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BRAZILIAN CONCRETE: PAINTING, POETRY, TIME, AND SPACE

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Fiaminghi's *Circles with Alternating Movement* (1956) (Ill. 44) presents an upright off-white rectangle traversed at regular intervals by coupled horizontal bands of red and grey arranged in an alternating sequence which reverses over the horizontal red and grey arranged in an alternating sequence which reverses over the horizontal axis. Superimposed on this structured is a series of half-circles whose diameter equals the width of the painting. In the lower half, their curve points toward the bottom, in the upper half toward the top. Their presence is, however, only suggested: a curved contour eliminates the central portion of one band while cutting off the extreme ends of the adjacent one as well as of the liked-colored band above or below. This simple design, more complex in the verbal description than it is to the eye, creates a dynamic pattern of visual ambiguities. There is first the question of figure and ground: if the implied circles are the figures, then the white appears at times as part of the figure, at others as part of the ground; at still others, an undifferentiated white seems to divide nevertheless into figure and ground as the eye carries the implied contour from one color band to the next. Then there is the interplay of the alternating horizontal bands with the rhythm of the implied circles. And, simultaneously, there is the interaction of red and grey, colors of carefully balanced value but unequal intensity: since the design treats both of them alike, the grey tends to recede and the red to come forward, adding to the ambiguity of the spatial relationships. This is made more complex by the problem of connecting concave and convex contours: the rigidly maintained system prevents them from combining into full circles. Where they meet in the center, the two implied shapes overlap, so that the psychological effect aroused in the perceiver is the desire to push them apart in order to obtain a perfect circle; but since the affinity of color leads the viewer to associate the upper semicircle in red with either of the two red semicircles below, he will inevitably want to pull them together to make them meet. A stable geometric design employing minimal means results in the suggestion of multi-directional movement and thus not only organizes pictorial space but also implies a temporal dimension.

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