

Painting in Italy 1961-1969

Marcia Hafif in conversation with Josselyne Naef and Sophie Costes

1.

Late in 1961 I planned a year-long trip to Italy to visit Florence and other Italian Renaissance cities to see the painting and sculpture I had recently studied. At least one year, because I intended to continue painting and to visit other European countries as well. I left Los Angeles having studied a little Italian but knowing very little about contemporary art in Italy.

Having packed paper, black pencils and oil pastel crayons in my bag, along with clothes for a year, I drew in my hotel room in New York, on the ship (the Cristoforo Colombo), in a pensione in Naples, in a hotel in Rome. I worked with the symmetric images I had developed in California, usually intense color pastels dissolved on paper and drawn through with black pencil.

I did go to Florence to visit the paintings and the city I wanted to see, but passing first through Rome, I fell in love with that city - despite the Baroque architecture that compared badly, to me, with the Renaissance art I had come for - and that was where I chose to live. I found an apartment in Rome, bought paint materials - oil and brushes - ordered canvases and began to paint ignoring the fact that this accumulation of material things would tie me down making my exploration of "Europe" difficult. But I settled in, bought an Italian cookbook, shopped for food, went to the movies, read newspapers - and through all this plus attempts at conversation I learned to speak and read and understand Italian.

The first oil paintings were variations on an image I had used in Los Angeles - a central round disk on a rectangular canvas, the corners of the canvas painted out to create a cross shape. These were executed in oil impasto applied with a brush and drawn into with a pointed instrument.

2.

It had been the summer of 1960 when I enrolled in one final painting class. I had grown up and lived for some years in Claremont, California, painting all through school, studying with rather traditional figure, still life and landscape painters, but this class was taught by Richards Ruben, a painter known for his West Coast Abstract Expressionism. It was with his encouragement that I worked my way into abstraction and went on to find my own imagery. It was through him, too, that I was introduced to the Los Angeles art scene, specifically the work and artists around Ferus Gallery where he and many of his friends showed.

Ferus, founded by Walter Hopps and Ed Kienholz in the late fifties, and now run by Hopps and Irving Blum, was the most avant-garde gallery in Los Angeles at that time, and has gone down in history as such. The artists exhibited there included Robert Irwin showing near-monochrome paintings, Kienholz with his socially relevant, if sometimes

grizzly, three-dimensional assemblages, Billy Al Bengston painting symmetrical, emblematic work, and Ken Price making ceramic pieces startlingly different from Raku, the Japanese influenced ceramic work I was familiar with. From Los Angeles and also San Francisco there were John Altoon, Jay De Feo, Sonia Gechtoff, Ed Moses, Bruce Connor, Peter Voulkos and John Mason, among others.

Walter (Chico) Hopps occasionally stopped by my house (I had moved to West Hollywood by then) to take me along on a visit to an artist he had recently heard about or even a to Chicago dealer in town with a selection of Abstract Expressionist paintings from New York. Hopps' interests were varied leading him even then to exhibit Giorgio Morandi, and eventually to curate at the Pasadena Art Museum the first U.S. retrospective of Marcel Duchamp.

I made trips to New York in 1959 and again in 1961 to visit galleries and museums, and met a few artists there: Mark Rothko and Norman Bluhm at an uptown bar, Franz Kline bought me a beer at the legendary Cedar Bar downtown, Willem de Kooning was said to be caught up in a row outside. I went to a party at Elaine de Kooning's loft; it was a smaller scene than what one would encounter now.

Influenced by my teacher, Ruben, my trips to New York, and by what I was seeing in Los Angeles, I continued to experiment with abstraction. During the year I lived in Los Angeles I reached out from the few near-monochromes I had painted in Claremont to go on to what I began to call "concrete" work (as opposed to abstract), I saw the stretched canvas as an object and began to paint it as though it were one. The mental imagery Ruben introduced me to included a new appreciation of Surrealism, a wider experience of Jazz (Dave Brubeck through Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman) and new directions in literature. We stopped in at poetry readings at the Gas House in Venice Beach, saw Beckett and Ionesco plays in Los Angeles, read Henry Miller and William Burroughs, Jean Genet.

Psychotherapy following my divorce led to certain new imagery in my work especially in drawings, but also in painting. My method was to sit before a blank piece of paper or a stretched and prepared canvas until an image appeared, projected from my mind onto the empty white surface. The paintings had begun to be bi-laterally symmetric in 1960 even before I broke my right wrist and became briefly ambidextrous; that symmetry remained in my work as long as it evinced a definable image, that is, throughout the sixties.

3.

Though I continued in Rome with these images from California I was to some degree freed, no longer watched over by a teacher and an ambient that had been to some degree intimidating. Here I followed my own inclinations and took in new influences I would never have imagined. Daily I visited churches or simply walked in the city taking in images from everywhere. I was impressed with the inlaid marble panels on walls and

floor I found in the churches, reversible geometric shapes related to the ones I had been using already.

Four collages I built, titled Bread or Meat and so on, were formed by pasting strips of the different papers that foods came wrapped in (pink for meat, yellow for bread and mixed colors for cheese) onto vertical rectangles, and using flat white enamel to cut out shapes at top bottom and/or the sides to make positive shapes that created other positive shapes through their presence. This device was furthest developed in 1963, in the series called, for identification, After Spain, but it continued to be central to much of the work I made in Italy.

I bought paint not only in fine art shops but also in hardware stores selling enamels and wall paint. The differences in color selection here from those I had available in the US always surprised me; here there was a different sensibility in formulating colors for general use. I noted European traffic signs as well as advertising billboards with unusual - to me - forms and colors. All these became part of my vocabulary of images.

Was I an American in Rome? Literally, yes, but in my everyday life, no. From the first, when I decided to live in Rome rather than Florence, I was fascinated by Roman culture and wanted to be a part of it. I met people and talked with them. I bought furnishings for my apartment and kitchen - a cookbook to learn food words. Some people I met spoke English, others did not. I bought clothes different from what I found in Los Angeles - some quite elegant - then too I began to wear the orange stockings that were the fashion in Rome at that time, and I listened to the popular singers: Mina, Milva and later Maria Monti among others. I had a woman to help with cleaning and cooking providentially named Italia. I became part of various social groups, met artists, who saw my work as well as inviting me to see theirs, and I was being accepted as an artist in Rome. I no longer felt like a foreigner.

Coming from Republican milieus in California, political discussion in Rome was new to me. Here was a legal and open Communist party on one end of a political spectrum that ranged from left to right through Socialist, CDs, middle, liberal (right) to the fascists, Missini, each party with its own newspaper. It was not easy unraveling the complexity of the parties, the politicians and the debates, but information was available though somewhere within all that the US helped keep the Christian Democrats in power.

4.

An American woman I happened to meet early on took me to an opening in a gallery in Via del Babuino where I met young Italian artists, Franco Angeli among others. I then read in some guide that artists met at Bar Rosati in Piazza del Popolo. I went to the cafe, saw Franco, met others and began to know that there were contemporary galleries in Rome and to visit them.

Probably it was at Rosati's that I met Pietro Consagra who invited me to lunch at his studio and one evening to dinner along with a group including David Smith and Umberto

Eco. We ended that evening dancing the Twist at the Taverna Margutta, David insisting that we all "twist" with still more abandon. This gathering was in celebration of Eco's first book, *Opera Aperta*, and later discussions with him, in which he pronounced my painting "open" had some affect on my thinking about my work. His central idea, as I understood it then, was that a painting might be open to the viewer's interpretation, that the viewer completed the work.

The presence in Rome of Cinecittà and the innovative film making of that time brought a mix of movie people into the cultural life of writers and artists. Seeing *l'Avventura*, *La Dolce Vita*, and *Rocco and his Brothers* in Los Angeles had given me some awareness of contemporary life in Rome, and now I was excited by the physical presence of Fellini and his actors and extras circulating in the center of the city along with others from films.

The newer works of Antonioni - *La Notte*, *L'Eclisse* - moved me as much as *Wild Strawberries* had earlier in Chicago and *Breathless* in New York. This was another way of making a film, another subject matter. These directors influenced some drawings I made in Rome, as well as short films of later, and remembering certain monochrome sets in *Deserto Rosso* I see them possibly influencing the monochrome painting I have been involved with since 1972. It was later that I became a fan of Pier Paolo Pasolini's films.

In the spring of 1962 I learned that all the Roman art world was on its way to the Venice Biennale so I too jumped on a train, found a pensione in Venice and went to the opening at the Giardini. That was my first introduction to a larger, international art scene. There I met other artists, walked in the city, visited churches, was impressed with the mosaics in the cathedral of San Marco. Passing through Bologna on the way back to Rome I stopped there wanting to look up Giorgio Morandi, but did not, had no idea how to do so.

In Rome again I visited the galleries, a British dealer with a gallery in Rome came to see my work - my first studio visit in Rome. Francine Virduzzo, who published *The New Reality*, pushed me to write an essay on the work of Odilon Redon that I had seen at the Biennale in Venice, and she published that.

I practiced my Italian reading Alberto Moravia and by studying words necessary to look another apartment to rent, and was lucky enough to find one in Via del Babuino, four rooms, kitchen and two baths, with a balcony on the courtyard. I hired a woman from across the way to help me clean up (a tailor had lived there with his family and had taken everything when he left including the electric outlets). Caterina, the portiera, helped me find what I needed to put the apartment in order. I painted all the walls white except for the living room where after removing many layers of wallpaper I found frescos - trellises, birds, vines, and wainscoting. The floor was paved with hexagonal red tiles. There was no water heater. I got one for the bathroom, but in seven years

never had hot water in the kitchen. I bought a refrigerator when summer heat melted the butter.

With the apartment in Via del Babuino I located myself literally in the artistic center of Rome. Via Margutta, known for its artist's studios, was parallel to me just below the Pincio and Villa Borghese, the Spanish steps were to the south, Bar Rosati north in Piazza del Popolo across the piazza from Canova, the literary bar.

5.

Beginning to work in my new place in that summer and fall of 1962, I divided the painting surface into rectangles or other geometric shapes, utilizing the edge as part of the drawing, then with enamel colors filled in the spaces and placed circles in them sometimes marking out a theme (Marienbad, for instance.) The painting referred to as Marienbad is based on a game that can be played with any number of different markers. A bartender in California had taught me the game using pennies. It was in Paris in the late summer of 1962 that I saw the film Last Year at Marienbad, and recognized the game that I already knew how to win. Then in a small bistro I met a group of guys with whom I played that game using matches, paper matches torn from a matchbook. In the film it was eventually played out with people on the board of the garden. In another painting, February 14, called St. Valentine after the date, I again divided the surface into square spaces, and placed circles within some of them in a systematic way. The colors were red, black, white and blue enamel.

Tano Festa was a young Roman painter using near monochrome for his own Pop purposes, and it was he who introduced me to his brother Francesco LoSavio, an early minimalist painter and sculptor who died in the early sixties. Mario Schifano, Franco Angeli and Fabio Mauri, perhaps others, also worked between monochrome and Pop, and I have to ask myself why I was not interested in exploring minimalism or monochrome then as I did so many years later, not working with it until 1972.

Some of these artists suggested I show my work to Plinio di Martiis at La Tartaruga, which I did, and he sent me then to Gian Tomaso Liverani at Galleria La Salita who said, "bring slides." After getting slides, which it had not occurred to me to have, I did bring them to him and only then would he come the two long blocks from the gallery to visit my studio. Toward the end of 1964 he offered me my first one-person exhibition. I became then a gallery artist invited to participate in group shows with various artists from Manzoni to Christo. Through the gallery I met Luciano Fabro, Giulio Paolini and other more Pop or Conceptual artists, eventually important in Arte Povera, along with artists who had shown with the gallery previously among them Carla Accardi and Franco Angeli.

Of course I met many other Italians and one of them, Sandro Nitoglia, became my husband, in fact. Eventually, living with Sandro who did not speak English, Italian became my daily language. We had a son, Pietro, in 1963, and this led to my not only

not returning home after the year I had envisioned, but my staying in Rome throughout the nineteen sixties.

I don't have to remind anyone of the kind of news one got in that decade of the sixties. I remember the shock I had watching a TV screen in the window of a shop in Piazza di Spagna, receiving the news of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. I often read an assortment of newspapers - Italian, English, American magazines, some French - and the longer running news was that of the Vietnam War. From the distance of Europe I felt I saw that situation more clearly than did some of my fellow Americans at home. Then too Franco was still in Spain and there were demonstrations against that government. Later came the student movement, postal strikes, demonstrations for all that in Piazza Navona among others places, and just before I left for the US, the women's movement was getting under way.

6.

Sandro and Pietro and I went to his beach house at Fregene on weekends, where many of his friends came to join us: Madeleine and Nini Santoro, Alberto with Maria Monti, Franco Balducci, an actor in cinema (Westerns) brought Dorothy Futterman from New York who became a good friend. Paolo Buggiani was living in New York now and brought Ruth Ansel, art director of Harper's Bazaar and a friend of Andy Warhol who we met with them on a visit in New York in 1964. I remained in contact through the mail with Ruben and other friends in California, and there were visitors from America. Ed Moses came with his family bringing the first copy of Artforum, and I knew I had to have this magazine. I sent a postcard to San Francisco without any other address than "Artforum," and it was received, and I subscribed. This gave me news from home and reviews of shows my friends were having there.

It was in August 1963 that Sandro and I traveled to Spain driving across the south of France to visit major cities, first Barcelona, where we went to the bullfights (Sandro was a Hemingway fan), and to see Gaudi architecture and to eat snails along the Rambla. Here we also found an exhibition of contemporary art where along with Tapies and Saura there hung work by Richards Ruben. And we visited Madrid, Seville, Cordoba, Granada, Valencia before driving back to Rome across Provence as the Mistral announced the coming of fall.

In Rome with three months to wait for Peter to be born, I began to paint again having stretchers made in rather large sizes, 2 x 2 meters, 170 x 200, and about 140 x 140 centimeters. The work continued to be symmetric, and I painted wide bars "cut" into the surface leaving positive shapes for the other one or two colors: black and white, blue and white, red and ochre, yellow and brown, others in green, ivory and black or yellow. The enamel was glossy. Most of these paintings used only two colors, a few smaller ones were painted with three

These works followed on what I began earlier in the summer with a painting recalling a kite and the one with a horizontal blue slit in the center. As one painting followed

another the center gradually opened finally becoming a circle. The shapes were drawn in pencil on the canvas, the edges taped in preparation for applying one of the colors, the tape then removed and fresh tape applied for the other color. Dopo Spagna II, black and white, was reproduced in Marca Tre 11,12,13 after being exhibited in my first one-person show at La Salita in the fall of 1964.

Re-reading a few old reviews I am surprised at the extreme positions that were taken in my regard. My first show in 1964 evoked condemnation and outrage at the "American cold squalor - similar to that provoked by traffic signs hung on the wall of a driving school." In another review of that exhibition at La Salita one critic complained that the paintings were too big - American size. There had recently been on view in Rome a big Rothko show with large paintings, but it was not so unusual either for Roman painting to be large at that time - thinking of Kounellis, Schifano, Twombly - unless one remembers the relatively small size of earlier Italian paintings (de Chirico, Carra, Morandi, Savinio) that one could see on collector's living room walls or at the museum in Valle Giulia.

In 1964, acrylic paint became available and it became my standard medium. Some of the earliest work in acrylic began with the series of six paintings I call for reference Mirror/Mirror. These involve a circle and/or a split circle, and one or two vertical lines. The circles are all the same size and placed at the same height on the painting but they are displaced laterally on the surface and some are split. In these the "depth of field" is the same in each one. With the following three in a larger format my notion was that the smaller circle seemed farther away, while the larger came closer, hence the reference titles Far, Near, Nearer. The six smaller paintings were painted in pastel colors of red and violet, the larger ones were also pastel: pink, yellow, green, gray.

This visual play may be what brought me to the group in which two different colors, in separate but reversed shapes hugging the lateral edges, were separated by a space of unpainted canvas. In this group, for which I have no series name, the general form was that of three vertical shapes. The line that divided the shapes was varied in each ranging from straight verticals (recalling John McLaughlin) through butterfly shapes to a shape with a deep cutting form penetrating the unpainted center. The two lateral shapes were painted in complimentary colors.

7.

The painter Carmengloria Morales introduced me to Marisa Volpi who became an supporter of my work. Carmengloria curated a show in Cattolica that I participated in, and Marisa Volpi included me in exhibitions she was curating for Qui Arte Contemporanea. At one point she proposed to Carla Accardi and me that we chose another woman for a three-person show, and our response was that we preferred to include a man. We had not yet arrived at the strength, perhaps, that we needed to say we are painters, and we are women. Or we did not think it was necessary to point that out. We suggested Giulio Turcato. The three of us together made an intensely colorful show, which was then discussed at the next regular conference at Qui Arte.

Carla Accardi and I lived across the street from each other and often visited in the afternoons either on her terrace or in my kitchen. We looked at and discussed our paintings and talked about the many things that friends discuss relating to private life. Our work was rather different, but we were both involved in abstract painting and both were, within that, influenced by Pop eventually. Her colors became brighter, fluorescent, and were moving off the wall onto plastic shapes. Mine that had been quite bright and intense were softening about that time.

Carla Accardi, coming to Rome from Sicily shortly after WWII, was the only female member of the group Forma Uno 1947-1951 that included Pietro Consagra, Giulio Turcato, Achille Perilli, a group dedicated to abstraction. The question has come up as to how I feel about being a woman and making abstract painting, how did Carla feel. I can only say that she was one of the strongest of that group and continues to be one of the best known abstract artists in Italy today. In the early seventies Carla Accardi and Carla Lonzi, from Milan, were among the founders of the women's movement in Italy, but even then, perhaps 1967, Carla had lost a teaching job when she talked too openly of these ideas with her female students. As for me, when I did accept abstraction as valid, it never occurred to me that I could not succeed in painting on the basis of being a woman. Nor did I feel that I must search out a "woman's way." Painting was painting, as math was math. In school I had been treated as an equal with boys and men, and I did not see that my sex should prevent me from doing the work I wanted to do.

There was a naiveté in this, however, which served me well. When I went to Rome I simply painted, simply showed my work to people I met, and at last simply showed it. Had I suspected that many women art students in Rome - as I later learned - were not allowed by their boy friends or by their families to be artists, and that others changed their names to masculine ones in order to sell work, I might not have had the courage necessary to continue.

The following group, the "hill shapes," involved a rising shape starting from the width of the bottom edge as though a line had been stretched from lower corner to lower corner, varying in its height and form as it rose or fell. Of all the images I worked with in Rome the one most significant to me, the one that stayed in mind and led me to appreciate other forms of it was the hill shape. In painting this shape I used two competing colors attempting to avoid figure on ground, to equalize the two spaces, but the hill shape remained dominant. It is a compact shape, archetypal, referring to the cave, the house, the home, safety, endurance, intensity. As in the earlier paintings I was placing a positive shape in order to create another positive shape by default, balancing the shapes and balancing the color so that no one prevailed. One large triptych, red and blue, was exhibited at the VI Quadriennale Romana in Rome in 1968.

What the hill shape meant to me I am not sure, it is just that paintings of mine based on this shape seemed to be more "mine" than any. It was a painting of this shape that Giulio Turcato chose to have when we made an exchange. I was first attracted to the shape when I bought a small sculpture of Ken Price's in Los Angeles in 1961. Later and

other versions I have been drawn to, especially noticed, have been certain sculptures by Jene Highstein, a Hill Censor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Billy Kluyer's compost heap, the Temple of the Magician at Uxmal.

8.

As I want to describe my thoughts about another series, I find I need to talk about the idea of series itself and about how that notion works in relation to my painting. It has been my habit throughout to come to a stop, perhaps with an exhibition or because I felt I had sufficiently explored a given theme, and when beginning again I would find a new image, a new conception that could be called the beginning of a new series, usually not unrelated to the previous. This is true now with the monochrome painting I have worked with since 1972, and it was true in the sixties. For this reason it has been possible in cataloging the works to assign working titles to certain paintings when I prefer a simple number as a title. The names such as Hill Shape, Body Part, or After Spain are merely useful in separating one group from another. Whether these are true series or not is another question. In a certain way all the work is one, a diary of my working life, though one that has suffered breaks, divisions and omissions.

It was February 1968, and maybe with the studio cleaned up after the holidays, that I again searched for a new image. Wanting to work with a large size again, I prepared a vertical canvas (210 x 200 cm.) and sat to commune with it. Slowly a deep bowl or urn shape came to mind, symmetrically placed, hanging from the top of the canvas, equally spaced on either side. I painted the lower, enclosing shape in a flat color, the inner shape as well, but then I sprayed into the bowl shape so that it had a surface flecked with many colors. I worked with several versions of this, some in a smaller format of 100 x 70 cm.

At this time I was reading poetry of 17th century England: John Donne, George Herbert and others. Taking the first line from some of these poems I titled the new paintings after them. The verticality and the height of these paintings made them elegant and regal, while the colors varying from blues and violets to orange and yellow often atomized, added lightness. This group was exhibited in my second one-person show at Galleria La Salita.

Following the English poetry group, I utilized a smaller format (100 x 100 cm.). During these years with a husband and a small child I was quite aware of simple shapes that are found in and around the human body. In those years a friend, Paolo Buggiani, had acquired several pieces of Etruscan pottery some of which took the form of body parts, the vulva or penis, for instance, and I would say these ceramic pieces also contributed to my interest in bodily forms. I enlarged and abstracted them while leaving them sometimes recognizable as relating to some part of the body, often the hidden or sexual parts or the negative space around. Here I divided the space horizontally with a symmetric line (reflecting the symmetry of the human form). Variations in the line are all that recall the body. The colors are usually complimentary - red/green, blue/orange,

yellow/purple - and one of the areas is painted in enamel, while the other is painted with flat acrylic again over-sprayed, flecked with still other colors.

Then flying into New York City in 1968 the plane was forced to circle for an extended time before landing, passing through cumulous clouds while the sun was bright in and on them. I was impressed by the nature of the light, which seemed to break into primary and secondary colors moving in a circular pattern. The experience of this vision stayed with me, and once back in the studio in Rome I looked for a visual equivalent in paint. I used again a rather large format (210 x 200 cm.) stretched canvas with a narrow edge, the canvas prepared with white gesso, I began work by spraying red, blue, yellow, then orange, green and purple (violet) in loose patterns then over-spraying again with white. Again the colors, again the white until what I saw brought me some of what I had felt in the clouds. I was concerned then with color more than with paint. As I sprayed and over-sprayed the colors joined and became mostly neutral while retaining some edge of individuality.

I showed those paintings in the spring of 1969, in the gallery at Editalia (Qui Arte Contemporanea) in Via del Corso. My friend Abe Nobuya came to the gallery to photograph me with them. I even sold a few of these paintings, the first I had sold in Italy in seven years. And they were the last I made before returning to the United States.

Through Madeleine and Nini Santoro I met Abe, a Japanese painter who lived and worked in Rome for many years. He encouraged me in my work and included me in a group show in Trento that he called Illumination. Abe talked about the work of an artist he called Cheminsky, I thought, and it was some years later, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, that I actually saw the paintings of Strzeminiski - a leader of the Polish Constructivists, and that I read, in the accompanying catalog, his essay "Unism". This manifesto expressed ideas that by the mid-seventies were indeed meaningful to me in connection with my own work.

9.

It had been my habit even in California and was then in Rome to work frequently on paper, not making studies for paintings, but drawings complete in themselves. I used them to explore images I might not have been ready to use on canvas. I have always been pleased with the immediacy of paper and pencil, or paper and paint, with the fact that one can pick up these materials and without further ado begin to work. Through this ease I found myself experimenting with many images that did not become central to my work, as I committed myself to this drawing or to that series, feeling free to move on to another. In my studio in Via del Babuino I often experimented in this way. Some drawings did relate directly to the images I was using in painting. Others were drawings in pencil on paper inspired by Piazza del Popolo in plan - its foundations and the bases of columns. This interest in foundations was explored further in the seventies in New York with pencil drawings taken from archeological site plans.

One group of drawings involved circles, an experiment to see how many circles could be grouped around a central one (all of the same size) - six. I planned installations of, for instance, drinking glasses (with or without water in them) arranged on the floor in a possibly endless extension - how many outer circles would be added? I visualized, too, piles of gravel or dirt in the gallery, an unformed shape (the hill shape again) simply placed there, allowed to be formed by gravity. Recalling a project in California in 1960, I might describe The Cave, a construction of wood and canvas, painted white, that I had built in what would have been the dining room in the house I shared with Lyn Kienholz (Shearer at that time).

I made no actual installations in Rome, but I did imagine and design others. One inspiration came from a dentist's office, my plan being to transfer everything in the waiting room to the gallery - central table covered with magazines, various chairs around the room, paintings on the walls. My first and perhaps only public installation was in California, 1970, at EAT (Experiments in Technology) at the University of Southern California. I had recorded the sound of the ocean on eight tracks then played back this sound in a darkened room building a "pier" of low metal tables for visitors to sit on while possibly meditating as the sound seemed to flow from one side to the other, back and through the middle of the space. Recording the ocean was inspired by my sitting on the beach and noticing the special effect of the various waves crashing, much as in listening to an orchestra the sound proceeds from one area to another, perhaps left to right or the reverse.

Still in the studio, with a view of passers-by on Via del Babuino, an image that emerged in only one example was the group of islands in adhesive orange film on paper though many series of drawings were conceived and executed using that intensely colored transparent material intended for graphic use. Another group of paper works included images of cars or of women cut from magazines colored over with this film. My mental imagery here was influenced by fashion and films I continued to see during this decade, for the most part French or Italian. Jean-Luc Godard, for instance - Week End, Pierrot le Fou, La Chinoise. It was later that I saw his earlier films: Le Petit Soldat, Une Bande Apart, Les Carabiniers. Masculin, Feminine, in 15 Acts of 1966 impressed me with its structure so that I used a versions of it later in a film I made myself called Notes on Bob and Nancy (1970-1977), something of an homage to Godard.

Another way I was drawn to disembodied color was in painting on the back of sheets of plastic, perhaps related to the old technique of painting in reverse on glass. I liked the thinness of the plastic sheets that could be installed hugging the wall nearly disappearing as physical objects and appearing as only color. And again another kind of work on paper emerged as Tony Vaccaro, a photographer for Look and Life and other magazines accompanied me to a shop in Rome to buy a camera, an Exa, and on weekends at the beach he taught me to use it. Photographing my own paintings was a practical use, but I also wanted to catch the growth of my young son and to record the friends and artists we saw. I then began to photograph store windows in Rome and that

was the beginning of a sub-set of work with which I am still involved - photo series and video.

10.

I continued to show my work with the Galleria La Salita and to be interested in the work of other artists of the gallery including Paolini, Fabro, and others from Milan or Turin. The Attico Gallery became an important center for exhibition of younger art in the later sixties showing artists like Jannis Kounellis and Pino Pascali. It must have been 1968 that Kounellis showed his horses in the Attico Garage. That was also the unfortunate year that Pino Pascali was killed in a motorcycle accident.

The Tartaruga Gallery was very active through this time showing work around Twombly, Warhol, and a number of Roman more-or-less-Pop artists. That gallery closed abruptly at the end of 1968 with a month long series of one-person shows revolving around the presence in the gallery of Marcel Duchamp, the gallery and the artists all expressing some notion of the end of art.

I was preparing to leave Italy. I needed to return to my own country, my own language, and I wanted to work in the context of American art. Alan Solomon, whom I met at a party given by Toti Scialoja for Ad Reinhardt, had visited my studio and seen my work, and it was he who later suggested that if I wanted to study again in the area of art I might try the University of California at Irvine, at that time a very active place. I did work there for an MFA degree, studying art history and contemporary art. In my studio I explored a kind of painting I later found to be related to that of the Supports/Surfaces group in France, painting which came off the wall and was supported by various kinds of invented stretchers, aslant or horizontal. But I was becoming more convinced of notions of the end of Modernism - if not of art - and of the seeming impossibility for the time of working from one's psyche. Paint was forbidden. To paint was forbidden.

I felt, however, that I was a painter and that painting was still what I wanted to do. In 1971 I left for New York with my MFA degree. It became a time of experimentation there searching for a way to go ahead without falling back into that personal expression from which I had recently emerged. When I found I could go no further with painting, I decided to focus on the paint and to use that in an attempt at finding another way of painting. When monochrome paintings developed out of that search I retained certain elements of the earlier work in that I used paint and applied it with a brush, now only one color for one canvas. I kept records of the paint in the same way I previously had. And if the earlier paintings had been declared "open work" by Umberto Eco, this was more so allowing the viewer even greater latitude of response.

Working with monochrome in New York in the nineteen-seventies, the paintings in Italy were forgotten. The ones I still owned were in storage in Rome, and I had no easy access to them. Donald Droll included three of them in a show at PS 1 Museum in NY organized around sixties minimalist painting, but many of them I had not seen myself for years before a small exhibition in Rome in 1997 of works from a private collection. Not

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long after I shipped the ones I owned to France where they were lent to Mamco in Geneva, FRAC-Bourgogne, Musee Art Contemporain, Lyon and the Musee des Beaux-Arts in Nantes. Exhibitions at Mamco in 1999 and 2001 and one at FRAC-Bourgogne in 2000 were the first to present so many of the series together.

Seeing the paintings once more I had varying responses to what felt most of all like revisiting an old diary. Each of these paintings represented for me a specific period of time, certain events in my life, but also ways of thinking about painting, and what a painting was for me then. I could hardly judge them, as they were so very mine, if of another time having little to do with today.

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