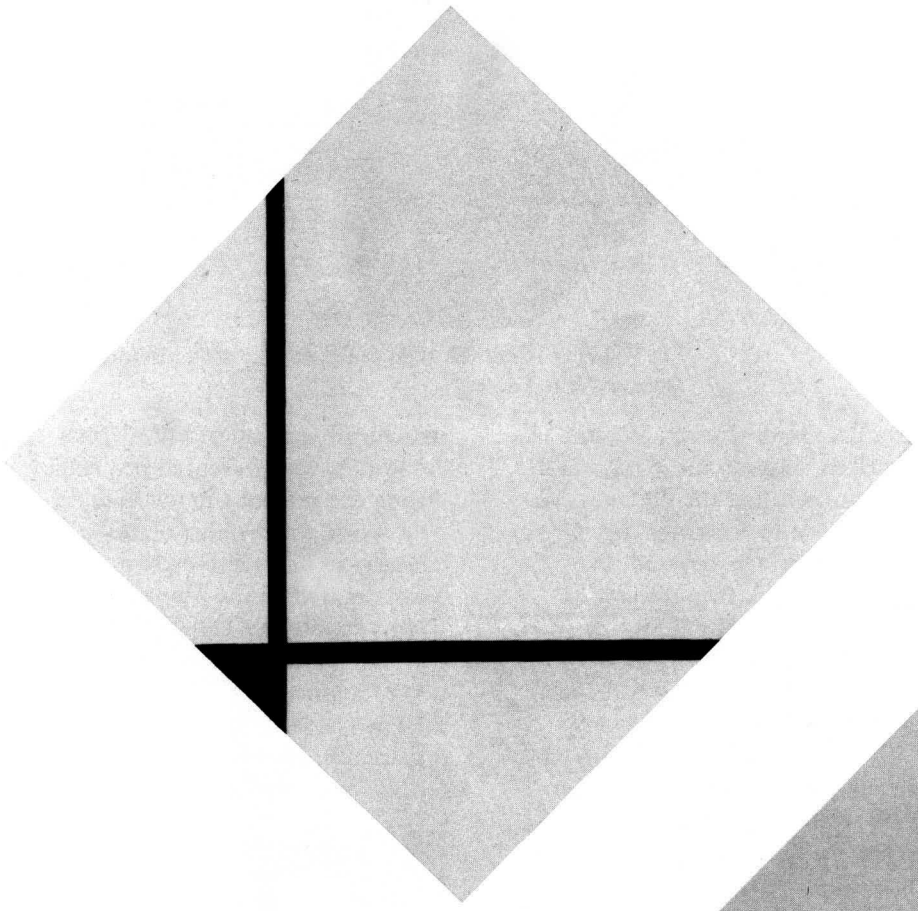
At this point in our study we requested the Philadelphia Museum to make an x-radiograph of the painting, hoping that it would show the isolated black line of the missing work under the white field. It does not (fig. 67); it does indicate, however, that in exactly the area where we were looking for the line, Mondrian repainted the picture. In addition to showing brushstrokes, an x-radiograph records density of pigment. The pigment in this section has been significantly built up. Our con-



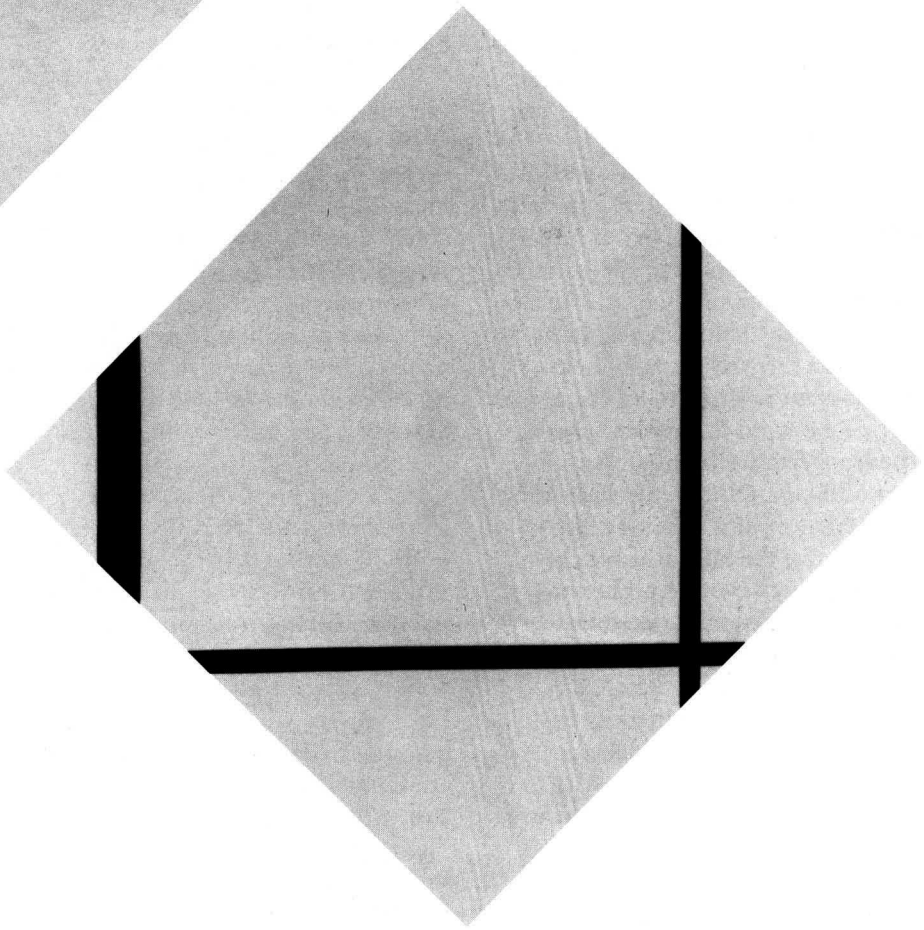
67. X-radiograph montage of fig. 68 (Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Conservation Department).



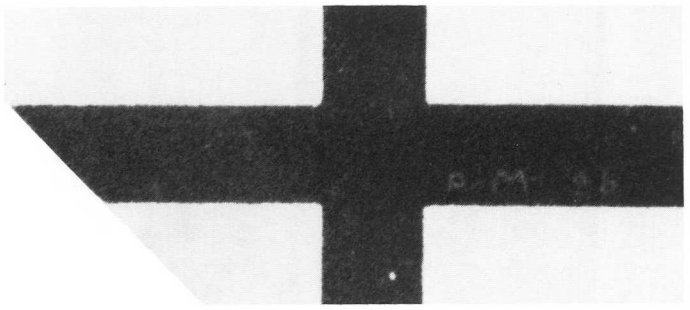
66. Photograph of *Composition,* 1926, paintings cat. no. 9 bis and document no. 3, here proposed as an early state of paintings cat. no. 9 (fig. 68). Private Collection.



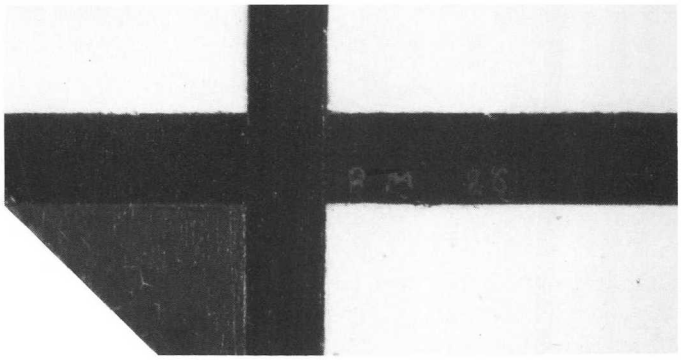
68. *Composition with Blue,* 1926, paintings cat. no. 9. Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection.



69. *Fox Trot A,* paintings cat. no. 11, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Gift of the artist for the Collection Société Anonyme.



70. Detail of lower left edge of fig. 66, showing Mondrian's monogram and date.



71. Detail of lower left edge of fig. 68, showing Mondrian's monogram and date.

clusion is that Mondrian scraped away the black line rather than overpainting it and chancing its showing through. This reworked area was then filled in and the whole surface repainted. Significantly, only one other section shows evidence of change. This is the area to the left of the left vertical, where revision would accord with the reduction of the broader band in the mysterious diamond to create the narrower line in the Philadelphia painting.

Another trace of the right vertical can actually be found on the surface of the painting. There, two parallel vertical cracks appear in the paint in the area corresponding to the former location of the black line (fig. 72). In addition a tiny fissure runs diagonally—that is with the weave of the fabric—between the vertical cracks. These aspects are found only in this area of the painting, again indicating that here the paint is denser. As noted above the blue area was repainted as well, with a preliminary layer of white over the sky blue. Craquelure in this area reveals this middle layer. Thus the revised Philadelphia painting literally becomes *Composition with Blue.*

Is this revision consistent with Mondrian's methods? While the use of a reverse composition is not recorded in any other set of paintings, we do know that among the first three diamonds (figs. 9, 10, and 12), as well as between the Zürich and Yale pictures, and the Philadelphia and Hilversum paintings (fig. 40) compositions are repeated. Furthermore, the drawings made at exactly this time show Mondrian experimenting with compositional variations. But this painting is the only known reversed image (see essay).

The 1925 drawings also show how in trying out a composition, Mondrian would eliminate various elements, the ideated work becoming increasingly sparse. Structurally, this is what we see in the changes from the earlier state to the painting's present appearance. But these alterations also reveal the progressive and conservative dialogue in Mondrian's art, the way in which he balances new ideas and earlier conventions (see the essay on this point). We surmise both from the more conservative blue plane as well as from the reinscribed date that Mondrian made these changes in 1926, although the painting did not leave his studio until 1938 (when it was purchased by A. E. Gallatin who gave it to the Philadelphia Museum in 1951). The painting's continued presence in the studio may account for the commission of the Hilversum picture, its "paired" work of 1931. Particularly intriguing is the fact that the equivalent to this later picture, the most structurally radical of Mondrian's diamonds, was present at one stage during the revisions in the Philadelphia work, for the blue plane—the conservative element—was at one point painted white. Two years would pass before Mondrian would trust his black structure alone to carry the pictorial authority, and then he chose to do so in the Yale picture, the mirror image of the mysterious eighteenth diamond.

72. Detail of x-radiograph montage of fig. 68, upper right edge, showing craquelure patterns (Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Conservation Department).

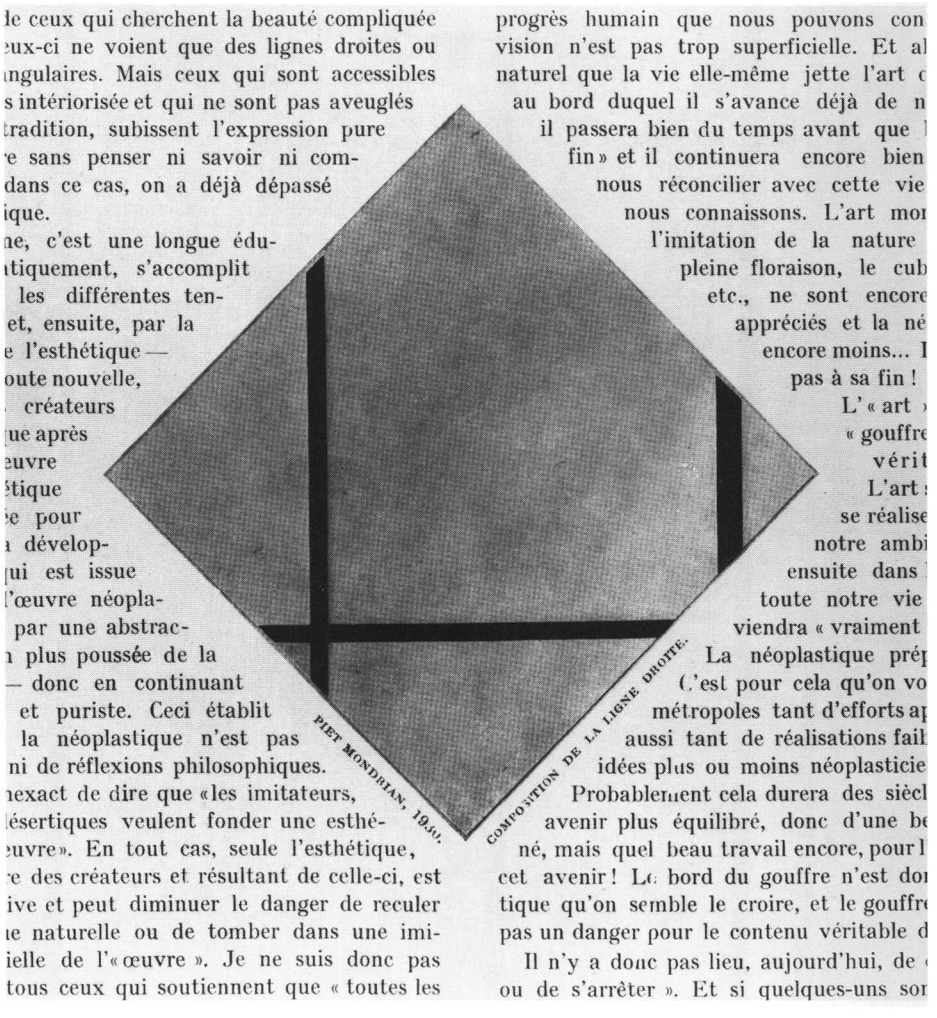
Chronology

1926
Mondrian paints a diamond picture in which the black structure is virtually the mirror image of the Zürich and Yale paintings. The small triangular area now at the left is painted sky blue. Unlike its parent work, the Zürich painting, the picture is otherwise in black and white. At this point Mondrian sends a photograph to S. B. Slijper, titling the work *Composition.*

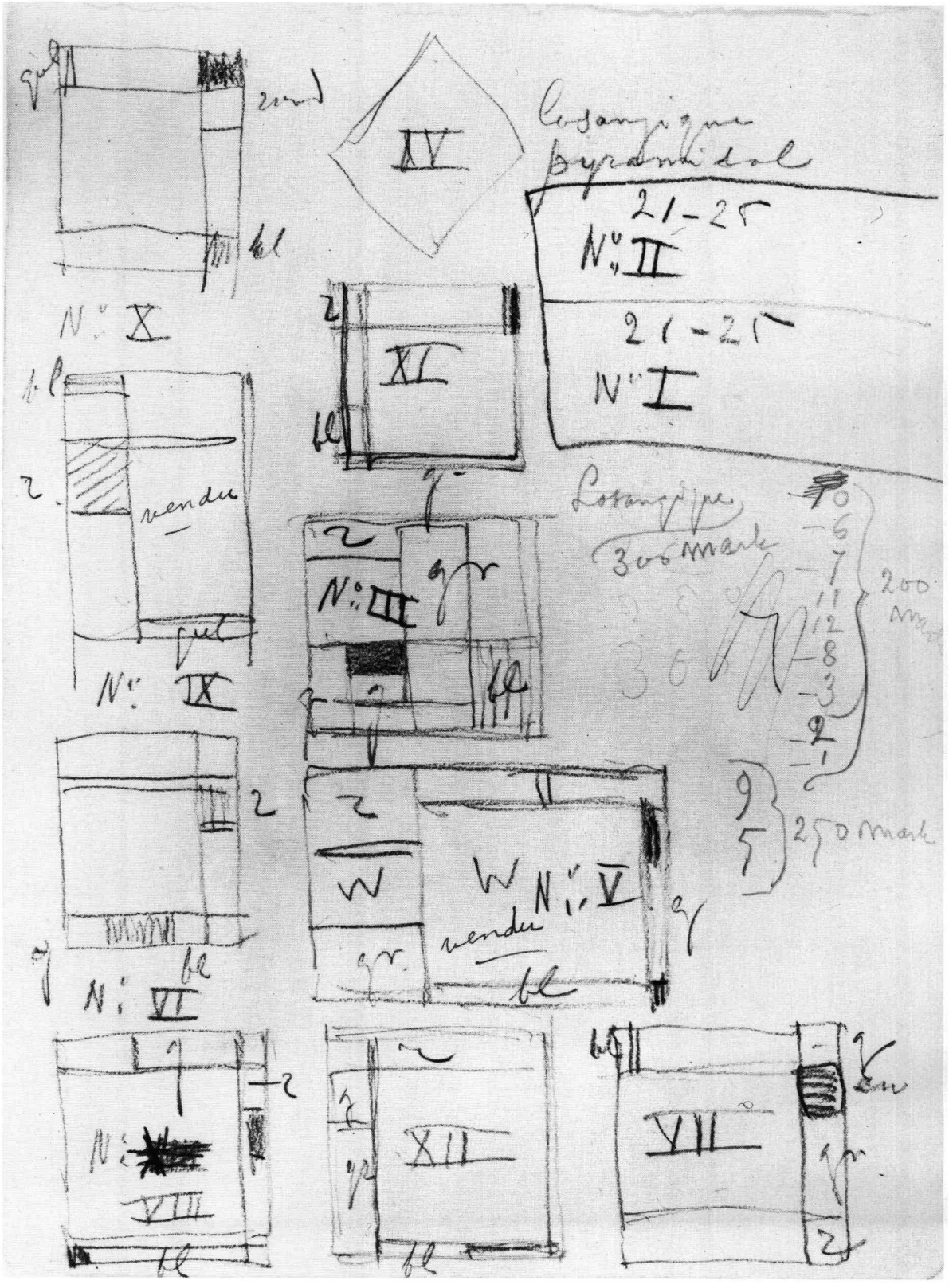
1926?
Mondrian revises the painting, removing the right vertical line, filling the area in with white, and then repainting this section. The left vertical is narrowed, and the sky blue-gray triangle is repainted white, then blue. The picture is reinscribed using the same monogram and date in virtually the same location.

1931
The initial state is published in *Cahiers d'Art*, but is ignored due to the belief that it is a reversed image of *Fox Trot A.*

1977
The photograph of *Composition*, 1926 is discovered in the Slijper Archives. It becomes the mysterious eighteenth diamond.



73. Reproduction of *Composition,* 1926 (fig. 66) in *Cahiers d'Art,* 1931, there identified as *Composition de la Ligne Droite,* 1930 and here identified as an early state of paintings cat. no. 9 (fig. 68) (Photo taken from *Cahiers d'Art, 6,* p. 42).



74. Notebook page, 1925, document no. 2. Collection of Mr. Harry Holtzman.

CATALOGUE

E. A. Carmean, Jr. with Trinkett Clark

The Diamond Paintings

The following is a complete catalogue of the known diamond paintings. They are listed in chronological order and by their present titles. Where documentary evidence suggests that Mondrian intended a different title, it is listed below in parentheses and discussed in the accompanying text. All measurements are for the diagonal dimension of the picture. Signatures and dates on the recto are given first, and inscriptions on the verso are cited in italics. The Seuphor and Ottolenghi citations refer to the entries in their respective catalogue raisonnés; the Elgar numbers to his monograph. All known information regarding provenance is given, as well as a complete exhibition history of each picture.

A ◇ indicates that the work is in the exhibition

1 *Lozenge with Grey Lines,* 1918

oil on canvas
diagonal: 121 cm (47⅝ inches)
signed, bottom center: P 18 M
Collection, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague
illustrated, fig. 9

Ottolenghi states that Mondrian gave this painting to his friend, Albert P. van den Briel, before leaving for Paris in 1919. However, the picture was in Paris in 1926, as it is visible in a photograph of Mondrian's studio taken that year (fig. 24).
Seuphor 297; Ottolenghi 305; Elgar 90

Provenance
The Artist
Albert P. van den Briel
Gift of Albert P. van den Briel to The Hague, 1956

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946, no. 85.

Basel: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* Kunsthalle, February 6 to March 2, 1947, no. 25 (a selection of works from the Stedelijk exhibition).

The Hague: *Mondriaan,* Gemeentemuseum, February 10 to April 12, 1955, no. 97.

Zürich: *Piet Mondrian,* Kunsthaus, May 22 to early July, 1955, no. 76.

London: *Piet Mondriaan, 1872-1944,* The Whitechapel Art Gallery, August/September 1955, no. 40.

The Hague: *Aanwinsten* (Recent Acquisitions), Gemeentemuseum, 1956/1957, no. 167.

New York: *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, September 30 to November 2, 1957.

New York: *Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 11, 1957 to January 26, 1958; traveled to San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, February 6 to April 14, 1958.

Kassel: *Documenta II: Kunst nach 1945,* Museum Fridericianum, July 11 to October 11, 1959, no. 38.

Delft: *Autonome Architectuur,* Stedelijk Museum "Het Prinsenhof," 1962, no. 31.

Kassel: *Documenta III,* Museum Fridericianum, June 27 to October 5, 1964, fig. 1, p. 86.

Dortmund: *De Stijl: Piet Mondrian,* Museum am Ostwall, May/June 1964, no. 2; traveled to Karlsruhe: Badischer Kunstverein, 1965.

Toronto: *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944,* The Art Gallery of Toronto, February 12 to March 20, 1966, no. 85; traveled to Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 8 to May 9, 1966; The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, June 15 to August 7, 1966.
Frankfurt: *Konstruktive Malerei: 1915-1930,* Kunstverein, 1966-1967, no. 44.

2 *Composition in Black and Grey (Lozenge with Grey Lines),* 1919

oil on canvas
diagonal: 84.5 cm (33¼ inches)
signed, dated, bottom corner: P M 19
Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection
illustrated, fig. 10

Mondrian painted this work on canvas which was primed with white paint, but rubbed so that the paint stayed only in the recesses of the fabric, with the warp and woof of the weave remaining unpainted and exposed. In the last sixty years this raw canvas has turned a dark brown, where originally it would have been slightly yellow in comparison to the rubbed-in white paint. The pattern of painted rectangles made by thickening certain lines is almost identical to that of paintings cat. no. 1.
Seuphor 298; Ottolenghi 308

Provenance
The Artist
Walter C. Arensberg, Hollywood, California, 1937
Present owner, 1950

Exhibitions
New York: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* The Museum of Modern Art, March 21 to May 13, 1945.
Chicago: *Arensberg Collection,* The Art Institute of Chicago, 1949, no. 157, illus., p. 90.
Philadelphia: *Arensberg Collection,* Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1954, no. 154, illus.
New York: *Arensberg and Gallatin Collections,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1961.
Santa Barbara: *Piet Mondrian,* Santa Barbara Museum of Art, January 9 to February 21, 1965, no. 52, illus. (did not go on to Dallas and Washington).
Berlin: *Piet Mondrian,* National-Galerie, September 15 to November 20, 1968, no. 42.
New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 78, illus., p. 160 (did not go on to Bern).

3 *Composition: Bright Color Planes with Grey Lines,* 1919

oil on canvas
diagonal: 84 cm (33⅛ inches)
signed, dated, lower center: PM '19
Collection, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo
illustrated, fig. 12

The compositional arrangement of planes here is almost identical to that of the emphasized lines in paintings cat. nos. 1 and 2.
Seuphor 299; Ottolenghi 309, Elgar 102

Provenance
The Artist
Unknown
Present owner (date entered collection unknown)

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946, no. 83 (did not go on to Basel).
The Hague: *Mondriaan,* Gemeentemuseum, February 10 to April 12, 1955, no. 99.
Zürich: *Piet Mondrian,* Kunsthaus, May 22 to early July, 1955, no. 80.
London: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944,* The Whitechapel Art Gallery, August/September 1955, no. 41.
Venice: *XXVIII Esposizioni Biennale Internazionale d'Arte,* June 16 to October 21, 1956, fig. 13 of Mondrian room.
Rome: *Piet Mondrian, Roma,* Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, no. 35, illus.; traveled to Milan: Palazzo Reale, November 1956 to February 1957.
Paris: *Mondrian,* Galerie Denise René, March 8 to April 7, 1957, no. 12, illus.
New York: *Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 11, 1957 to January 26, 1958; traveled to San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, February 6 to April 14, 1958.
Basel: *Piet Mondrian,* Galerie Beyeler, November 1964 to January 1965, no. 37a, illus.
Toronto: *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944,* The Art Gallery of Toronto, February 12 to March 20, 1966, no. 86b, illus.; traveled to Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 8 to May 9, 1966 (did not go on to The Hague).
New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 79; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972, no. 75.

4 *Composition in Diamond Shape,* 1919

oil on canvas
diagonal: 67 cm (26⅜ inches)
signed, dated, bottom center: PM 19
Collection, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo
illustrated, fig. 13 and pl. 1
Seuphor 300; Ottolenghi 310, Elgar 91

Provenance
The Artist
Unknown
Present owner (Kröller-Müller Foundation by 1936)

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring,* 1919.
New York: *Cubism and Abstract Art,* The Museum of Modern Art, 1936, no. 183.
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946, no. 84.
Basel: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* Kunsthalle, February 6 to March 2, 1947, no. 24 (a selection of works from the Stedelijk exhibition).
New York: *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, October 10 to November 12, 1949, no. 16.
Sao Paulo: *Pintura contemporánea de los Paises Bajos,* no. 13; traveled to Montevideo: 1954, no. 35.
New York: *Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 11, 1957 to January 26, 1958; traveled to San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, February 6 to April 14, 1958.
Charleroi: *L'Art du XXIme siècle,* Palais des Expositions, 1958, no. 5, illus.
Kiel: *Holländische Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert,* Kunsthalle, 1959, no. 31, illus.
Delft: *Autonome Architectuur,* Stedelijk Museum "Het Prinsenhof," 1962, no. 32.
New York: *Mondrian, De Stijl, and their Impact,* Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, Inc., April 1964, no. 19.
Berlin: *Piet Mondrian,* National-Galerie, September 15 to November 20, 1968, no. 40.
Paris: *Mondrian,* Orangerie des Tuileries, January 18 to March 31, 1969, no. 60.
New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 80; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972, no. 76.

5 *Diagonal Composition,* 1921
◇

oil on canvas
diagonal: 84.5 cm (33¼ inches)
signed, dated, lower corner: PM / 21
Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
illustrated, fig. 16 and pl. 2
Seuphor 400; Ottolenghi 336; Elgar 106

Provenance
The Artist
John Rädecker, Groet, the Netherlands, 1946/1947
John L. Senior, Jr., New York, 1951
Sidney Janis Gallery, New York
Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., New York, 1957
Present owner, 1957

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946, no. 110.
Basel: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* Kunsthalle, February 6 to March 2, 1947, no. 13 (a selection of works from the Stedelijk exhibition).
New York: *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, February 5 to March 11, 1951, no. 21.
New York: *Selections from Five New York Private Collections,* The Museum of Modern Art, June 26 to September 12, 1951, no. 4.
Chicago: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970 (shown in Chicago only).

6 *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue,*
◇ 1921-1925
(Tableau losangique I ?)

oil on canvas
diagonal: 1.428 x 1.423 m (56¼ x 56 inches)
signed, lower right center: P M
Collection, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1971
illustrated, fig. 19 and pl. 3

This painting has previously been dated c. 1925-1926 and related to another similar composition, Seuphor no. 401 and Ottolenghi no. 358. But it is argued here that the Washington picture and the other comparable diamond (paintings cat. no. 6 bis) are identical, and that the photograph of the other work is in fact an early 1921 state of this picture, which was then repainted by

Mondrian in 1925. The dark red triangle and perhaps the blue-gray surfaces may be later revisions by the artist (see study A). As the other comparable 1925 composition, cat. no. 7, was entitled by Mondrian *Tableau losangique II,* it is possible that this work was intended to be *Tableau losangique I.* Ottolenghi states that this painting was owned by the dancer Palucca, wife of Friedrich Bienert of Dresden. However, Mrs. Bienert's name was Enid. Palucca was a dancer and friend of the Bienerts, who borrowed a Mondrian diamond for her studio as an object of meditation. This work was probably either this painting or paintings cat. no. 8, as these are the only two diamonds which, to our knowledge, have been in Dresden.
Seuphor 404; Ottolenghi 359; Elgar 130

Provenance
The Artist
Friedrich Bienert, Dresden
Galerie Rudolf Springer, Berlin
Jon Nicholas Streep, New York, circa 1951
John L. Senior, Jr., New York
Sidney Janis Gallery, New York
Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, New York, 1955
Present owner, 1971

Exhibitions
New York: *Arp and Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, January 25 to March 5, 1960, no. 24.

New York: *Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, November 4 through 30, 1963, no. 23, illus. *(Lozenge in Red, Yellow and Blue).*

Toronto: *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944,* The Art Gallery of Toronto, February 12 to March 20, 1966, no. 94, illus., p. 187 *(Lozenge Composition in a Square)*; traveled to Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 8 to May 9, 1966; The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, June 15 to August 7, 1966.

Paris: *Mondrian,* Orangerie des Tuileries, 1969, no. 79 but not exhibited *(Composition dans le carreau avec rouge, jaune et bleu).*

New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 99, illus. (color), p. 181 *(Lozenge Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow and Blue),* did not go on to Bern.

Washington: *Aspects of Twentieth-Century Art,* National Gallery of Art, East Building inauguration, June 1 to September 30, 1978, no. 80, illus. (color), p. 96.

75. Mondrian's inscription on the verso of a photograph of *Composition in a Square,* document no. 1. Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris.

6 bis *Diamond Composition in Red, Yellow and Blue,* 1921?
This composition is listed by Seuphor (no. 401), Ottolenghi (no. 358) and Elgar (no. 112) with the owner incorrectly given as Harry Holtzman. We argue here (Study A) that this composition is an early state of paintings cat. no. 6.

7 *Composition in a Square,* 1925
(Tableau losangique II)

oil on canvas
diagonal: 109.1 cm (42⅞ inches)
Private collection, the Netherlands
illustrated, fig. 22

On the back of a photograph of this painting Mondrian wrote the title as *Tableau losangique II* (see document no. 1).
Seuphor 402; Ottolenghi 360.

Provenance
The Artist
Unknown
Present owner (date entered collection unknown)

8 *Composition I with Blue and Yellow,* 1925
(Losangique Pyramidal?)

oil on canvas
diagonal: 112 cm (44⅛ inches)
signed, dated, lower center: P M / 25
Collection, Kunsthaus Zürich, Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde
illustrated, fig. 34

This work, which like paintings cat. no. 6 was owned by Friedrich Bienert of Dresden, is probably the painting referred to by Mondrian as *Losangique Pyramidal* on a list of pictures for a Dresden exhibition (fig. 74). It was discussed with the artist in a 1925 (?) interview in his studio: "On the easel stands the artist's latest painting: in a white square on its point, three, four horizontal and vertical lines cross each other, cutting off small slices of yellow and blue . . ." (cited in Nancy Troy's "Piet Mondrian's Atelier," *Arts,* 53 [December 1978], 84). Mondrian described the work as "an abstract surrogate of the whole," referring either to his studio or his universal concepts, and chose the painting to illustrate his article, "Home-Street-City" *(Vouloir,* no. 25 [1927]).
Seuphor 403; Ottolenghi 357; Elgar 118

Provenance
The Artist
Friedrich Bienert, Dresden
Sidney Janis, New York, 1956
Present owner, 1956

Exhibitions
Zürich: *Auswal von Werken aus dem Kunstbesitz der Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde,* Kunsthaus Zürich, 1965.
Berlin: *Mondrian,* National-Galerie, September 15 to November 20, 1968, no. 53, illus.
Paris: *Mondrian,* Orangerie des Tuileries, January 18 to March 31, 1969, no. 78, illus. (color), p. 117.
New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 98, illus., p. 180; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972.

9 *Composition with Blue,* 1926

◇

oil on canvas
diagonal: 59.8 cm (23½ inches)
signed, dated, lower left toward middle: P M 26
Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection
illustrated, fig. 36 and pl. 4

A "mysterious eighteenth diamond" recently discovered in a photograph (paintings cat. no. 9 bis) is discussed here (Study B) as an early state of this picture.
Seuphor 406; Ottolenghi 365; Elgar 131

Provenance
The Artist
A. E. Gallatin, New York, 1938
Present owner, 1952

Exhibitions
New York: *Gallatin Collection,* Museum of Living Art, 1940, no. 94, illus. (color).
New York: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* The Museum of Modern Art, March 21 to May 13, 1945.
Philadelphia: *Gallatin Collection,* Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1954, no. 124, illus. (color).
Santa Barbara: *Piet Mondrian,* Santa Barbara Museum of Art, January 9 to February 21, 1965, no. 57, illus.; traveled to Dallas: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, March/April 1965; and Washington: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, May 8 to June 20, 1965.
New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 100, illus. (did not go on to Bern).
New York: *Philadelphia in New York,* The Museum of Modern Art, October 18, 1972 to January 7, 1973, no. 67.

9 bis *Composition,* 1926

This composition is not listed by Seuphor, Ottolenghi, or Elgar. Its existence is only recorded in a photograph in the S. B. Slijper Archives, The Hague and in a reproduction in *Cahiers d'Art* of 1931 (as *Composition de la Ligne Droite,* 1930). It is argued here that this composition is an early state of paintings cat. no. 9.

10 *Painting I,* 1926

◇

oil on canvas
diagonal: 113.6 x 111.7 cm (44¾ x 44 inches)
signed, dated, lower bar on left: P M '26
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953
illustrated, fig. 37

This painting was purchased by Katherine S. Dreier from Mondrian in 1926. This purchase, along with those made by the Bienerts (paintings cat. nos. 6 and 8), represent Mondrian's first significant sales. The painting was the first diamond shown in America. It was exhibited in *An International Exhibition of Modern Art, Assembled by the Société Anonyme* at the Brooklyn Museum, November 19, 1926 to January 1, 1927, as either no. 117 or no. 118, under the title *Clarification I* or *II.* Katherine Dreier appears to have often changed the titles of paintings, and this new title may reflect her theory of Mondrian's intentions: "Mondrian from Holland with his international group standing for clarification" (in the

introduction to the Brooklyn catalogue).
Seuphor 405; Ottolenghi 364; Elgar 117

Provenance
The Artist
Katherine S. Dreier, 1926
Present owner, 1953

Exhibitions
Brooklyn: *An International Exhibition of Modern Art, Assembled by the Société Anonyme,* Brooklyn Museum, November 19, 1926 to January 1, 1927, either no. 117 or 118 *(Clarification I* or *II).*
New York: *International Exhibition of Modern Art,* Anderson Galleries, January 25 to February 5, 1927, illus., p. 4 (a selection of works from the Brooklyn exhibition).
New York: *Cubism and Abstract Art,* The Museum of Modern Art, March 2 to April 19, 1936, no. 185, illus. (fig. 157), p. 154.
New York: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* The Museum of Modern Art, March 21 to May 13, 1945.
New Haven: *Katherine S. Dreier, 1877-1952: Her Own Collection of Modern Art,* Yale University Art Gallery, December 15, 1952 to February 1, 1953, no. 58.
New York: *25th Anniversary Exhibition,* The Museum of Modern Art, October 19, 1954 to February 6, 1955.
Washington: *Paintings from the Museum of Modern Art, New York,* National Gallery of Art, December 16, 1963 to March 22, 1964.

11 *Fox Trot A,* 1930
◇

oil on canvas
diagonal: 109.8 cm (43¼ inches)
signed, dated, bottom left: P.M '30
verso, on stretcher, in Mondrian's hand:
TOP/ accrocher lozen-/ giquement/ ◇
P. MONDRIAN/ FOX-/ TROT/ A-
Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the artist for the Collection Société Anonyme
illustrated, fig. 39

This painting was selected by Katherine S. Dreier sometime before October 1930, when it was shipped by Marcel Duchamp to her in New York. The title, *Fox Trot A,* is clearly Mondrian's own, as it is inscribed in his hand on the reverse of the picture, but how this painting relates to the rectangular *Fox Trot B* (also at the Yale University Art Gallery), shipped to New York with the diamond and dated earlier (1929), is unclear. This picture was shown at The New School for Social Research in 1931, probably with the catalogue number 22b, as *Simplification II.* (Katherine S. Dreier appears to have often changed titles, see paintings cat. no. 10.)
Seuphor 407; Ottolenghi 393; Elgar 123

Provenance
The Artist
Gift of the artist to the Société Anonyme, 1937
Present owner, 1941

Exhibitions
New York: *61st Exhibition of the Société Anonyme,* The New School of Social Research, January 1 to February 10, 1931, probably no. 22b *(Simplification II).*
Buffalo: *64th Exhibition of the Société Anonyme,* Albright Art Gallery, February 18 to March 8, 1931 (same exhibition shown at The New School of Social Research), probably no. 49 *(Simplification II).*
New York: *8 Modes,* Julien Levy Gallery (assembled as Exhibition Q by the Société Anonyme with the cooperation of the College Art Association), October 22 to November 3, 1934 *(Fox Trot).*
New York: *New Forms in Art,* College Art Association (assembled by the Société Anonyme), traveling exhibition, September 1936 to July 1937.
Springfield, Massachusetts: *Some New Forms of Beauty, 1909-1936, A Selection from the Collection of the Société Anonyme,* The George Walter Vincent Smith Art Gallery, November 9 to December 17, 1939, no. 44 *(Fox Trot).*
Hartford: *A Selection of the Collection of the Société Anonyme,* Wadsworth Atheneum, January 4 to February 4, 1940.
New Haven: Exhibition inaugurating the Collection Société Anonyme, Yale University Art Gallery, January 13 to February 23, 1942.
New York: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* The Museum of Modern Art, March 21 to May 13, 1945.
New York: *The White Plane,* Pinacotheca, March 1947.
The Hague: *Mondriaan,* Gemeentemuseum, February 10 to April 12, 1955, no. 120, illus.
Santa Barbara: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944,* Santa Barbara Museum of Art, January 9 to February 21, 1965, no. 58, illus.; traveled to Dallas: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, March/April 1965; Washington: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, May 8 to June 20, 1965.
Buffalo: *Plus by Minus: Today's Half-Century,* Albright-Knox Art Gallery, March 3 to April 14, 1968, no. 132.

Berlin: *Piet Mondrian,* National-Galerie, September 15 to November 20, 1968, no. 64, illus.

New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 109, illus.; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972.

12 ◇ *Composition I-A,* 1930
(No. 1)

oil on canvas
diagonal: 75.2 cm (29⅝ inches)
signed, dated, center of left edge: P M 30
verso, on stretcher, in Mondrian's hand:
P Mondrian accrocher/ losangiquement N⁰ 1
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Hilla Rebay Collection
illustrated, fig. 43

Like paintings cat. no. 11, this painting was also selected by October 1930, as on the tenth of that month Mondrian wrote to the buyer, Hilla Rebay, expressing his delight. The painting's present title may be inaccurate, as Mondrian's stretcher inscription, *No. 1,* indicates. In his October letter to Rebay, Mondrian added the following conservation advice:
J'espère que le tableau vous parvienne en bon état, mais si on le salit quand-même vous pouvez toujours avec un peu d'eau et du savon blanc le nettoyer. La peinture est assez épaisse pour supporter cela. (I hope that the picture will arrive in good condition, but if it does get dirty you can always clean it with a little water and white soap. The paint is sufficiently thick to withstand this.)
(in Angelica Rudenstine, *The Guggenheim Museum Collection: Paintings 1880-1945, 2* [New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1976], 584).
Seuphor 408; Ottolenghi 401; Elgar 142

Provenance
The Artist
Purchased from the Artist by Hilla Rebay, Green Farms, Connecticut, by October 1930
Estate of Hilla Rebay, 1967 to 1971
Present owner, 1971

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946.

Basel: *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* Kunsthalle, February 6 to March 2, 1947, no. 107 (a selection of works from the Stedelijk exhibition).

New York: *Tenth Anniversary Exhibition,* Museum of Non-Objective Painting, May 31 to October 10, 1949.

New York: *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, October 10 to November 12, 1949, no. 22.

New York: *Selections from the Museum Collection and Recent Acquisitions, 1971,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, June 11 to September 12, 1971.

New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 111; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972.

New York: *Collection Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 7, 1972 to February 22, 1973.

New York: *(Selections from the Guggenheim Museum Collection) Recent Acquisitions 1972-73,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, August 9 to September 3, 1973.

New York: *Concentrations I: Nine Modern Masters from the Guggenheim Museum and Thannhauser Collections,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, July 4 to September 8, 1974.

New York: *The Guggenheim Museum Collection: Paintings 1880-1945,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, April 9 to October 3, 1976.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim Museum,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, November 19, 1976 to April 7, 1977, no. 17.

New York: *Forty Modern Masters: An Anniversary Show,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 16, 1977 to February 5, 1978, no. 107.

New York: *The Grid,* The Pace Gallery, December 15, 1978 to February 3, 1979 (early removal on January 15, 1979), illus.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

13 ◇ *Composition with Two Lines,* 1931

oil on canvas
diagonal: 114 cm (44⅞ inches)
signed, dated, left side: P M/ '31
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, on loan from the Municipality of Hilversum
illustrated, fig. 40 and pl. 5

This painting has an especially interesting history. As Joop M. Joosten has shown, it was purchased from Mondrian in 1931 by a private society which assisted artists by buying their works. It was donated to the municipality of

Hilversum in that year to celebrate the opening of the new city hall, designed by Willem M. Dudok in 1924 and built between 1928-1931. The intended room for the painting was a colonnaded structure (fig. 42), but the picture was never hung there; it has been on loan to the Stedelijk Museum since September 1951. Curiously, Dudok had no interest in Mondrian's art, and Mondrian himself sold this painting without any participation in the architectural project.
Seuphor 409; Ottolenghi 405; Elgar 143

Provenance
The Artist
Hôtel de Ville, Municipality of Hilversum, 1931
On loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, since September 1951

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946, no. 111 (did not go on to Basel).
Amsterdam: *3 Leeftijden,* Stedelijk Museum, 1960, no. 67
Dortmund: *De Stijl: Piet Mondrian,* Museum am Ostwall, May/June 1964 (did not go on to Karlsruhe).
Paris: *Mondrian,* Orangerie des Tuileries, January 18 to March 31, 1969, no. 89.

14 *Composition with Yellow Lines,* 1933

oil on canvas
diagonal: 113 cm (44½ inches)
signed, dated, lower left: P M 33
Gift by admirers of the artist to Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1933
illustrated, fig. 44 and pl. 6

Although this painting is dated 1933, it was commissioned the preceding year by a group of admirers of Mondrian's work for presentation to the Gemeentemuseum. The painting is also interesting for the hanging instructions Mondrian placed on the reverse, giving an idea how he felt the diamond should be presented:

When hanging the picture, please do not let it lean forward or backwards. It must be parallel to the wall, with the centre no lower than the eye-level of a man standing up and, if possible, with the bottom corner coming at eye-level—P. M. Please do not touch the picture, but take hold of it by the frame. The picture must be hung as a diamond, so that the letters TOP come uppermost. P.M.

A photograph of Mondrian in his studio c. 1933 (frontispiece, document no. 5) shows the painting in this position on the artist's easel.
Seuphor 410; Ottolenghi 410; Elgar 165

Provenance
The Artist
Present owner, 1933

Exhibitions
The Hague: *Mondriaan,* Gemeentemuseum, February 10 to April 12, 1955, no. 122.
Zürich: *Piet Mondrian,* Kunsthaus, May 22 to early July, 1955, no. 106.
London: *Piet Mondriaan, 1872-1944,* The Whitechapel Art Gallery, August/September 1955, no. 45.
Venice: *XXVIII Esposizioni Biennale Internazionale d'Arte,* June 16 to October 21, 1956, fig. 21 of Mondrian room.
Rome: *Piet Mondrian, Roma,* Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, no. 46; traveled to Milan: Palazzo Reale, November 1956 to February 1957.
New York: *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, September 30 to November 2, 1957.
New York: *Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 11, 1957 to January 26, 1958; traveled to San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, February 6 to April 14, 1958.
Paris: *L'Art hollandais depuis Van Gogh,* Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1958, no. 70.
Kassel: *Documenta II: Kunst nach 1945,* Museum Fridericianum, July 11 to October 11, 1959, no. 41.
Cologne: *Traum Zeichen Raum: Kunst in Den Jahren 1924-1939,* Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, October 23 to December 12, 1965, no. 81.
Toronto: *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944,* The Art Gallery of Toronto, February 12 to March 20, 1966, no. 101; traveled to Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 8 to May 9, 1966; The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, June 15 to August 7, 1966, no. 112, illus., p. 199.
New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 114; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972, no. 104.

15 ◇ *Composition in a Square with Red Corner,* 1937-1938

oil on canvas
diagonal: 149.2 cm (58¾ inches)
Private collection
illustrated, fig. 47

Although this painting has been dated 1943 in the literature, it is argued here on stylistic grounds that the essential composition was begun and resolved between 1936 and 1938, and most probably in 1937. Moreover, James Johnson Sweeney, who owned the painting, recalled seeing it first in an early charcoal state in Mondrian's rue du Départ studio in Paris, which would suggest it was begun before March 1936, when the artist left that atelier (conversation with E. A. Carmean, Jr., May 25, 1979). Sweeney asked Mondrian for "first right of [purchase] refusal" at that time.

Sweeney also remembered that at that stage the painting was "only in charcoal lines with a piece of red paper stuck to it on one side." This would again confirm the theory that the composition as we see it today was essentially determined by this date. But the use of colored paper runs contrary to Mondrian's general method of the 1920s, although it forecasts his procedures with colored tapes later in New York (see the essay on this question). When Sweeney was asked if he was sure of this fact he replied, "Maybe memory plays tricks on you—it might have been blue *paper,* but I recall it as red" (emphasis mine). Of course, Mondrian's use of paper, rather than paint at this stage in the charcoal drawn composition, would be consistent with his method of painting the colors after painting the structure. A photograph taken in 1943 shows Mondrian posing with the finished picture (fig. 48, document no. 6).
Seuphor 411; Ottolenghi 465; Elgar 198

Provenance
The Artist
James Johnson Sweeney
Present owner

Exhibitions
New York: *Piet Mondrian,* Valentine Dudensing Gallery, January to February 1942?
New York: *Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, December 11, 1957 to January 26, 1958; traveled to San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, February 6 to April 14, 1958.

16 ◇ *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* 1942-1944

oil on canvas with colored tape and paper
diagonal: 178.4 cm (70¼ inches)
unsigned
Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine
illustrated, fig. 56 and pl. 7

This painting was begun in June 1942, apparently with the title *Victory Boogie-Woogie.* It then developed through a series of different stages. Its initial appearance is recorded in a drawing by Charmion von Wiegand (fig. 52, document no. 7), while the first "finished" state, of fall-winter 1942/43, is partially recorded in a photograph showing Mondrian with the canvas (fig. 53, document no. 8). Between March 1943 and January 15, 1944 Mondrian continued to work on the painting. At this stage it may have resembled the diamond drawing composition (fig. 55, drawings cat. no. 9). Between January 15 and January 20 or 21 Mondrian revised the painting again, producing its present form. As a painting this work is unfinished, with the pieces of tape Mondrian used in composing still on the surface. Whether it is a completed composition is a question of considerable debate; Harry Holtzman recalls Mondrian showing him the picture and saying "Now it needs only to be painted." His illness and death on February 1, 1944, prevented Mondrian from doing so. *Victory Boogie-Woogie* was shown *en point* on his easel when Holtzman opened Mondrian's studio for visitors following Mondrian's death (fig. 57, document no. 10).

The title of this work and that of its rectangular companion *Broadway Boogie-Woogie,* refer to Boogie-Woogie music. The practice of adding a modifying word to the phrase "Boogie-Woogie" was common at this time. For example Mondrian owned a Decca record album (no. A-137) titled *Boogie Woogie Music* which included *Indian Boogie Woogie* by Woody Herman and *Pinetop's Boogie Woogie* by Cleo Brown.
Seuphor 425; Ottolenghi 472; Elgar 205

Provenance
The Artist
Valentine Dudensing Gallery (via Harry Holtzman)
Present owners, 1944

Exhibitions
Amsterdam: *Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition.* Stedelijk Museum, November 6 to December 15, 1946 (did not go on to Basel).
Zürich: *Piet Mondrian.* Kunsthaus, May 22 to early July, 1955.

Brussels: *Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles: 50 Ans D'Art Moderne,* Palais International des Beaux-Arts, no. 231, pl. VI.

New York: *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October 8 to December 12, 1971, no. 131, illus. (color), p. 213; traveled to Bern: Kunstmuseum, February 9 to April 9, 1972.

Paris: *Paris—New York,* Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, June 1 to September 19, 1977, illus., p. 436.

Washington: *Aspects of Twentieth-Century Art,* National Gallery of Art, East Building inauguration, June 1 to September 30, 1978, no. 81, illus. (color), p. 97.

The Diamond Composition Drawings

The following is a listing of the known diamond drawings. All seem to be working studies, rather than finished sheets. They are listed in approximate chronological order. The drawings from 1925 have been given new identification titles for clarity; the former titles are listed below in parentheses. All are single sheets, save for nos. 6, 7, and 8 which come from a notebook of 1925, in which Mondrian also listed the works for his 1925 or 1926 Dresden exhibition. Measurements are taken along the edges of the sheets, height precedes width. The Seuphor and Ottolenghi citations refer to the entries in their respective catalogue raisonnés; the Elgar numbers to his monograph. For each sheet the provenance and a selected exhibition history is provided.

A brief discussion of another possible drawing follows.

1 ◇ *Composition based on Diamond Shape,* 1916-1917

charcoal on paper
50.1 x 44.7 cm (19¾ x 17⅝ inches)
signed, lower right: Piet Mondrian (added later?)
Collection of Mr. Harry Holtzman
illustrated, fig. 8
Seuphor 260; Ottolenghi 242[7]

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
Present owner

Exhibitions

Toronto: *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944,* The Art Gallery of Toronto, February 12 to March 20, 1966, no. 81, illus., p. 162; traveled to Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 8 to May 9, 1966; The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, June 15 to August 7, 1966.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

2 ◇ *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 1,* 1925 *(Classic Drawing No. 28)*

pencil on paper
21.6 x 21.6 cm (8½ x 8½ inches)
Collection of Mr. Sidney Singer
illustrated, fig. 25
Image full sheet, with notations designating the top —*H* for *haut*— in two opposite points.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970
Present owner, 1977

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., p. 21; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago,

October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

3 ◇ *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 2,* 1925 *(Classic Drawings Nos. 22A and 22B)*

pencil on lined paper
21.0 x 21.0 cm (8¼ x 8¼ inches)
Collection of Mrs. Andrew Fuller
illustrated, figs. 26 and 27

Recto: Image full sheet with notations of color.
Verso: Image full sheet with notations of color.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
The Pace Gallery of New York, 1970
Sidney Singer, 1977
Present owner, 1978

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., p. 22; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

Cologne: *De Stijl: Cercle et Carré,* Galerie Gmurzynska, March 8 to May 31, 1974, no. 102, illus.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

4 ◇ *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 3,* 1925 *(Classic Drawings No. 24A and 24B)*

pencil on lined paper
24.1 x 16.8 cm (9½ x 6⅝ inches)
Collection of Mr. Sidney Singer
illustrated, figs. 28 and 29

Recto: Large diamond upper left with notations of color; small diamond lower left with notations of color.

Verso: Large diamond upper left; small diamond upper right.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970
Present owner, 1977

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., pps. 24 and 25; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

5 ◇ *Diamond Composition Drawing, Sheet No. 4,* 1925 *(Classic Drawing No. 23)*

pencil on paper
27.3 x 14 cm (10¾ x 5½ inches) (measured at widest points)
Collection of Mr. Stephen Singer
illustrated, fig. 30

Large diamond upper left; three small diamonds lower right.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970
Present owner, 1977

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., p. 23; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

6 *Diamond Composition Drawing, Page A,* 1925
◇ pencil on paper
23.5 x 29.9 cm (9¼ x 11¾ inches)
Mr. and Mrs. Tony Rosenthal
illustrated, fig. 31

Page from a notebook. Large diamond with notations of color at the left; two small diamonds at the right.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970
Sidney Singer, 1977
Present owner, 1978

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., p. 27; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

7 *Diamond Composition Drawing, Page B,* 1925
pencil on paper
23.0 x 29.9 cm (9 1/16 x 11¾ inches)
Whereabouts unknown
illustrated, fig. 32

Page from a notebook; one diamond at right, two rectangular compositions at left.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970
Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, Dusseldorf, 1972

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., p. 28; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

8 *Diamond Composition Drawing, Page C,* 1925
◇ pencil on paper
23.0 x 29.9 cm (9 1/16 x 11¾ inches)
Collection of Arnold and Milly Glimcher, New York
illustrated, fig. 33

Page from a notebook, two diamonds.

Provenance

The Artist
The Estate of the Artist
Present owner, 1970

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian: The Process Works,* The Pace Gallery, April 11 to May 16, 1970, illus., p. 29; traveled to Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, July 14 to August 30, 1970; Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, October 4 to November 8, 1970; Columbus, Ohio: Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971; Dusseldorf: Galerie Denise René—Hans Mayer, 1972; Caracas: Estudio Actual, 1973; Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1975.

New York: *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, January 18 to May 6, 1979.

9 *Composition Study for "Victory Boogie-Woogie,"*
◇ 1943
pencil on paper
diagonal: 48.9 cm (19¼ inches)
Collection of Mr. Sidney Janis
illustrated, fig. 55
Image full sheet. Probably relates to second "completed" state of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (paintings cat. no. 16).

Seuphor 424; Ottolenghi 472[1]; Elgar 206

Provenance

The Artist
Harry Holtzman
Present owner, 1958

Exhibitions

New York: *Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, November 4 to November 30, 1963.

Toronto: *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944,* The Art Gallery of Toronto, February 12 to March 20, 1966, no. 114, illus., p. 225; traveled to Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, April 8 to May 9, 1966; The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, June 15 to August 7, 1966.

Paris: *Paris—New York,* Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, June 1 to September 19, 1977, illus., p. 436.

10? *Study for Boogie-Woogie* (?), 1943 (?)
(Study II: Boogie-Woogie)

pencil on lined paper
19.7 x 19.7 cm (7¾ x 7¾ inches)
unsigned and undated
Collection of Sidney Janis Gallery

Although this sheet has been considered a study for the rectangular *Broadway Boogie-Woogie,* Welsh has argued that its structure relates more strongly to that of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* and that the drawing can be considered partly oriented to the diamond format (Robert P. Welsh, *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944* [Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1966], p. 222, fig. 113b). The possibility also exists that this sheet was a study for another, but unrealized composition. Mondrian remarked to Charmion von Wiegand that he was eager to finish *Victory* in order to begin an even larger painting (Charmion von Wiegand in conversation with Trinkett Clark, January 21, 1979). Given the scale of *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* it is unlikely that Mondrian would have considered making a rectangular picture of even greater dimensions. But a diamond painting of such size would have been possible, especially in light of Mondrian's tendency to make paired pictures. Could this drawing thus relate to a projected diamond painting?

List of Documents

1. Photograph of *Composition in a Square* (paintings cat. no. 7), 1925, taken by Marc Vaux, with Mondrian's inscription on the verso, entitling the work *Tableau losangique.* Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris. Recto illustrated, fig. 22; verso illustrated, fig. 75.

◇ 2. Notebook page, 1925, listing paintings Mondrian sent to the Kühl and Kühn Gallery in Dresden for an exhibition, with a diagram of a diamond without interior divisions, labeled *Losangique Pyramidal.* Collection of Mr. Harry Holtzman. Illustrated, fig. 74.

3. Photograph of *Composition* (paintings cat. no. 9 bis), here identified as an early state of paintings cat. no. 9. Photographer unknown. Sent to S. B. Slijper with Mondrian's inscription on the verso, entitling the work *Composition,* 1926. This copy of photograph, Private Collection. Illustrated, figs. 35 and 66.

◇ 4. Photograph of Mondrian's studio, rue du Départ, Paris, 1926, taken by P. Delbo, showing two diamond paintings: *Lozenge with Grey Lines* (paintings cat. no. 1) hanging high on the wall and *Composition in Black and Grey* (paintings cat. no. 2) on the easel/partition which divided the room. Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris. Illustrated, fig. 24.

◇ 5. Photograph of Mondrian's studio, rue du Départ, Paris, 1933, photographer unknown, showing Mondrian standing next to *Composition with Yellow Lines* (paintings cat. no. 14) which is placed on the easel at eye level. Collection, The Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Illustrated, frontispiece.

◇ 6. Photograph of Mondrian in his New York studio on First Avenue, taken by Fritz Glarner, showing Mondrian holding *Composition in a Square with Red Corner* (paintings cat. no. 15), c. 1942-1943. Collection of Michel Seuphor, Paris. Illustrated, fig. 48.

◇ 7. *Sketch of "Victory Boogie-Woogie"* in its initial state after the first day of work, June 13, 1942, by Charmion von Wiegand. Collection of Charmion von Wiegand. Illustrated, fig. 52.

◇ 8. Photograph of Mondrian painting (?) *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* near its first "finished" state, in his First Avenue studio, taken by Fritz Glarner, in 1942 or 1943. Illustrated, fig. 53.

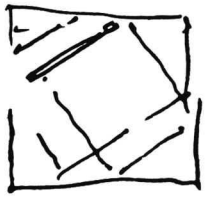
9. Page from a letter written by Mondrian to James Johnson Sweeney, dated May 24 [1943], in which he discusses van Doesburg and his own diamond paintings. Collection of James Johnson Sweeney. Illustrated, fig. 76.

◇ 10. Photograph of Mondrian's studio on 59th Street, New York, taken after his death by Harry Holtzman, showing *Victory Boogie-Woogie en point* on his easel. Other photographic records of this scene also exist. Collection of Mr. Harry Holtzman. Illustrated, fig. 57.

Many appreciate in my
former work just what I did
not want to express but
established by incapacity
to express what I wanted:
dynamic movements in
equilibrium.
Continious struggle for this
brought me nearer.

—

In his later works Doesburg tryed
to destroy static expression by
diagonal position of his lines.
But in this way
the feeling of physic
equilibrium which
is necessary to enjoy
a work of art is lost.



Relationship with architecture,
of vertical and horizontal position,
is broken.
The picture,
(Time in this
position
the picture
pictures. The advantage is the longer lines in
this way produced.
only the limitation of
is in lines of 45° not the

76. Page from a letter written by Piet Mondrian to James Johnson Sweeney, 1943, document no. 9.

SELECTED CHRONOLOGY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY*

Part One: Mondrian's Life and Work

1872 Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan, Jr., born March 7 in Amersfoort, Utrecht, the Netherlands. He is the second child and oldest son of Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan and of Johanna Christina de Kok.

1892 In November enters the Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam; studies painting for two years.

1909 In May joins Theosophic Organization.

1911 Sends a work titled *Soleil* to the spring *Salon des Indépendants, 27^e Exposition* in Paris. At the first *Moderne Kunstkring* exhibition in October/November sees original cubist works by Braque and Picasso, apparently for the first time. Officially gives up his Amsterdam address December 20.

1912 Registers in May in Paris. Residence at 26, rue du Départ. Exhibits several works at the *28^e Salon des Indépendants.*

1913 Begins working in the High Cubist style.

1914-1915 Returns to the Netherlands, probably in August. Is prevented by the outbreak of World War I from returning to Paris and remains in the politically neutral Netherlands.

1915-1916 Late 1915, discussions begin with Theo van Doesburg which lead to the formation of the de Stijl group in 1916 and 1917. Plus-and-minus paintings are begun.

1917 Makes first work, *Composition based on Diamond Shape* (drawings cat. no. 1), which indicates a diamond composition. First issue of *De Stijl,* published in October, contains his essay on the nature and meaning of abstract art.

1918 Produces compositions based upon a mathematical grid, including first diamond painting, *Lozenge with Grey Lines* (paintings cat. no. 1).

1919 Completes second diamond, *Composition in Black and Grey* (paintings cat. no. 2), started in 1918, and executes two more, *Composition: Bright Color Planes with Grey Lines* and *Composition in Diamond Shape* (paintings cat. nos. 3 and 4). February/March departs Laren, the Netherlands for Paris, arriving in July (?). Resides temporarily at 5, rue de Coulmiers. Paintings cat. no. 4 is exhibited in the *Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring* at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the first diamond ever shown. Paintings cat. no. 3 is illustrated in *De Stijl, 10;* first published diamond.

1920 His *De Stijl* essays are published as *Le Néo-plasticisme* by the Galerie Léonce Rosenberg.

1921 Returns to 26, rue de Départ. Included in *Maîtres de Cubism* at Galerie Léonce Rosenberg. Paints first two diamonds in classic style, *Diagonal Composition* and *Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue* (paintings cat. nos. 5 and 6).

1922 *Retrospective Exhibition of Works by Piet Mondriaan: on the Occasion of his Fiftieth*

* This section incorporates information from chronologies in *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971) and Robert P. Welsh, *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1966).

Birthday, Stedelijk Museum is organized in Amsterdam by his Dutch friends S. B. Slijper, Petrus Alma, and J. J. P. Oud.

1924 Paintings cat. no. 6 is published in an early state in *Jahrbuch der jungen Kunst.*

1925 Because of van Doesburg's reintroduction of diagonal elements (Elementism) in his own work circa 1924, Mondrian withdraws from de Stijl. Revises Washington painting (paintings cat. no. 6) and finishes another *Composition in a Square* (paintings cat. no. 7), the last in the classic style. Makes numerous drawings of diamond compositions (drawings cat. nos. 2-8), leading to first open diamond painting *Composition I with Blue and Yellow* (paintings cat. no. 8). Sends paintings, including one of two diamonds (paintings cat. nos. 6 or 8) to exhibition at Kühl and Kühn Gallery in Dresden. Mr. and Mrs. Friedrich Bienert acquire both diamonds.

1926 Paints two more diamonds in the open style, *Composition with Blue* and *Painting I* (paintings cat. nos. 9 and 10). Katherine S. Dreier acquires no. 10 and exhibits it in *An International Exhibition of Modern Art, Assembled by the Société Anonyme,* at the Brooklyn Museum. This is the first diamond shown in America.

1930 Paints two open diamonds in a restricted palette of black and white *Fox Trot A and Composition I-A* (paintings cat. nos. 11 and 12). Both are immediately selected by New Yorkers and sent to America: no. 11 by Katherine S. Dreier, no. 12 by Hilla Rebay. *Fox Trot A* is the first work to make reference to modern dance.

1931 Paints his most reduced composition in a diamond format, consisting of only two black lines on a white field, *Composition with Two Lines* (paintings cat. no. 13). This work is purchased as a gift to the Hôtel de Ville in Hilversum, the Netherlands, but never installed. A missing diamond, *Composition de la Ligne Droite,* 1930, is illustrated in *Cahiers d'Art, 6.*

1932 *Composition with Yellow Lines,* the only diamond painting in which the lines do not intersect, is commissioned by friends as a gift to the Geementemuseum, The Hague (paintings cat. no. 14). The picture is finished the next year. Mondrian also begins first multiple-line paintings.

1934 Meets the American artist Harry Holtzman in Paris. James Johnson Sweeney approaches Mondrian's work in an art historical fashion in his *Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Art* (Chicago).

1936 In March, moves to 278, boulevard Raspail because rue du Départ studio is scheduled to be torn down. Alfred H. Barr continues the art historical discussion of Mondrian in his *Cubism and Abstract Art,* the exhibition catalogue accompanying the show at The Museum of Modern Art in which paintings cat. nos. 4 and 10 are exhibited.

1937 Mondrian publishes "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art" in *Circle* (London: Naum Gabo, Ben Nicholson, et al., eds.). Gives *Fox Trot A* to Société Anonyme. Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Arensberg acquire *Composition in Black and Grey,* 1919 (paintings cat. no. 2).

1938 Leaves in September for England. Studio at 60 Park Hill Road, Hampstead, London, near those of Gabo and Nicholson. Joins Circle group. A. E. Gallatin acquires *Composition with Blue,* 1926 (paintings cat. no. 9).

1940 Leaves London due to war conditions and, with assistance of Holtzman, arrives in New York in October. Studio at 353 East 52nd Street, at corner of First Avenue. Joins American Abstract Artists.

1941 Works on unfinished paintings brought from Europe and introduces use of unbounded color planes and color lines. Friendships with artists Charmion von Wiegand, Fritz Glarner, and Carl Holty. Begins using color tapes.

1942 January/February, *Piet Mondrian,* first one-man show, at Valentine Dudensing Gallery. *Composition in a Square with Red Corner* (paintings cat. no. 15) is probably among the works shown. Published

pamphlet "Toward the True Vision of Reality"; other essays include "Pure Plastic Art" and "Abstract Art" (Peggy Guggenheim, ed.). By summer begins work on *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* and *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (paintings cat. no. 16). *Victory Boogie-Woogie* nears first "finished" state.

1943 At the start of year begins to revise compositions of *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* and *Victory Boogie-Woogie. Broadway Boogie-Woogie* is completed and exhibited at Valentine Dudensing Gallery in March/April. Continues to revise *Victory Boogie-Woogie.* In October moves studio to 15 East 59th Street.

1944 By January 15 *Victory Boogie-Woogie* nears completion of its second "finished" state. Between January 15 and January 20 or 21 makes major revisions to the painting. On January 20 or 21 tells Holtzman "Now it needs only to be painted." On January 24 is discovered ill at home by Glarner and taken to the hospital the following day. Dies February 1 from pneumonia. Funeral service is attended by Barr, Glarner, Holtzman, Holty, Robert Motherwell, von Wiegand, Dreier, Sweeney, Gallatin, Rebay, and others. That month Holtzman opens Mondrian's studio to visitors with *Victory Boogie-Woogie* shown on the artist's easel. Later that year Mr. and Mrs. Burton G. Tremaine acquire the painting.

Part Two: The Work of Friends, Critics, and Art Historians

1945 Sweeney publishes first detailed art historical account of Mondrian's work, discussing *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* in the *Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art, 12.* Motherwell edits and publishes Mondrian's essays of 1937-1943 in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art* (New York), the first in the series Documents of Modern Art. This publication makes Mondrian's theories widely available in English for the first time. His paintings are shown in the first of many posthumous exhibitions, *Piet Mondrian Retrospective Exhibition,* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, including paintings cat. nos. 2, 9, 10, and 11 (21 March to 13 May).

1946 Sweeney publishes his interview with Mondrian in the *Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art, 13. Piet Mondriaan Retrospective Exhibition,* Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, including paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 16 (6 November to 15 December).

1947 Stedelijk exhibition travels to Kunsthalle, Basel. Paintings cat. nos. 1, 4, and 12 are shown (6 February to 2 March).

1949 Michel Seuphor publishes "Piet Mondrian et les origines du neoplasticisme" in *Art d'Aujourd'hui, 5,* first of many articles by Seuphor. *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, including paintings cat. nos. 4 and 12 (10 October to 12 November).

1951 Sweeney publishes and discusses a letter from Mondrian to him, dated May 24, [1943] in *Art News, 50* (June-July-August).

1955 Seuphor organizes *Mondriaan* at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Included are paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, 11, and 14 (10 February to 12 April). *Piet Mondrian,* Kunsthaus, Zürich, including paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, 14, and 16. Preface by Max Bill (22 May to early July). *Piet Mondriaan, 1872-1944,* The Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, including paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, and 14 (August/September).

1956 Seuphor's major publication, *Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* (New York), with a classified catalogue of the paintings, is released. This becomes the standard reference on Mondrian's works. Bill publishes his "Die Komposition 1/1925 P M" in *Zucher*

Kunstgesellschaft, Jahresbetlicht, the first extensive analysis of the diamond paintings, especially paintings cat. no. 7. Bill's theory that Mondrian is projecting the composition beyond the limits of the diamond format gains wide acceptance. *XXVIII Esposizioni Biennale Internazionale d'Arte,* Venice, including paintings cat. nos. 3 and 14 (16 June to 21 October). *Piet Mondrian, Roma,* Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; Palazzo Reale, Milan, including paintings cat. nos. 3 and 14 (November 1956 to February 1957).

1957 *Piet Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, including paintings cat. nos. 1 and 14 (30 September to 2 November). *Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years,* The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, including paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, 4, 14, and 15 (11 December 1957 to 26 January 1958); traveled to San Francisco Museum of Art (6 February to 14 April 1958).

1959 *Documenta II: Kunst nach 1945,* Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, including paintings cat. nos. 1 and 14 (11 July to 11 October).

1961 Von Wiegand publishes a memoir of her association with Mondrian in which she describes the painting of *Victory Boogie-Woogie, Arts Yearbook, 4.*

1962 Carlo L. Ragghianti publishes *Mondrian e l'arte del XX secolo* (Milan), which suggests hidden geometric systems are present in Mondrian's work. *Autonome Architectuur,* Stedelijk Museum "Het Prinsenhof," Delft, including paintings cat. nos. 1 and 4.

1963 *Mondrian,* Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, including paintings cat. no. 6 and drawing cat. no. 9 (4 to 30 November).

1964 *De Stijl: Piet Mondrian,* Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, including paintings cat. nos. 1 and 13 (May/June); traveled to Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe in 1965.

1965 *Piet Mondrian,* Santa Barbara Museum of Art, including paintings cat. nos. 2, 9, and 11 (9 January to 21 February); traveled to Dallas Museum of Fine Arts (March/April); Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington (8 May to 20 June).

1966 Robert P. Welsh organizes and catalogues the works for the first major Mondrian retrospective *Piet Mondrian 1872-1944* at The Art Gallery of Toronto (12 February to 20 March); travels to the Philadelphia Museum of Art (8 April to 9 May); The Gemeentemuseum, The Hague (15 June to 7 August). Welsh's catalogue marks a new direction in Mondrian studies by its thorough art historical approach and his stunning analysis of pictures and their relationships to larger formal and thematic issues. Four diamond paintings (paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, 6, and 14) and three drawings (drawings cat. nos. 1, 9, and 10) are included in the exhibition. Simultaneously, Welsh publishes his "Landscape into Music: Mondrian's New York Period" in *Arts, 40* (February), a significant account of the painting of the two Boogie-Woogies.

1968 *Piet Mondrian*, National-Galerie, Berlin, including paintings cat. nos. 2, 4, 8, and 11 (15 September to 20 November). Frank Elgar publishes *Mondrian* (London) which illustrates fourteen diamond paintings, the first state of the Washington painting, and one drawing (drawings cat. no. 9).

1969 Hans L. C. Jaffé reviews the disagreement between Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg in *The Structuralist, 9. Mondrian,* Orangerie des Tuileries, Paris including paintings cat. nos. 4, 8, and 13 (illustrated but not exhibited, 6). Catalogue written by Seuphor (18 January to 31 March)

1970 *Piet Mondrian* (New York) by Jaffé appears with a discussion of two diamond drawings (drawings cat. nos. 1 and 9) and separate entries on four paintings (paintings cat. nos. 3, 8, 14, and 16). A major retrospective exhibition of Mondrian's work is organized by the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in honor of the artist's birth centenary. Among the catalogue essays are three important for the diamonds: two with recollections of Mondrian by Nelly van Doesburg and von Wiegand, as well as the English translation of Bill's 1956 study of the Zürich picture.

Ten diamonds are shown: paintings cat. nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 16 (8 October to 12 December). At the time of the exhibition Meyer Schapiro delivers his lecture on Mondrian, discussing *Painting I* (paintings cat. no. 10), summarizing thoughts on Mondrian delivered in his Columbia lectures over thirty years. This is later published in the second volume of his *Selected Papers (Modern Art, 19th and 20th centuries,* New York, 1978). An exhibition entitled *Mondrian: The Process Works*, The Pace Gallery, New York, constructs Mondrian's design *Salon for Mme B . . . à Dresden* and shows seven diamond drawings for the first time, drawings cat. nos. 2-8 (11 April to 16 May). Traveled to Los Angeles County Museum (14 July to 30 August), the Art Institute of Chicago (4 October to 8 November), Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 1971, Galerie Denise René-Hans Mayer, Dusseldorf, 1972, Estudio Actual, Caracas, 1973, Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1975.

1971 *Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (see above), traveled to the Kunstmuseum, Bern. Paintings cat. nos. 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 14, and 16 were shown (9 February to 9 April 1972). In the December issue of *Artforum* Barbara Rose and John Elderfield each publishes an article dealing with Mondrian's work and its influence on New York painting after his death.

1973 Kenneth Noland paints a number of "plaid" paintings (including diamond compositions) inspired by Mondrian's 1930s-1940s work.

1974 Joseph Masheck publishes "Mondrian the New Yorker," discussing Mondrian's New York works including *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, in *Artforum, 13* (October). Cor Blok publishes a massive study of Mondrian's work in the Netherlands (*Piet Mondriaan,* Amsterdam), including five diamond paintings (paintings cat. nos. 1, 3, 4, 13, and 14). Maria Grazia Ottolenghi publishes *L'opera completa di Mondrian* (Milan and *Tout l'oeuvre peint de Mondrian,* Paris, 1976) the first catalogue raisonné since Seuphor's of 1956. This volume corrects earlier errors and adds newly discovered works.

1977 *Paris-New York*, Centre nationale d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, including paintings cat. no. 16 and drawings cat. no. 9 (1 June to 19 September). Welsh publishes "The Place of *Composition 12 with Small Blue Square* in the Art of Piet Mondrian" at the National Gallery of Canada *(Bulletin, 29),* suggesting new interpretations of Mondrian's 1930s style, as well as including an analysis of three diamond pictures (paintings cat. nos. 1, 14, and 16) and documentary evidence (document no. 5).

1978 Kermit S. Champa's "Piet Mondrian's *Composition with Blue and Yellow*" appears in *Arts, 52* (January), with an analysis of two diamonds (paintings cat. nos. 12 and 14). In December Nancy Troy publishes an intricate account of "Piet Mondrian's Atelier" *Arts, 53,* which relates the diamond paintings to Mondrian's concepts of interiors and architecture. *Aspects of Twentieth-Century Art,* National Gallery of Art, Washington, including paintings cat. nos. 6 and 16 (1 June to 30 September).

1979 Champa discusses the diamond paintings in "Piet Mondrian's *Painting Number II: Composition with Grey and Black," Arts, 53* (January). The Guggenheim Museum exhibits *Piet Mondrian at the Guggenheim* (18 January to 6 May), including their diamond painting (paintings cat. no. 12) and seven diamond drawings (drawings cat. nos. 1-7).

FOR PAINTINGS CATALOGUE NO. 15, READ:

Composition in a Square with Red Corner, 1937-1938
(*Picture No. 3,* 1938)

oil on canvas
diagonal: 149.2 cm (58¾ inches)
signed, lower left: P M
dated, lower right: 38
verso, on stretcher, in Mondrian's hand:
Picture N:3 Piet Mondrian 1938
Private collection
illustrated, fig. 47

After the catalogue was set in type, William Leisher and I examined the Sweeney diamond. We discovered Mondrian had dated the painting 1938 on both its recto and verso and entitled it *Picture No. 3.* The use of an English term suggests this title was given after September 1938 when Mondrian left Paris for London. The presence of a Parisian packer and shipper's stamp does indicate, however, that the work was at one time in Paris.

Examination of the canvas also indicates that *Picture No. 3* was revised after an initial state of finish. The black vertical to the left was widened to the left, the far right vertical widened to the right, and the central right vertical widened to the left. The upper horizontal was lowered, and there is some evidence on the verso that originally there were three horizontal lines in this area. In the lower section, the upper horizontal was widened while the middle line was expanded at its upward limit, and white paint was applied over its original lower edge. No changes were made to the lower line or to the inner vertical at the left.

These alterations accord with the chronology here proposed for this painting on the basis of stylistic analysis. Keeping Sweeney's date of 1936 for the diamond's early charcoal state, the first state of the picture would then fall in 1937, with the second, present state dating from 1938, perhaps after Mondrian's move to London.

The condition of the painting did not permit it to travel to the exhibition.