

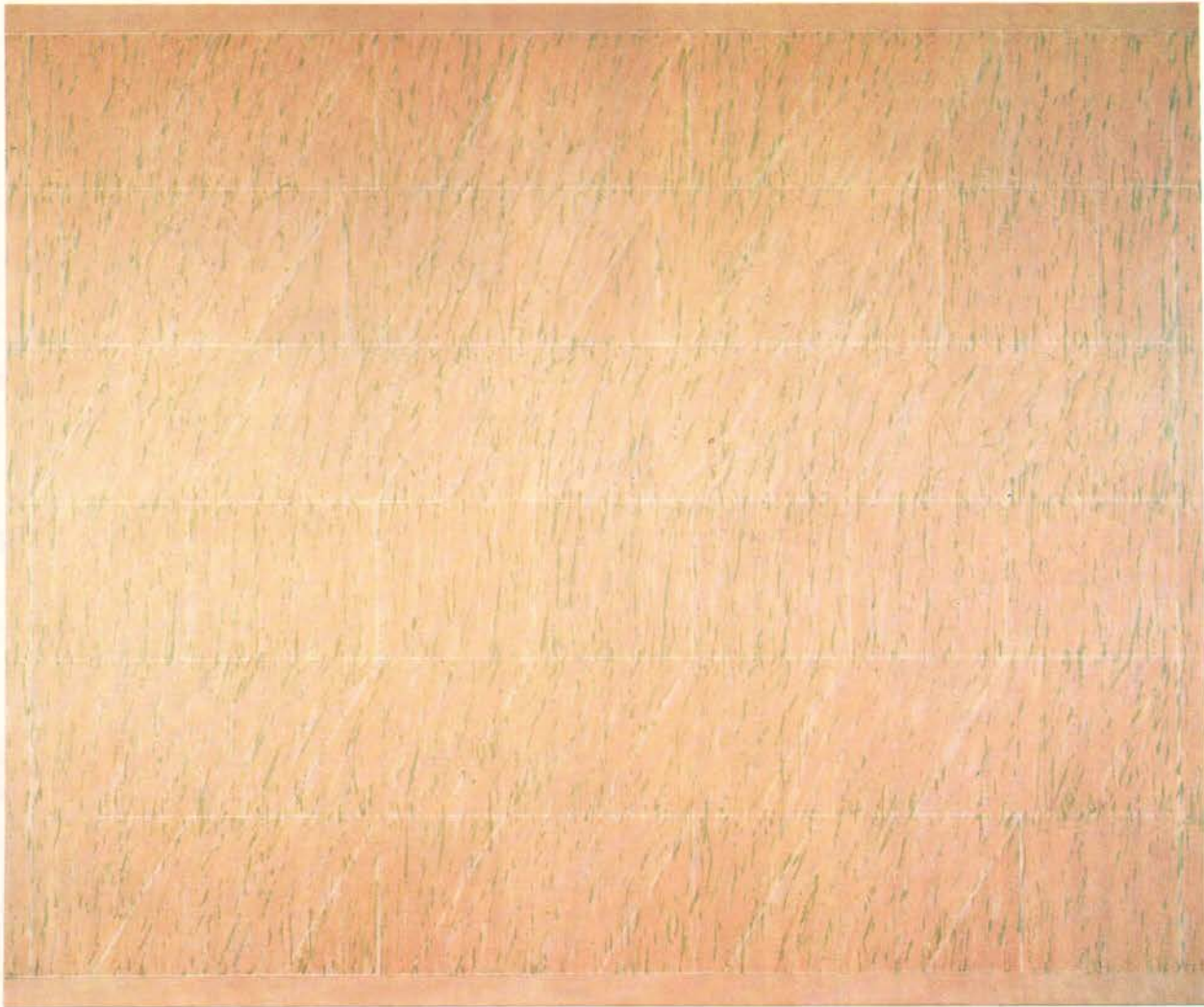
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# THIRD EYE CENTRE

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PROGRAMME

26th APRIL – 9th JUNE



Jack Tworikov. Crossfield 3, 1970. Oil on canvas, 80 x 96in.

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## 4 EXHIBITIONS

**Jack Tworok** was born in Poland in 1900. When he was thirteen years old his family moved to the United States and settled in New York. Growing up in the city was not easy for Tworok who took refuge in reading any literature he could find, whether in English, French or Russian. He was especially struck by Pound, Beckett and Joyce.

From 1920 to 1923 Tworok studied English at Columbia University and it was during his undergraduate days that he saw for the first time paintings by Cézanne and Matisse. The effect of these paintings, coupled with the encouragement he had received from an enthusiastic teacher of mechanical drawing whilst at school, led Tworok to decide to go to art college. He studied under Ivan Olinsky and briefly under Charles Hawthorne at the National Academy of Design from 1923 to 1925 – and subsequently at the Art Students' League.

During the Depression Tworok worked under government subsidy. In 1934 he was employed by the U.S. Treasury Department Public Works of Art Project and from 1935 to 1941 he was with the Easel Division of the Federal Art Project of the WPA. He is dismissive of the pictures he painted on the WPA: "My Project paintings were the worst of my career. I tried to salve my social conscience at the expense of my esthetic instincts". It was on the Project that Tworok met de Kooning and they began a long friendship.

The company of avant-garde artists to which Tworok belonged were interested in surrealism, psychoanalysis, automatic painting and free association in art. During the 1930's Tworok's work, mainly still lifes, portraits and landscapes, displayed strong links with European art. His situation as an artist in the years leading up to World War II was beset by problems typical of those facing



Franz Kline and Jack Tworok (above right). Date and photographer unknown

## JACK TWOROK Paintings (and Related Drawings) 1950-1978

18th May – 17th June

Galleries 1 and 2

whereas as a matter of fact, these were always in the hands of European artists . . .

Consciously or unconsciously we adopted the attitude that spiritual and esthetic elements could be had only by importation from the past and from abroad. We were unnaturally supine before the glories of the past and the glamour of intellectual life abroad . . . Modern art in America implied a delicacy of spirit and mood in which the character, the situation, the chaos of the

whole world was compelled to take note of."<sup>1</sup>

As it transpired, the World War II years formed a decisive era in Jack Tworok's life. He worked as a tool designer (from 1942 to 1945) and was totally isolated from the art world and from other artists with the exception of Willem de Kooning. He did not paint at all during those three years. However, he emerged a more mature, independent thinking artist. The following years

on formal problems; simultaneously he was making subjective, automatic abstract paintings and drawings most of which he subsequently destroyed. By 1947 Tworok was a fully developed abstract expressionist painter.

"Abstract expressionism is best defined negatively, by what it is not. If it has any positive features, it got them from individual artists and the mood of the period, which can become stale and academic . . . Abstract expressionism, as an idea and not as a movement, has no rules, no specific character, attitude or face. It does not even exclude the use of representation or geometry. It merely claims to be able to do without them. As such it is now everybody's idea, which is academic when the idea is merely being demonstrated, but it is non-academic if you realize that, given the idea, everything else in a picture still remains to be done – you cannot predict in advance what it ought to be."<sup>2</sup>

An important influence on Tworok was his friend Willem de Kooning: from 1948 to 1953 Tworok's studio adjoined that of de Kooning. From 1949 Tworok's pictures displayed an increasing interest in the figure. His treatment of colours, space and form became more free and more energetic.

By 1954, however, Tworok's work had become abstract though a figurative element sometimes makes an appearance.

"I don't accept certain kinds of paintings as being less pure than certain other kinds of painting that are called pure . . . I don't know exactly where life enters into art. Suppose you could keep it out, what would be the point? What kind of game is art that you have to set a wall around it to keep everything out of it? . . . From my point of view . . . abstract art . . . is only abstract because that one element, the descriptive element that characterized the old art, got out of it. With that out of it, I still think



beset by problems typical of those facing avant-garde American artists of that time.

"In my country we had modern painting but not a modern movement, since a movement would imply that the initiative, direction and development was in our hands,

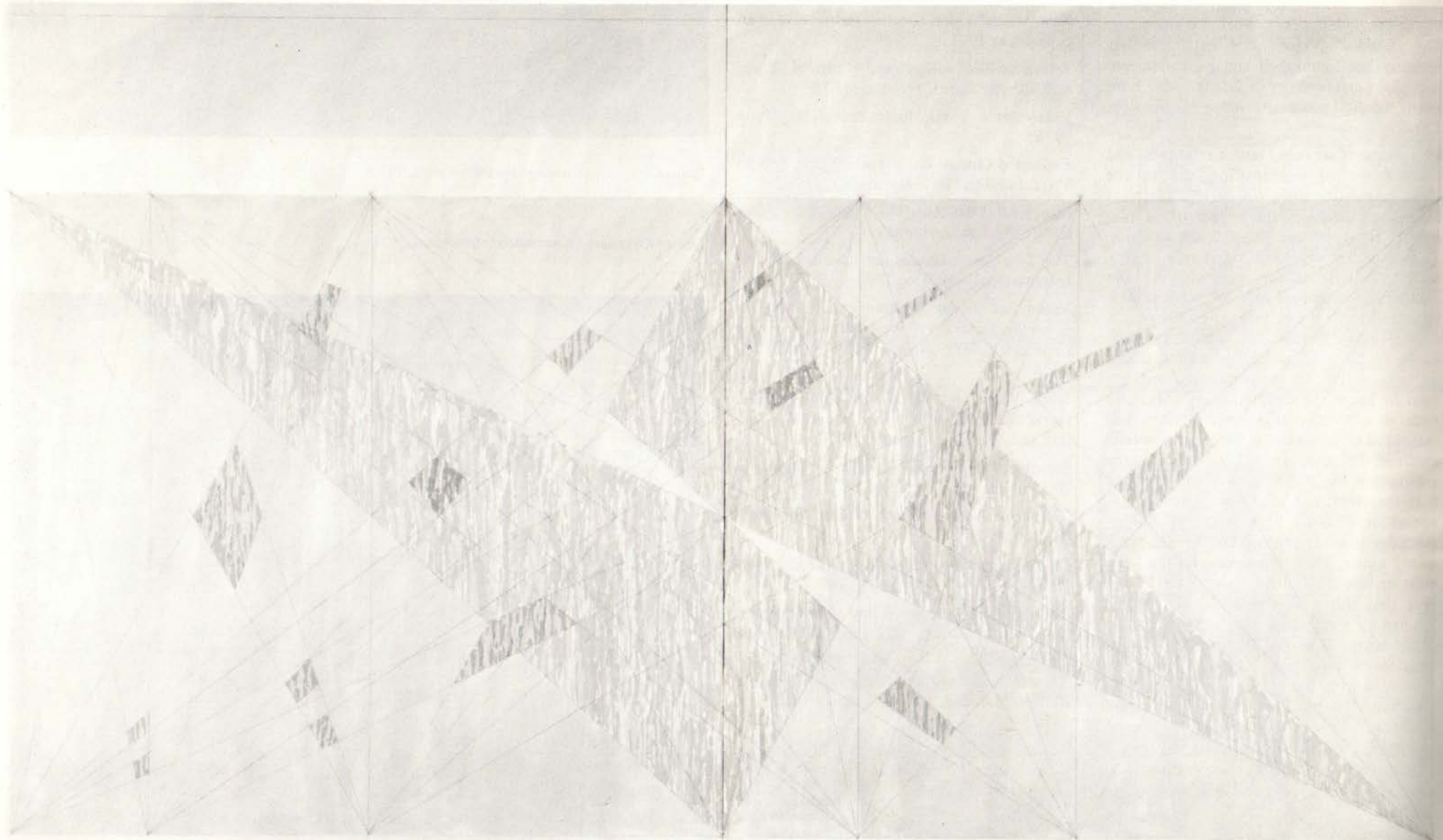
character, the situation, the chaos of the country were rejected. The modern artist in America lacked that audacity of the jazz musician who, without so much as "by your leave" from Bach, Beethoven or Brahms, or from Strauss, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, nevertheless made music which the

independent thinking artist. The following years were a transitional period of development which he devoted to the exploration of the new ideas that were appearing in contemporary American art. His return to painting began with still life compositions which provided the means for him to concentrate

out of it. With that out of it, I still think that everything can enter into this art that entered into any kind of art."<sup>3</sup>

"It would be a mistake to try to read landscape into (my paintings), even less any specific landscape. For it is a willful part of

Jack Tworkov. *Air Game*, 1976. Oil on canvas, 80 x 140in.





my painting process to abolish specific reference in favour of abstract forms that stir a sense of recognition in me. And these forms speak to me of the forces which to explain would begin the psychological autobiography which I shun. The picture as a final object is best experienced without reference to the processes that produced it – just as we experience food by taste and textures and not by a rationale of how it was cooked, interesting as that may be.”<sup>4</sup>

Tworokov's paintings tend to divide themselves into series and the pictures that reflect these themes represent different concurrent aspects of his work. His style is constantly evolving, never remaining static.

In recent years, Tworokov has moved away from Abstract Expressionism to forms which he finds more disciplined and contemplative. Though no mathematician he began in 1965 to study elementary geometry and theories of the number system. He has translated some of his findings into paintings.

“I became fascinated with the little I learned and found in some aspects of the geometry of a rectangle a new starting point for composing a painting. An example of the kind of naïve question that was a starting point for me is the following: given any rectangle, what line can I draw that is not arbitrary but is determined by the rectangle? I soon arrived at an elementary system of measurements implicit in the geometry of the rectangle which became the basis for simple images that I had deliberately given a somewhat illusionistic cast. From then on, all my paintings began with carefully worked out drawings and measurements that I could repeat at will. But the actual painting I left to varieties of spontaneous brushing. What I wanted was a simple structure dependent on drawing as a base on which the brushing, spontaneous and pulsating, gave a beat to the painting somewhat analogous to the beat in music. I wanted, and I hope I arrived at, a painting style in which planning does not exclude intuitive and sometimes random





clude intuitive and sometimes random play."<sup>5</sup>

This exhibition is concerned with Jack Tworok's work from 1950 to 1978, with emphasis on the paintings from the 60's and 70's and traces Tworok's development from figurative painting, through Abstract Expressionism to his current, less gestural, more geometric and restrained style. A number of related drawings are also included.

### Bridget Brown

#### Notes

- 1 taken from **Means & Subject**; unpublished notes for a lecture at The American University, 1948.
- 2 taken from **Art News**, September 1959, p.38.
- 3 taken from **It is**, Spring 1960, No. 5, p.37.
- 4 taken from a letter to Edward B. Henning, Curator of Contemporary Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art, August 14, 1962.
- 5 taken from **Art in America**, September – October 1973.

**Jack Tworok** has had several one-man exhibitions (particularly at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1964 and most recently at California State University in 1979). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions. This is the artist's first one-man exhibition in Europe. He has been an influential and well-loved teacher (notably as Chairman of the Art Department at Yale University from 1963-1969). In 1952 he was visiting artist at Black Mountain College, North Carolina. He is represented in numerous important public and private collections.

#### EXHIBITION PUBLICATION

A fully illustrated monograph is being published by the Third Eye Centre to accom-



Jack Tworok. *Red Lode*, 1959-1960. Oil on canvas, 68 x 61in.

pany the exhibition. It will include: essays by Dore Ashton (writer and lecturer at Cooper Union, New York) and Andrew Forge (writer and lecturer at Yale University); an interview with Jack Tworok conducted by Marcia Tucker (writer and Director of the New Museum, New York); twelve colour plates; a black and white reproduction of each exhibited work; a full biography and bibliography and a list of works in the exhibition. **Price £4.00** (+50p postage and packing for single copy orders within UK).

**Jack Tworok: Paintings (and related drawings) 1950-1978**, organised by the Third Eye Centre, is presented by the Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh and the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, in association with the Ulster Museum, Belfast. The exhibition is grant aided by the Scottish Arts Council.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the energy and advice of Nancy Hoffman (of the Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York) and, of course, the friendly co-operation and enthusiasm of Jack Tworok and his wife Wally.

It is hoped that the artist will be present at the opening of the exhibition and that he will give an informal talk at Third Eye Centre. (Details of the talk will be advertised). A programme of complementary films is being arranged, and it is hoped that a video tape on the artist will be shown at frequent intervals during the exhibition

showing. Dates and times will be advertised when confirmed. Most of the works, including the drawings, are for sale.

#### EXHIBITION TOUR

After its showing at the Third Eye Centre, the exhibition travels to:

**The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh** (June/July)

**The Academy Gallery, Liverpool** (July/August)

**Ulster Museum, Belfast** (October)

**Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne** (November/December)

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Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven: **Recent Paintings by Jack Tworok** (introd., *Edward Bryant*), 1963.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York: **Jack Tworok** (introd., *Edward Bryant*), 1964.

#### Film

**The Americans: 3 East Coast Artists at Work** (*Jack Tworok, Hans Hofmann and Milton Avery*). New York: Contemporary Films, Inc., 1963. Produced, directed and filmed by *Warren Forma*. 16mm.; sound; colour; 19 min. (Tworok section 8 min; narration by the artist).