

clear that the actual physical attributes of a picture could exercise a direct physical effect on the onlooker. "A metre of green is greener than a centimetre of green," said Gauguin. The fields of flat colour in Matisse or Rothko or Newman which seem to swallow up, to saturate, the onlooker, the eye-twisting physical impact of the optical art of Vasarely and Bridget Riley, are consequences of painting having accepted the fact that a four-foot canvas is literally four feet of colour.

Ambiguity - In Finnegans Wake James Joyce created a language (inspired or anticipated by Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky) of distorted, telescoped and invented words evoking multiple incongruous meanings--e.g. I'm looting them that's here and all I lothe. Loonely in me loneness. The visual equivalent of this punning has been widely pursued by 20th-century painters and sculptors--most systematically by the Surrealists, who have created forms suggesting one thing turning into another as in dreams. Only, the stages of metamorphosis are not actually represented; one form stands for different things at the same time. But this is not at all a prerogative of the Surrealists and their allies (such as Klee and Picasso) and successors (such as Pollock and Dubuffet). It was Braque who wrote: "So when you ask me whether a particular form in one of my paintings depicts a woman's head, a fish, a vase, a bird, or all four at once, I can't give you a categorical answer, for this 'metamorphic' confusion is fundamental to what I am out to express."

Modern artists have tried to spread confusion not only as to what can be read into a work but as to the very way in which it should be read. When Jasper Johns first made a painting of the American flag, some people thought he was making a joke at the expense of themselves; again, some thought he was taking a child's open-eyed view of a trite subject, others that he was painting a trite subject to cancel the subject out.

The ambiguities of modern art arise from the fact that artists have been trying to ask questions rather than make statements and that these are questions that cannot be answered conclusively but remain open.

Chance - "I think that painting today," says Francis Bacon, "is pure intuition and luck and taking advantage of what happens when you splash the bits down." The modern painter, because of the liberties he takes with natural appearances, is especially free to exploit the suggestive chance effects that always happen in oil-painting. Belief in the creative value of chance is encouraged by belief in the creative power of the unconscious. The Dadaists--such as Arp and Duchamp--went so far as to drop lengths of string or bits of paper on to a surface and preserve the chance results as works of abstract art. Here there was not only a belief in the value of chance but an expression of contempt for the belief that art had to conform to accepted canons of order.

New Materials - The quick-drying paints with a plastic base invented in recent years have greatly affected working methods; they have consequently affected the appearance of paintings. But it is sculpture above all that has been revolutionised by technology. For thousands of years sculpture was either carved in stone or wood or was modelled in clay and then either fired or cast in metal. In this century it has been welded in iron or steel; constructed from sheets of transparent or coloured plastic; made or cast in coloured plastic or Fibreglass, in which shapes can be made that would be virtually impossible in non-synthetic materials; made in soft fabric stuffed with kapok. The widespread incorporation into art of various forms of junk has meant another large extension of the materials used in both sculpture and painting.

The found object - In 1913 Marcel Duchamp began to select manufactured objects --a bicycle wheel, a bottle-rack, a urinal--and treat these 'ready-mades', as he called them, as if they were works of art. His argument was that he had chosen them, and artistic creation was essentially a matter of choosing. Later the Surrealists persistently chose objects they found--natural or man-made objects--and exhibited them, either as they came or more-or-less modified. These 'found objects' are usually ambiguous-looking forms with some fortuitous resemblance to other things, especially parts of the body. Henry Moore, for example, habitually takes pebbles or bones and incorporates them into sculptures. Though found objects are usually natural, they can be man-made things, exotic or common-place. Whereas the found object is meant to reveal beauty or meaning in unexpected places, Duchamp's real concern was that his ready-mades should debunk the notion that art had to do with good taste.

The Unconscious - Psychoanalytic theory--and various misunderstandings of it --have influenced artists as they have influenced, sooner or later, everyone else. They have provoked a desire to capture the imagery and the atmosphere of dreams. They have also aroused a belief in the interest and the value of gestures and utterances made with a