

runs up one's spine as often runs down again as a ripple of laughter. Colours in *The Dark* is a patchwork quilt of playlets sewn into a rugged but enduring pattern. Reaney pioneers in new dramatic territory by abandoning one or two plots for forty-two or, possibly, one thousand and twenty-four.

Against a cruciform backdrop of

arts/canada No 113 October 1987

# artscan

## A tribute to Ad Reinhardt



Reinhardt and Taylor, arts/canada discussion 16 August 1987 (Photo: Jesse Fernandez)

Ad Reinhardt realized what every serious artist dreams — he defined a sensibility of his own. His serenely resonant black-on-black paintings, when seen in a large body, were obviously one of the great achievements of American art in the period. They set new rules of sensitivity and subtlety, they conquered new frontiers of taste, in their presence one felt a rare sense of finality. Reinhardt accomplished this through a lifelong devotion to his own vision and through a cool condescension toward all fads and tendencies of the moment. He deserves to be remembered as one of the major figures of this period. — Robert Fulford, Toronto.

The end is not the end of art — Jerry Santbergen, Toronto

I'm very sorry Ad Reinhardt is dead. I don't want to begin to think of him and his work in a static context. Mainly, since I didn't know him well, that means that all the paintings there are to see exist — there are so many and perhaps I've seen half and will see three quarters or all; there won't be any new paintings. — Donald Judd, New York.

Is black death or is it the infinite of a new department. — Yves Gaucher, Montreal.

Ad Reinhardt devoted himself to art, scholarship, social justice, his friends, his family and his students. Few lives have been so well used or so productive. With his wit, knowledge, and generosity, he enriched all our lives.

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Black: 7 men in Toronto and New York converse on the meaning of black — black words, black painting, black space, black power, black sound, black magic.

#### ● artscan

Tributes to Ad Reinhardt  
Projected art in the theatre  
Montreal Film Festival  
Expo roundup  
Two sculpture exhibitions, opening of the first Canadian photo gallery, and arts/canada.

# artsCanada (formerly Canadian Art)

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## The black issue

In Ad Reinhardt's death the art world has suffered the loss of a major American artist, whose contemplative paintings in black on black, whose presence, integrity and wit will have immeasurably informed the texture of our experience. When we learned of his death, Reinhardt's participation in the conversation which forms the basis for this issue, became even more poignant. It was then too late to include anything but a brief note in the magazine section. Tributes to Ad Reinhardt, collected from a few of his friends, his dealer, critics and artists who feel some intellectual affinity with the artist's paintings and his words, appear on page one and two of artcan.

This issue of artsCanada is further evidence of our desire to make a marriage of form and content in the magazine. The text of the conversation is published throughout the magazine in imitation of the motion of speech. Two thirds of each page is left clear for visual illustration and expansion of text. Captions which might distract from the page were placed at the back. This issue has been bound and stapled, since, unlike the August/September magazine there was no reason to present a portfolio of separate, fold-out pieces.

The last issue with its intensive coverage of multiple subjects and its visual documentary style justified its fragmented format. This one, however, is more cohesive, more specific — thus its treatment as a book on black.

## A tribute to Ad Reinhardt:

continued from page 1

Ad's lifelong devotion to modest art, often against extreme opposition, his openness to the young who were willing to learn from him, and his own exemplary paintings changed the face of American art. Ad believed that life and art were separate; yet his life and his art were of a piece because in them both he pursued the same goals: consistency, honesty, and unwavering idealism. In our time such civilizing virtues are rare; Ad was among the few to believe that Civilization was a single enterprise and that the fine artist was above all the agent of its continuity. His contribution to insuring that continuity was substantial.

There were many reasons to admire Ad. He was a good friend and a gentleman. He was also the great hold-out in an age of capitulation. I guess I admired him most for that. — Barbara Rose, New York.

Ad was his own man. He saw things his own way. But he didn't keep it to himself. He said what was right about what he did and what was wrong about what other people did. People tolerated his work and polemics, but nobody liked it. The only way to deal with Ad was to make an ultimate evolution. And it was severe — a

gifted minor artist. This kind of vicious game playing at the heart of the matter was right down Ad's alley. He can't play the game anymore, but nobody can get around the paintings anymore either. If you don't know what they're about you don't know what painting is about. — Frank Stella, New York.

Ad Reinhardt was the negative space in the composition of American art since the war.

He was the author of a magical formula for concentrating upon himself the intellectual resistance of people with or without intellect.

By disagreeing with Reinhardt anyone could give himself the illusion of having something to say.

Thus Hilton Kramer could not resist taking advantage of Reinhardt's death to enlighten readers of the *New York Times* about the naïveté of Reinhardt's generation.

In time Reinhardt's stubborn reiterations assumed the poetry of an unshakable denial, as easy to respond to as a sunset over the sea.

His bellicose postcards were an affront to his friends and to his constantly hostile presence. They will be missed. — Harold Rosenberg, New York.

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## scanmail

I am writing to express my appreciation for the excellent work that you are doing in the publication of your magazine — artsCanada. It is a source of encouragement to all of us in the creative arts to see one of our journals with the courage to explore new formats that represent our changing attitudes toward communicative media. It is even more rare to see such experimentation executed with the high degree of quality in typography and layout which is not usually associated with the innovative. — Bill Lacey, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

with a price headlined, Richardson's Nipples Too tough for Times, and then a lot of lies about where I live by Anita Epstein.

Mandel Sprachman, 33 Asquith Ave., the Toronto architect has just bought eleven Nipples for some eerie project which might interest Artscan readers. I'm not sure what it is.

People from the TV program The Other Eye are coming out to film a Nipple in action for possible use as a symbol for that program.

That's what's new on the Nipple scene and I don't know how else you would find out about it.

Also I am including some Nipples in action, that is, resting in my new *Portrait of a Nipple* by the artist.

Black as spatial concept, symbol, paint quality; the social-political implications of black; black as stasis, negation, nothingness and black as change, impermanence and potentiality: these are some aspects of the experience of black discussed by seven men in conversation between Toronto and New York.

arts/canada arranged for this simultaneous conversation. It was made possible through the cooperation of the C.B.C. and the Bell Telephone Company who set up a telephone loop for one hour between New York and Toronto. The text of this conversation, taken from tapes made in the C.B.C. studios, forms a running commentary in this issue. Some deletions and sequential reorderings were made in the interest of conciseness and clarity.

The conversation begins on this page; participants are shown on pages 4 and 5; captions are found on page 19.

#### Reinhardt

I once organized a talk on black, and I started with black as a symbol, black as a colour, and the connotations of black in our culture where our whole system is imposed on us in terms of darkness, lightness, blackness, whiteness. Goodness and badness are associated with black. As an artist and painter I would eliminate the symbolic pretty much, for black is interesting not as a colour but as a non-colour and as the absence of colour. I'd like then to talk about black in art — monochrome, monochrome and the art of painting versus the art of colour.

Here is a quotation from Hokusai: "there is a black which is old and a black which is fresh. Lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow. For the old black one must use an admixture of blue, for the dull black an admixture of white, for the lustrous black, gum must be added. Black in sunlight must have grey reflections." I wanted to read that because that doesn't have any meaning for us.

I might, also, touch on some religious aspects of black, because I've been called a number of names like "the black monk" and so on. I suppose it began with the Bible in which black is usually evil and sinful and feminine. I think a whole set of impositions have affected our attitudes toward white and black — the cowboy with the white hat and white horse, and the villain with the black gloves. And then the use of black all the way through the Bible, through Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare and a few others. Even in terms of colour caste there are blacks and coloureds, what Harold Isaacs in *Encounter* once called a yearning for whiteness in the West, like high yellow and so on. There is a relation in Christianity to the black hell void and the white heaven myth, the blackness of darkness that is involved with formlessness or the un-

# Black

formed or the maternal, the hidden, guilt, origin, redemption, faith, truth, time. Black can symbolize all those. There's the black castle and the black knight; and I suppose in one way or another they all represent transcendancy, which is interesting. And Lao Tse "the tao is dim and dark", and the Kaaba, the black cube in Mecca; there's the black rock in the dome of the rock in Jerusalem, and what the mediaeval mystic Eckhardt called the Divine Dark. But, as an artist, I wanted to eliminate the religious ideas about black.

#### Rockman

I've been particularly interested in the question of black because of the relation between colour and emotional expression. And the thing that struck me through speculation and research over many years in this area is that after the Protestant Reformation in the West we tend to get a constriction and a restriction of colour usage, among the upper classes and among men, among all the people who are supposed to be dominant. What seems then to happen is that outerwear at its most formal is black and white, and suggests playing down of personality. But then, of course, you've got the extreme contrast that black underwear, for many men — I mean female underwear — is very lascivious and sexy. And all of the things that Ad Reinhardt mentioned are involved with this. The idea of black and good is impossible, in the West — and, of course, this is especially urgent today.

I came across a photograph a couple of years ago of what is believed to be the first black wedding cake — get that, a black wedding cake in the world. Now this is a deliberate attempt to upset these deeply-held associations that we have with black as a symbol. In my research I'm struck by the fact that many Negro cultures in Africa have internalized this same thing of black as evil and white as

pure. And I don't know whether we're talking about cultural things or biological things, whether we're talking about the experience of darkness as something to be afraid of (that's a very psychological and biological thing), or whether we're talking about some kind of language thing that's overlaying our experience as responsible for this set of associations. Nowhere can I find positive associations with black, which I find very mysterious.

#### Reinhardt

Well, in art of course, we've had monochrome traditions in China. And the *chansu-curo* tradition is non-colouristic in the West. And the negative — again that's a term that is like black; but the idea of negativity is not a bad idea anymore whereas once the positive seemed great and the negative seemed terrible. It's the negativity of black, or darkness particularly in painting which interests me. When you get into the dark-and-light experience in other fields, I think that would be something else.

#### Snow

My father was blind for the last fifteen years of his life, and I think that's blackness. In my own work I have usually dealt in a way with opposites and tried to balance things. Mr Reinhardt's work is particularly interesting because he's made balances of things where there, in a way, are no opposites. It seems pretty relevant and it may have some relationship to the things that Aldo does. I'm doing a piece in the "Happening Series" at the Expo Youth Pavilion. It's going to be really a sound thing, but most of it is going to be done in the dark. The reason is to emphasize hearing. It's like a radio studio piece for blinded people. It involves several tapes which are going through a kind of catalogue of sounds which eventually becomes what is called music. A lot of it



**Aldo Tambellini** Film-maker, painter, sculptor. Born in Syracuse, N.Y. in 1930, he lived in Italy and attended school there, returning to the U.S. in 1946. B.F.A. Syracuse University, M.F.A. University of Notre Dame in sculpture. Taught in several institutions before moving to New York in 1963 where he founded the Group Centre in 1963. Since then he has worked on "Black Events," forerunner of intermedia, integrating many aspects of the arts under the medium of light. His preoccupation with black is evident in the titles of his works: *Black*, *Black 2*, *Black Zero*, *Black is* and *Black Plus X*. Founder of *Black Gate*, the first electromedia theatre in New York. In Canada his works have been seen at the University of Western Ontario in London and in the Youth Pavilion at Expo 67.

**Michael Snow** Painter, sculptor, film-maker, jazz musician. Born in Toronto in 1929. Graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1953, travelled and painted in Europe during the next two years. Exhibits with Isaacs Gallery in Toronto and Poindexter in New York, where he has been living for the past several years. Famed for his "Walking Woman" series of paintings, constructions, films and graphics, utilizing a repeated outline image of a walking woman. His most recent work, an experiment in sound with darkness and light, appeared at the Youth Pavilion in Expo 67.

**Cecil Taylor** Musician, composer, poet. Born in 1933, studied at the New York College of Music and graduated from the New England Conservatory in Boston. Since 1960 he has been increasingly recognized as a master of the "new jazz," combining violent jazz tempo and dynamics with his sophisticated musical training, both in performance and in composition. He has had an important influence on jazz musicians like Archie Shepp, Sonny Murray and Albert Ayler. Among his recordings are *Looking Ahead* (Contemporary, 7562), *Into the Hot* (Impulse, A-9) and *Unit Structures* (Blue Note, 4237). This year he was an outstanding success at the Holland Jazz Festival, and was the first jazz musician ever invited to play his own compositions at the Venice Festival of Contemporary Music.

**Ad Reinhardt** Painter. Born in Buffalo, N.Y. in 1913, studied at Columbia College and in Europe. Has exhibited extensively in New York, Paris, London. Professor of "Modern Art and Asiatic Art" at Brooklyn College, New York, since 1947. A prominent member of the New York art scene since the pioneer days of abstract expressionism. Best known from about 1954 for his series of black-on-black and all-black canvases.

**Editor's note:**  
The black conversation took place on 16 August 1967. Two weeks later, as this issue was going to press, we learned of Ad Reinhardt's tragic death in his studio on 30 August.

A.B.

is representational sound, in a sense, things that you can recognize but that have a quality of sound like the sounds of waves, city sounds, things which aren't identifiable like certain machine sounds, and then sounds that are made in a free way electronically. It isn't a sort of "total sense" thing; it's an attempt to make you really concentrate on one sense. There have to be occasional interruptions of light to reinforce the fact that it's black.

#### Cowan

So far architects have been scared to death to use black, I think basically for the reason that black destroys scale. When you destroy scale you distort yourself. When I was younger I painted my washroom black, everything in it ex-

cept the three fixtures, and if you weren't sick when you went in, you were sick when you came out. Architects have been working with black by default because, of course, light is a very important part of architecture. And I think even insulating black spaces could be used. If you are in a very bright place and then you walk into normal light, or vice versa, of course you go through a black sensation, you go through a black space. It's not a physical space in terms of a space that's been created, but it is in your mind.

#### Broomer

I find a parallel between the purely visual properties of black and the music in which I'm involved, music which has the ability to organize and transcend musical

artifice. And the use of black, which is darkness, reinforces the effect of a visual event.

#### Taylor

I think for my first statement I would like to say that the experience is two-fold, and later, I think, you'll see how the two really merge as one experience.

"Whether it's bare pole light, whitened eyes inside a lion's belly, canceled by justice, my wish to be, a hued mystic myopic region, if you will, least shadow at our discretion, to disappear, or as sovereign, albeit intuitive, sense my charity, to dip and grind, fair-haired, swathed, edged to the bottom each and every second, minute, month; existence riding a cloud of diminutive will, cautioned to wailing



**Anne Brodsky** Editor of  
arts/canada magazine

**Arnold Rockman** Sociologist, art critic. Born in London in 1930, he attended the University of London before emigrating to Israel. Came to Canada in 1953. Now working in the anthropology department of the University of Toronto, researching sociology of the arts and the perception of city form. Interested in colour as an important aspect of expressive symbolism.

**Stu Broomer** Musician. Born in Toronto in 1947 and studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Composer of electronic music and leader of a kinetic ensemble. Has given concerts at the University of Toronto and National Gallery of Canada and participated in mixed media events. Worked with Michael Snow on *Sound and Darkness* for the Youth Pavilion at Expo.

**Harvey Cowan** Architect and critic. Born in Toronto in 1935, and a graduate of the University of Toronto. Has taught art to architects and architecture to artists. Works with a Toronto architectural firm and writes a newspaper column on "The City." Interested in black space as it applies to architecture.

eye in step to wild, unceasing energy, growth equaling spirit, the knowing, of black dignity."

Silence may be infinite or a beginning, an end, white noise, purity, classical ballet; the question of black, its inability to reflect yet to absorb. I think these are some of the complexes that we will have to get into.

#### **Tambellini**

Black to me is like a beginning. A beginning of what it wants to be, rather than what it does not want to be. I am not discussing black as a tradition or non-tradition in painting or as having anything to do with pigment or as an opposition to colours. As I'm working and exploring black in different kinds of dimensions, I'm

definitely becoming more and more convinced that black is actually the beginning of everything which the art concept is not. Black gets rid of the logical historical definition. Black is a state of being blind and more aware. Black is the oneness of birth black which is within totality the oneness of all. Black is the expansion of consciousness in all direction. I believe very strongly that the completely artificial "art" concept and the concept of "non-art" will have to collapse for the very reason they are both on the wrong track. Black is one of the important reasons why the racial conflicts are happening today, because it is part of an old way to look at human beings or race in terms of colour. We oppose black. Black will get rid of the separation of colour at the end.

Blackness is the beginning of the re-sensitizing of human beings. I'm a strong believer that the word "black power" is a powerful message, for it destroys the old notion of western man, and by destroying that notion it also destroys the tradition of the art concept.

Let me put it this way: if we think of man's creations and of the era that man lives in, all of a sudden we have a simultaneous idea of all man's endeavors coming to us at once. We have been preserving and magnifying the most decadent objects whether under Louis XV or the contemporary pompous art court, while all around us there is a whole creation going on of forms and concepts, of the atomic era, the space era, the computer era. Ad Reinhardt talks of black in a high

"There is something wrong, irresponsible and mindless about colour, something impossible to control. Control and rationality are part of any morality." - Ad Reinhardt



sense. I respect what he talks about because he deals with black as an essential concept, but he still retains black within the context of art. In his writing, he says that a canvas should be of a certain size and it shouldn't have this brush stroke, this and that. He still gives very high importance to the object, the canvas, to the act of painting itself. By defining what he does not want he gives it a highly puritanical value. I wish to destroy all that, not just destroy in a negative sense, but to get rid of art as art.

#### Taylor

I think Richard Wright wrote a book in the 1930s called *Black Power*. Unfortunately, newspapers must sell, and I think they give a meaning of the moment to

something which has long been in existence. The black artists have been in existence. Black - the black way of life - is an integral part of the American experience - the dance, for instance, the sloop, Lindy hop, applejack, Watusi. Or the language, the spirit of the black in the language - "hip," "Daddy," "crazy," and "what's happening," "dig." These are manifestations of black energy, of black power, if you will. Politically speaking, I think the most dynamic force in American political life since the mid-1950s has been the black surge for equal representation, equal opportunities, and it's become an active ingredient in American life.

#### Rockman

The yin and yang symbol traditionally has always been black on white. And, you know, if there was an alternative movement to black or white power movements, it could very well take this symbol. I found listening to Mr Taylor's poem a very moving experience, and I was thinking while he was reading it that there are two kinds of blackness that have very, very deep emotional connotations. Mike Snow talked about his father being blind. This is a sort of internal blackness. All right, Mike's father had been sighted before that, so he could remember what it was like to be in "the white land," as it were. And then I think of what Cecil Taylor said about the link between black associations and black power and negro-



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ness, if you will, and this is a sort of exterior blackness. In other words, the whole negro bit is a creation of the white world. I have speculated that if we had called ourselves light brown and dark brown and medium brown that maybe we wouldn't be in the present hangup.

**Reinhardt**  
I want to object to the introduction of blindness. I think that's a sentimental idea. And then also ideas like space and the sexual terms are really, well, they're all right for some discussion. I think I'd like to insist that the highest possible discussion would be on an aesthetic level, and that it has to do with art and it has to do with an experience or a creation. All the other levels operate on some

political or racial or personal or some other level which is alright too, but I think you can go off into too many subjects.

Well, of course, we have enough mixed media here. I just want to again stress the idea of black as intellectuality and conventionality. There's an expression "the dark of absolute freedom" and an idea of formality. There's something about darkness or blackness that has something to do with something that I don't want to pin down. But it's aesthetic. And it has not to do with outer space or the colour of skin or the colour of matter. As a matter of fact, the glossier, texturier, gummy black is a sort of objectionable quality in painting. It's one reason I moved to a sort of dark grey, I guess. At any rate it's

a matte black. And the exploitation of black as a kind of quality, as a material quality, is really objectionable. Again I'm talking on another level, on an intellectual level.

**Rockman**  
May I ask you this question, sticking in the realm of aesthetics, why do you believe is the highest level, why do you find glossy black objectionable?

**Reinhardt**  
Well, it reflects, and it has unstable quality for that reason. It's quite surreal. If you have a look at a shiny black surface it looks like a mirror. It reflects all the activity that's going on in a room. As a matter of fact, it's not detached then.

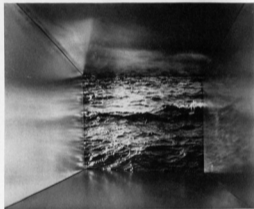








And then all of a sudden this cosmonaut from the U.S.S.R. gets out in space and says he sees this whole sensation again in black. He made this beautiful statement, "Before me – blackness, an inky-black sky studded with stars that glowed but did not twinkle; they seemed immobilized." Here again is a primitive man, a caveman, but he's the caveman of the space era. I see him as the most important man. It's immaterial who he is; it's even immaterial what his name is. But that's what our children are going to be, that's what the future is going to be, and this is what the extension of man has to go to. He's got to get rid of this whole concept of black pictures or of black anything as a physical object. He's got to realize that he is black right now.

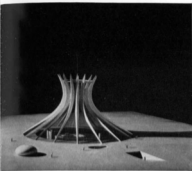


Man himself is completely in this darkness; he's a moronic human being right now – dictated to by the capitalist structure which reduces him completely to an unthinking object. But he's got to break out of this blackness. He's got to push into this dimension and every time he discovers something he's still in the darkness. This is what science proves to us – we discover, we search, we find, and we still know less and less all the time. And this is more or less what creation is involved with. I can no longer see creation involved with the act of painting, the act of sculpture, or the act of whatever you want to call it which is being categorized during history. It is the act of creating. I don't give a damn if a man makes poetry, or makes sounds, or he makes space

ships. In other words, Leonardo broke all the rules a long time ago – and we still talk about this departmentalization, black shining or black not shining, or black on this or black on that. Black is definitely the beginning stages of man. This is what he begins from.

#### Reinhardt

Well, I suppose the end is the beginning and vice-versa, if you want to talk that abstractly. But I would object to your romanticism in throwing everything together. The reason for the involvement of darkness and blackness is, as I said, an aesthetic-intellectual one, certainly among artists. And it's because of its non-colour. Colour is always trapped in some kind of physical activity or assem-



tiveness of its own; and colour has to do with life. In that sense it may be vulgarly or folk art or something like that. But you'd better make sure what you mean by emotion, that's what I would say.

**Taylor** \_\_\_\_\_  
Would you give us a definition?

**Reinhardt** \_\_\_\_\_  
Well, Clive Bell made it clear that there was an aesthetic emotion that was not any other kind of emotion. And probably you could only define that negatively. Art is always made by craftsmen – it's never a spontaneous expression. Artists always come from artists and art forms come from art forms. At any rate, art is involved in a certain kind of perfection. Express-

sion is an impossible word. If you want to use it I think you have to explain it further.

**Taylor** \_\_\_\_\_  
In pursuit of that perfection, once it is attained, what then? What is your reaction to that perfection?

**Reinhardt** \_\_\_\_\_  
Well, I suppose there's a general reaction. I suppose in the visual arts good works usually end up in museums where they can be protected.

**Taylor** \_\_\_\_\_  
Don't you understand that every culture has its own mores, its way of doing things, and that's why different art forms

exist? People paint differently, people sing differently. What else does it express but my way of living – the way I eat, the way I walk, the way I talk, the way I think, what I have access to?

**Reinhardt** \_\_\_\_\_  
Cultures in time begin to represent what artists did. It isn't the other way around.

**Taylor** \_\_\_\_\_  
Don't you understand that what artists do depends on the time they have to do it in, and the time they have to do it in depends on the amount of economic sustenance which allows them to do it? You have to come down to the reality. Artists just don't work, you know, just like that – the kind of work, the nature of their



involvement is not separate from the nature of their existence, and you have to come down to the nature of their existence. For instance, if they decide to go into the realm of fine art, there are certain prerequisites that they must have.

#### Tambellini

This guy floating in space has more to do with the reality that I'm living in than some idiotic place with walls and pictures in it. This man made one of the most poetic statements I've heard in my life. And furthermore I recognize the act he performs out there; he's destroying every possible square idea I've ever known, every possible notion that man can any longer be up and down. In the tradition of Mondrian you have the floor and the

top; the tradition of Egyptian and western man is in the horizontal and vertical. I don't work with that concept, I work with the concept of this space guy. He doesn't make the concept, it is the concept of nature. But he's telling me what's going on there. When the black man breaks out of his tradition, he's telling me what he's feeling, he's telling me what western man has done. He's telling me about segregation, he's telling me directly "see what your museums are, preservation of your own culture," "see what the radio is, the propaganda for your own culture," "see what this newspaper is, the propagation of your own . . ." and this space guy says to me, "see what the universe is up there, something which has no ups and downs," "see what space is, total darkness." He's

telling me something I have to deal with. I have to create some kind of images.

#### Reinhardt

This hasn't anything to do with your day-to-day problems.

#### Taylor

Day-to-day problems? What do you mean by day-to-day problems?

#### Reinhardt

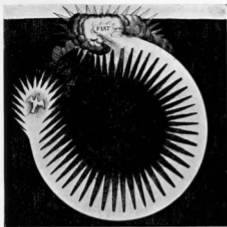
That an artist has a day-to-day routine.

#### Taylor

What is that routine specifically?

#### Reinhardt

It is a boring, drudging . . .



**Taylor**

My work gives me pleasure. But the minute I walk outside there is enough that is evil and ugly and full of that which I call drudgery and boredom for me not to want it in my work and around me. Poverty is not a very satisfying thing. Aldo said it very clearly, western art is involved and has been involved with one perspective, one idea, one representation of one social-racial entity and aesthetic; and I'm saying that I must be aware of that, in what that has meant to black men or to the Indians. I have to be aware of the social dynamics of my society in order to function. I don't only have a responsibility to myself, I have a responsibility to my community.

**Reinhardt**

As a human being, not as an artist.

**Taylor**

Now look, you are not the one, you are positively not the one to talk about human beings, since you rule out the human element in your art. That kind of dichotomy is very common in the West, and it has resulted in paranoia. And so, therefore, I'm involved in making people aware of the black aesthetic. That fine art which you talk about is an exclusive art, and it excludes not according to ability, but according to wealth.

**Tambellini**

I don't even go to the god damn museums any more. I get the creeps, god

damn it, I got depressed for months — it reminds me what the fucking black man must feel when he walks in the damn upper class of this society. I see the god damn slums in this country. I know how it feels to be black and walking the streets of a white society and as a white man, I feel what this damn ruling class is doing to anybody creative. They are set up there to destroy, because I can not go along with this intellectualization of protecting this particular class, this particular structure.

**Reinhardt**

There was an achievement in separating Fine Art from other art.

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me . . .



**Taylor**

The Russian ballet masters took the peasants and made them fine dancers; but the spirit of the ballet comes from the peasant.

**Reinhardt**

Tambellini suggested that we may abandon the historical approach to art, and get into a kind of simultaneity in which you have all twenty-five thousand years of art and you have to think about it. Quoting as astronaut isn't meaningful.

**Tambellini**

To me it's essential and meaningful.

**Reinhardt**

Not you as an artist, but maybe as a human being. It is certainly interesting to

me as a human being.

**Taylor**

It is interesting to me as a musician, because it has to do with space, and space automatically implies time. Like I'm involved with rhythm, and rhythm is like the marginal division of time. Of course Reinhardt visualizes blackness as some kind of technical problem. I visualize it as the quality that shapes my life, in terms of the quality of the acceptance that my work gets or does not get based on the fact that it is from the Afro-American community.

**Reinhardt**

But your art should be free from the community.

**Rockman**

Reinhardt makes objects for museums.

**Broomer**

I'd like to make museums for Reinhardt. I am concerned with the perceptual difficulty that Reinhardt imposes on his work because Michael Snow and myself, Aldo Tambellini and Cecil Taylor are all involved in bombarding the passive participants senseless. And yet there's an underlying compatibility, actually, in achieving order in what we are involved in — in what Reinhardt is involved in. In viewing a Reinhardt painting there's such a blanket of grey or black — whichever you wish to call it. This interests me because it forces the passive participant in the act of creation to go to such lengths



to formalize what is actually being done in the work.

#### Rockman

Reinhardt's difficulty, it seems to me, is the difficulty that Gustave Mahler had to face. Mahler was desperately striving to break out of grand romantic symphonic form and he never quite made it. Now Reinhardt is in the same sense desperately trying to break out of everything that he understood as formal painting, but he's still stuck with that form, in other words, the rectangular canvas, the object. And the rest of what we were talking about, black, with all its other connotations and the fusion kind of aesthetics that I think most of us are interested in, Reinhardt can't accept because black for him is only

a palpable object that is there on the wall and that you respond to.

I think that Harvey Cowan would see the same thing in architecture. There are architects who feel that a building is a "made" form that's there, whereas there are other architects - Otto would be a very good example, or the Archigram group in England - who don't see this thing as fixed structure. And so if we talk about black, again you can start talking about black spaces that might be there one time or not there another time - that will depend just as much on the lighting of the space itself as the inherent colour of the materials or the shape of the space. Or one could conceive of spaces that are ever-changing, that have black qualities or light qualities.

#### Cowan

Impermanence is the big new thing in architecture rather than design forever - say, like the designs Mies van der Rohe did; you might equate his architecture to black painting. The new concept in architecture expressed by the Metabolist group in Japan and others is to let things live and die natural deaths.

#### Rockman

There's a sense in which black (I'm thinking now in spatial terms as we experience it), when we think of black night and darkness, is all-enveloping. Even if it's temporary it has the quality of evoking in us a fear that it might be permanent. You know, I suspect that this is at the bottom of a lot of our experience of black,

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that there might be order in that blackness, but how can we ever know? You can't see anything. Whiteness can be just as disorderly: "white noise" is a good metaphor for this, in which you have a completely random mixture of all frequencies; and yet it's not threatening in the same way.

**Broomer**  
 The idea of black is a continuing form. It's also highly spongelike the way it absorbs other colours and eliminates them. My musical horizons are a little different than Mr Taylor's because of the peculiar experiences from which he comes. But I'm interested in all musical artifices, all manners of musical expression, being absorbed into a single totality. And for me is

this totality has the formal quality of blackness.

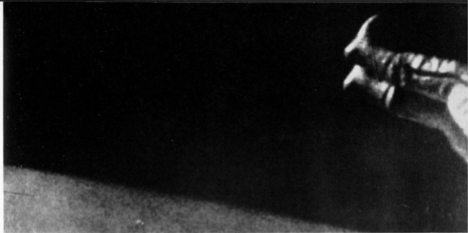
**Cowan**  
 Rather than a rainbow?

**Broomer**  
 It's at once a rainbow and black too. I think the non-reflecting quality that black has is also not dependent upon these absorbed forms. The consistency of black as a form is much more oppressive to me than anything.

**Cowan**  
 I'd like to clear up the idea of soft space. We have soft sculpture and we have hard space, but I think black space makes soft space. There's a building under construction

in Brasilia by Oscar Niemeyer, a cathedral. It looks like a glass tent, and it's quite a high-ceilinged space. In order to get into this space you enter a few hundred feet away into a hole in the ground and you go through what I hope is a very dark tunnel and then up into this dazzling space. And I think this is an instance of a soft experience and maybe a cleansing experience to disorient yourself from the outside to approach a religious experience. I wonder if Tambellini and Reinhardt really are saying the same thing, because Tambellini says black is birth, it's the start of something; but Reinhardt's art is also the start of something.





Before me — blackness: an inky-black sky studded with stars that glowed but did not twinkle; they seemed immobilized. Nor did the sun look the same as when seen from Earth. It had no aureole or corona; it resembled a huge incandescent disc that seemed embedded in the velvet black of the sky of outer space. Space itself appeared as a bottomless pit. It will never be possible to see the cosmos the same way on Earth.  
— Aleksei Leonov, the first man to walk in space, 18 March 1965

cover Aldo Tambellini's lunagram from hand-painted slide for *Black Zero*

page 2 Aldo Tambellini, *round poem*

page 4 Photo: Jessie Fernandez, New York

page 5 Photo: Michel Lambert, Toronto

page 6 Ad Reinhardt, *The Jewish Museum*, New York, Photo: Robert Lax, 1962

page 7 (left) Ad Reinhardt, *Black Digiptych*, 1965, oil on canvas, 80" h. x 20" w. The Jewish Museum, New York. Photo: Gretchen Lambert, New York  
(right) Element of Japanese calligraphy, emblematic of "painting". Anonymous

pages 8 and 9 Excerpts from entry for *black* in the *Shewer Oxford English Dictionary*, 1950. Permission of Oxford University Press

pages 10 and 11 (clockwise from upper left) Aldo Tambellini's *Black Zero*, 1965. Periscope Sequence: Cello Scott on amplified cello, with stroboscope, light machine, hand-painted slides and air pump. Photo: George Eherlich  
*Black Zero*, Internal Sequence: Cello Scott on amplified cello with hand-painted slides projected on black balloon. Photo: George Eherlich  
notebook page, 1967: idea for simultaneous projection of a movie and slides on air-suspended, spherical forms.  
Aldo Tambellini and his poem "to be enveloped by black." Photo: Diane Dunn. *Dorjnyak* notebook page, 1966: *Black Zero* diagram for performance at the Arts Festival, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, 17 November 1966.  
Poem, "to all is black."

page 12 (left) Eero Saarinen, *C.B.S. building*, New York. Canadian black granite with grey glass fenestration. Photo: Robert Demers, New York

(upper right) Michael Snow, *Atlantic*, 1967, in and sequential black and white photographs of the sea, 5' h. x 6' w. x 20"  
(lower right) Michael Snow, *dental* from *Atlantic*

page 13 (left) Oscar Niemeyer, model of cathedral in Brasilia  
(right) Robert Maritz, *Europe Series: New York City Redhead*, 1963, tempera, 35" h. x 23" w. Collection: Mr. Jack Orley, Photo: Isaacs Gallery, Toronto

page 14 (clockwise from upper left) Selen gives the *Adaptz a Black Book in Exchange for the Gospel*, from Guacacua, *compendium multivarium*, 1628  
Specimen of the *Book of Spirits*, a *Black Book*, from Frances Barrett, *The Magus*, 1801  
Jose Guadalupe Posada, *Death's Head: The Hand of Glory*, from *Sacros: maravillas de la magia natural e cabalotique de Petit Albert*, 1722  
Jose Guadalupe Posada, *The Serpent Woman*

page 15 (clockwise from top left) *The Creation of the World According to Oducat Doctrine*, from Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmologiae*, . . . . 1619  
Sta Broomer, *Black Magic*, lines chosen at random from African myths, 18 August 1967  
Audrey Beaudry, *India ink drawing for The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1894-95  
Jose Guadalupe Posada, *The New Comet*

page 16 Quotation from *The Song of Solomon*, 1.5-6  
George Lathwaite, (c. 1956) *The Queen of Sheba*, cement over armature made of iron from old farm machinery, approx. 3' high, Goderich, Ontario. Photo: Don Vincent

page 17 *Black Panther* symbol for Black Power movement

page 18 Aldo Tambellini, *used black poem*

page 19 Astronaut Aleksei Leonov floats in space. Reproduced from colour film taken by Leonov's colleague aboard their space vehicle, 18 March 1965. Photo APN, from *The Ukraine Courier*, June 1965