



SOTO AT SIGNALS LONDON with two of his repetition-reliefs painted in 1951.

Photo: Clay Perry

*Nous constatons l'existence de Relations
dans tous les instants lucides de notre
comportement*

*Nous nous émerveillons des lois du Hasard,
sans nous rendre compte que nous ne faisons
que prendre conscience de réalités aux quelles
nous n'avons pas songé*

*Les éléments plongent dans l'oeuvre
comme le poisson dans l'eau. toutes ces
directions, vitesses, accidents, positions sont
ordonnées par un tout environnant dont
ils sont tributaires et qui conditionne
leurs variables. Leur force se mesure au
nombre de leurs révélations*

*Cet état conscient au nom de l'artiste
contemporain a donné à l'art de notre
temps cette surprenante richesse de
possibilités*

Soto

SIGNALS

director : paul keeler

editor : david medalla

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nov - dec 1965

four shillings

Korosta Katzina Song (Corn-planting Time) of the Hopi Indians of Arizona

*Yellow butterflies,
Over the blossoming virgin corn,
With pollen-painted faces
Chase one another in brilliant throng.*

*Blue butterflies,
Over the blossoming virgin beans,
With pollen-painted faces
Chase one another in brilliant streams.*

*Over the blossoming corn,
Over the virgin corn,
Wild bees hum ;
Over the blossoming beans,
Over the virgin beans,
Wild bees hum.*

*Over your field of growing corn
All day shall hang the thunder-cloud ;
Over your field of growing corn
All day shall come the rushing rain.*

Translated from the Hopi dialect by Natalie Curtis Burlin, 1907

Note: The katzinas are the deities of the Hopi Indians of Arizona: they are amalgams of anthropomorphic, abstract and animistic forms, and the Hopis represent them by colourful doll-like fetishes. The Hopis believe that, long ago, the katzinas came to live among them; dancing in the plazas of the Hopi villages, bringing down the rain. But one day they left and did not return. And so to bring down the much-needed rain in the desert regions of Arizona, the Hopis dress like the katzinas and dance their dances at corn-planting time. — DM.

**To Our Readers:
A Happy New Year!**

SOTO par Paul Wember

Directeur, Musée Kaiser Wilhelm, Haus Lange, Krefeld

Il faut passer devant les images de SOTO, il faut se promener de long en large devant elles et s'arrêter en mouvant la tête ça et là pour faire ainsi l'expérience de leurs structures cinétiques.

Nous croyons avoir la faculté de la vue universelle. Ce n'est juste que sous certaines réserves. Notre oeil comme instrument optique ne voit que dans un secteur étroitement limité. Seulement par suite du mouvement de l'oeil, de la tête, de tout le corps nous sommes à même de voir 'tout', et même la suite des temps dans laquelle cela se fait ne restreint point notre connaissance de pouvoir voir 'parfaitement'.

Par rapport aux images de SOTO, il faut faire usage de cette expérience du mouvement humain que l'on fait en regardant. Ce n'est que par suite des mouvements de l'oeil, de la tête, de tout le corps que ses structures sont des structures cinétiques et ses images appartiennent à l'art cinétique.

Le contemplateur active les structures dans la mesure de sa propre activité, s'il commence à être actif, lui-même, dans le jeu libre, sans aucune conformité perceptible aux lois. Ces structures en repos sont arrangées tellement qu'elles contiennent une tension qui se développe au même moment dans lequel le contemplateur entre en relation avec l'image, et même par la plus petite relation, celle de ses yeux. Le mouvement de ces images, c'est le mouvement du contemplateur, lequel dans le jeu correspondant de la structure et du mouvement du corps est conscient de son propre mouvement. En même temps, il est conscient du fait que les structures en repos comme toutes les choses en repos ne signifient rien en soi. La chose en repos immédiatement à la validité de son existence qui est liée au moment. Le repos local se transforme, par suite de l'activité

du contemplateur, en mouvement dans l'espace et dans le temps. L'équilibre de tout le vivant n'existe que dans le changement permanent.

Les idées d'image de SOTO suivent immédiatement les connaissances de MALEWITSCH et MONDRIAN. Tandis que les deux grands hommes de la Russie et de la Hollande avaient encore à combattre pour pouvoir se détacher de l'objet, l'image dégagée de l'objet est la position de départ bien entendue pour SOTO. Les surfaces de SOTO ne sont également pas des surfaces vides, mais la concentration d'un sentiment le plus fin.

Si MALEWITSCH fait usage du carré, du cercle, du triangle, de la croix, et MONDRIAN du dualisme des lignes droites qui se rencontrent à angles droits, SOTO, d'une part, emploie des éléments semblables, mais dans une application plus libre, d'autre part, il présente un déplacement et élargissement du dualisme par suite de ses structures doubles de nature spatiale et plastique. Son élément fondamental c'est la surface de fond avec ses lignes fines, laquelle est en vibration ou entre en parallèle. La ligne verticale, la ligne horizontale, le rectangle, le carré, la pelote de fil et la construction en fil de fer, mais aussi la ligne diagonale et la ligne inclinée sont les autres éléments d'image logés devant le fond. Ainsi ses images peuvent être comparées au 'désert' de MALEWITSCH, dans lequel on ne peut reconnaître rien excepté le sentiment. Comme chez MONDRIAN, son intérêt principal est dirigé vers le dedans, et son art devient une présentation exacte de rapports balancés. Ceux-ci reflètent la vie autonome de l'esprit humain qui est conscient de soi-même.

Krefeld 1963



Keeler & Medalla crossing Wigmore Street with a work by Soto. In the background: SIGNALS building

STOP PRESS

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has purchased from SIGNALS LONDON a physi-chromie, no 123, 1964, by CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ.

Another psychromie by CRUZ-DIEZ has been acquired by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada.

The Tate Gallery, London, has purchased from SIGNALS LONDON a monumental wood relief painted white by SERGIO DE CAMARGO. This is a recent work, done last April 1965: one of its most striking features is the incorporation of large pieces of wood split in the middle to create an interior rhythm within the wider rhythm of light-and-shadow of the entire relief.

The Tate Gallery, London, has also purchased from SIGNALS LONDON two monumental vibrations by J.-R. SOTO. One is entitled Cardinal 1965, of suspended bars which can be swung by the spectator creating sensations of motion and producing musical sounds. The other work is entitled Grand Vibration 1965: it has sixteen square plates painted black and eight silver square plates. Both works were made by the artist especially for his retrospective exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON.

SIGNALS X

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Editor: David Medalla

The name SIGNALS was inspired by a series of tensile sculptures by Takis.

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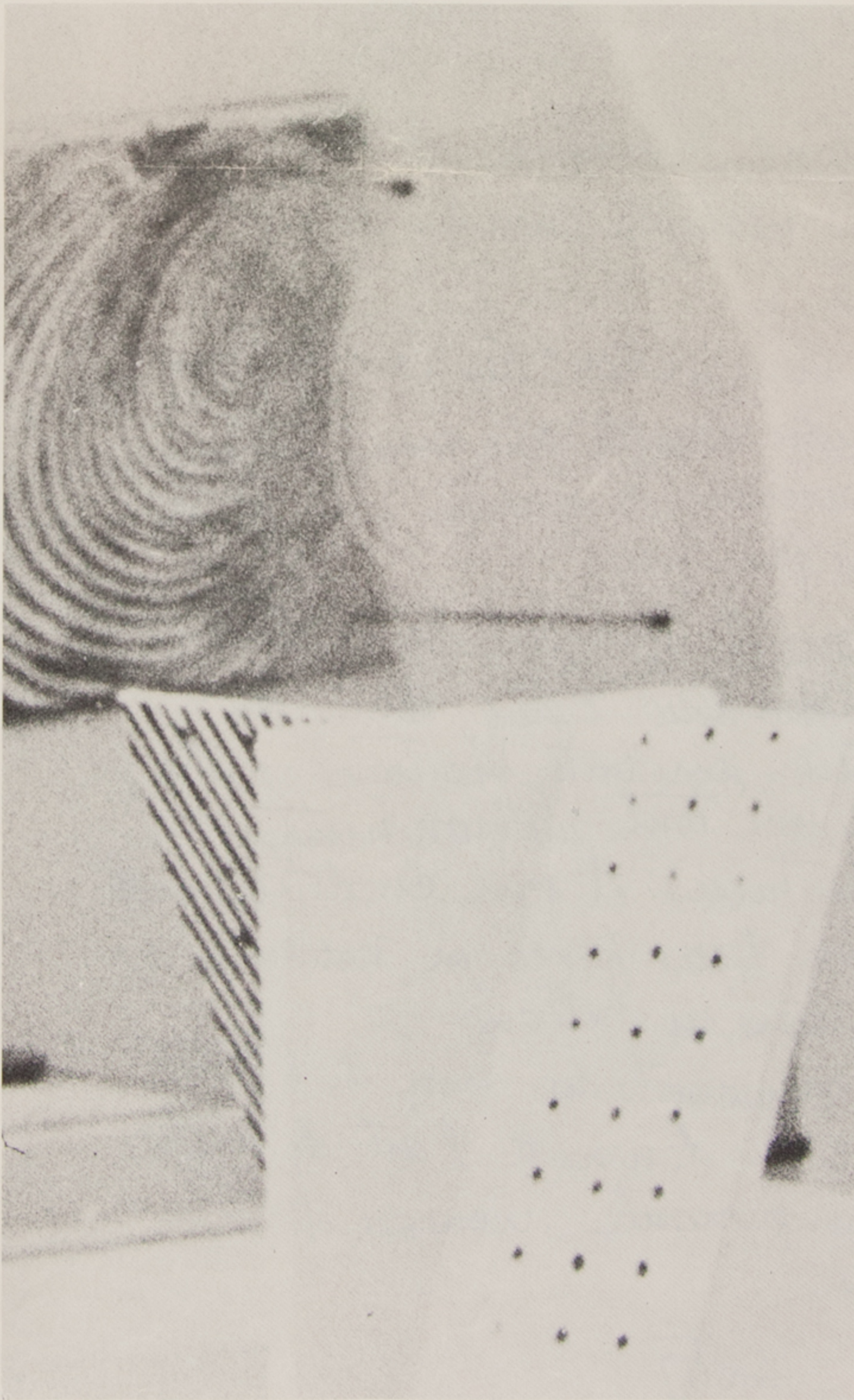
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SIGNALS welcomes the best in experimental writing.

SIGNALS welcomes progressive ideas on architecture, art, literature, drama, music, modern life.

SIGNALS also welcomes accounts of art events, news items on the progress of science. Poems and articles in any other language aside from English should be submitted whenever possible with adequate English translations.

The editor reserves the right to reject any material and is not responsible for any material that may get lost in transit.



J. R. SOTO: Two Works done in 1955. Foreground: part of a standing kinetic construction. Background: Spiral-Relief



Leaning at the window: Patricia Rogers, SIGNALS's secretary, and Anthony de Kerdrel
Photo: Clay Perry

A Letter from New York

October 4, 1965

Dear Mr Keeler:

I want to thank you for your good sense and judgement in publishing Mumford and Lowell. There is not much press here for such momentous professions, above all in the so-called art press. It does not appear that Americans can draw the necessary moral lessons from societies that have split off the arts from the rest of existence. A few American intellectuals are keenly aware of our deficiencies, but all too few in the arts. I for one feel frightfully depressed.

It was therefore a great lift to receive SIGNALS with the statements of artists in their role as responsible men—not just abracadabrazing yet again about how modern is modern art.

Believe it or not, it was the first chance I had to read Mumford's full statement.

I would be most grateful to receive all further issues of SIGNALS.

Sincerely,

Dore Ashton.

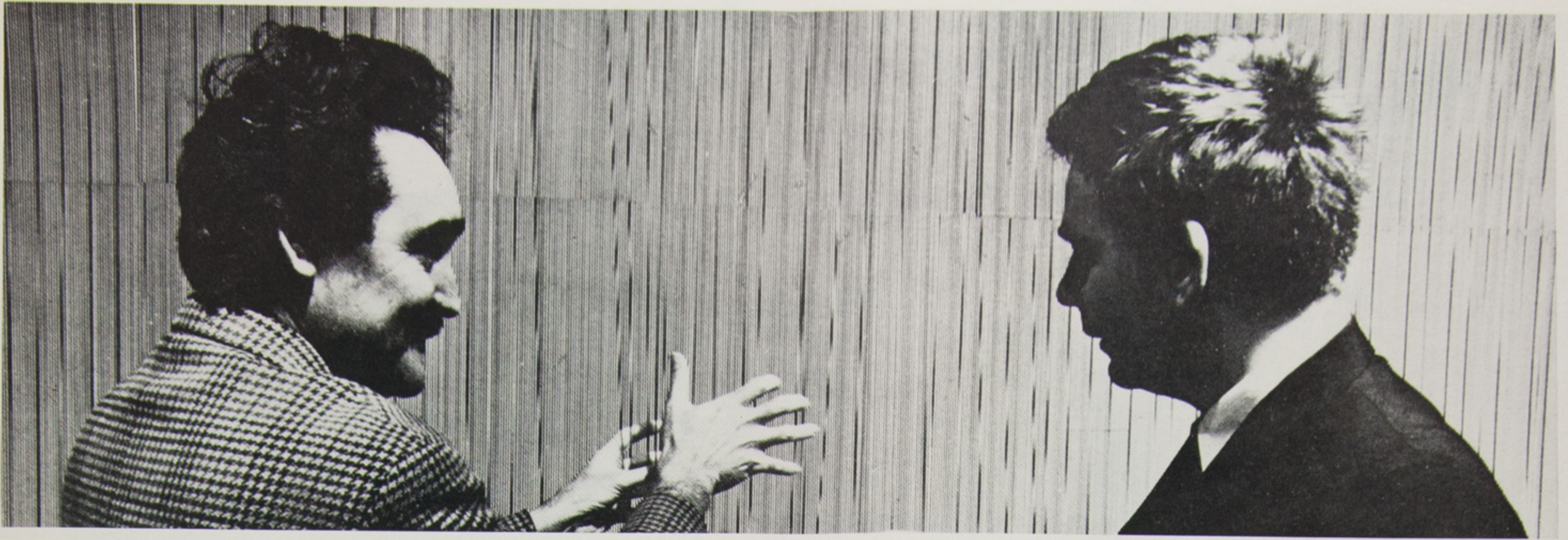
Editor's Note: Dore Ashton is an American critic and New York correspondent of the magazine Studio International. We reprinted the open letter of American poet Robert Lowell to President Lyndon B. Johnson, and the ceremonial address of Lewis Mumford before the American Academy of Arts and Letters, both of which were critical of President Johnson's policy in Vietnam, in the Summer Issue (Vol 1, no 8) of SIGNALS Newsbulletin. We would like to thank Mrs Dore Ashton for her warm and friendly letter. Several of our overseas and British readers have also written us in support of our decision to reprint Mr Mumford's address and Mr Lowell's letter. Other readers have written to say they were inspired by Professor Werner Heisenberg's essay on the role of modern physics in the present development of human thinking, which we reprinted in our last issue (Vol 1, no 9). We would like to take this opportunity of thanking Professor Heisenberg for his kind permission to reprint his article, and our readers for their letters and continuing support.

ODE TO SOTO'S MOUSTACHE

SOTO'S MOUSTACHE!
MA CHE? OUSTS SOOT?
MUST ACHE TOO! S.O.S.
ESTOMAC SHOUT SOI
SHOOTS MUTE. COSA?
MOOTS SHUTE. CASO!
SOUS TOMATES OCHI!
TO SMOOTH SAUCES?
OU CA HE TOSS MOST.
TOOTHsome? A CUSSI!
EATS TOO MUCH SOSI!
CUSTOM? SHOO EAST!
STOMACH TO SOUSE?
SO USE SMOOTH ACTI!
MOOS AT COT'S HUESI!
US SHOE SCOOT MATI!
SATI COOTS HOEI SUMI!
HO SOTI USE MASOTI!
ME TOO? SHOT? SCUSAI!
OHOI SCOT SUE'S MOAT?
AUTOMOOSIE! SCHTSI!

JOHN FURNIVAL

NOV 1965



Jesús-Rafael Soto showing to Paul Keeler the relations in the vibrating wall which Soto made this year (1965) to demonstrate his idea of repetition and the dematerialisation of simple elements into a visual perception of pure energy

Photo: Clay Perry

Hermann L. F. Helmholtz on the Composition of Vibrations

from Hermann L. F. Helmholtz's *On the Sensations of Tone*, English translation from the last German edition of 1877, by Alexander J. Ellis

That the ear is capable of distinguishing from each other tones proceeding from different sources, that is, which do not arise from one and the same sonorous body, we know from daily experience. There is no difficulty during a concert in following the melodic progression of each individual instrument or voice, if we direct our attention to it exclusively; and, after some practice, most persons can succeed in following the simultaneous progression of several united parts. This is true, indeed, not merely for musical tones, but also for noises, and for mixtures of music and noise. When several persons are speaking at once, we can generally listen at pleasure to the words of any single one of them, and even understand those words, provided they are not too much overpowered by the mere loudness of others. Hence it follows, first, that many different trains of waves of sound can be propagated at the same time through the same mass of air without natural disturbance; and, secondly, that the human ear is capable of again analysing into its constituent elements that composite motion of the air which is produced by the simultaneous action of several musical instruments. We will first investigate the nature of the motion of the air when it is produced by several simultaneous musical tones, and how such a compound motion is distinguished from that due to a single musical tone. We shall see that the ear has no decisive test by which it can in all cases distinguish between the effect of a motion of the air caused by several different musical tones arising from different sources, and that caused by the musical tone of a single sounding body. Hence the ear has to analyse the composition of single musical tones, under proper conditions, by means of the same faculty which enabled it to analyse the composition of simultaneous musical tones. We shall thus obtain a clear conception of what is meant by analysing a single musical tone into a series of partial simple tones, and we shall perceive that this phenomenon depends upon one of the most essential and fundamental properties of the human ear.

We begin by examining the motion of the air which corresponds to several simple tones acting at the same time on the same mass of air. To illustrate this kind of motion it will be again convenient to refer to the waves formed on a calm surface of water. We have seen that if a point of the surface is agitated by a stone thrown upon it, the agitation is propagated in rings of waves over the surface to more and more distant points. Now, throw two stones at the same time on to different points of the surface, thus producing two centres of agitation. Each will give rise to a separate ring of waves, and the two rings gradually expanding, will finally meet. Where the waves thus come together, the water will be set in motion by both kinds of agitation at the same time, but this in no wise prevents both series of waves from advancing further over the surface, just as if each were alone present and the other had no existence at all. As they proceed, those parts of both rings which had just coincided, again appear separate and unaltered in form. These little waves, caused by throwing in stones, may be accompanied by other kinds of waves, such as those due to the wind or a passing steamboat. Our circles of waves will spread out over the water thus agitated, with the same quiet regularity as they did upon the calm surface. Neither will the greater waves be essentially disturbed by the less, nor the less by the greater, provided the waves never break; if that happened, their regular course would certainly be impeded.

Indeed it is seldom possible to survey a large surface of water from a high point of sight, without perceiving a great multitude of different systems of waves, mutually overtopping and crossing each other. This is best seen on the surface of the sea, viewed from a lofty cliff, when there is a lull after a stiff breeze. We first see the great waves, advancing in far-stretching ranks from the blue distance, here and there more clearly marked out by their white foaming crests, and following one another at regular intervals towards the shore. From the shore they rebound, in different directions according to its sinuosities, and cut obliquely across the advancing waves. A passing steamboat forms its own wedge-shaped wake of waves, or a bird, darting on a fish, excites a small circular system. The eye of the spectator is easily able to pursue each one of these different trains of waves, great and small, wide and narrow, straight and curved, and observe how each passes over the surface, as undisturbedly as if the water over which it flits were not agitated at the same time by other motions and other forces. I must own that whenever I attentively observe this spectacle it awakens in me a peculiar kind of intellectual pleasure, because it bares to the bodily eye, what the mind's eye grasps only by the help of a long series of complicated conclusions for the waves of the invisible atmospheric ocean.

We have to imagine a perfectly similar spectacle proceeding in the interior of a ballroom, for instance. Here we have a number of musical instruments in action, speaking men and women, rustling garments, gliding feet, clinking glasses, and so on. All these causes give rise to systems of waves, which dart through the mass of air in the room, are reflected from its walls, return, strike the opposite wall, are again reflected, and so on till they die out. We have to imagine that from the mouths of men and from the deeper musical instruments there proceed waves of from 8 to 12 feet in length [e to F], from the lips of the women waves of 2 to 4 feet in length [e" to e'], from the rustling of the dresses a fine small crumple of wave, and so on; in short, a tumbled entanglement of the most different kinds of motion, complicated beyond conception.

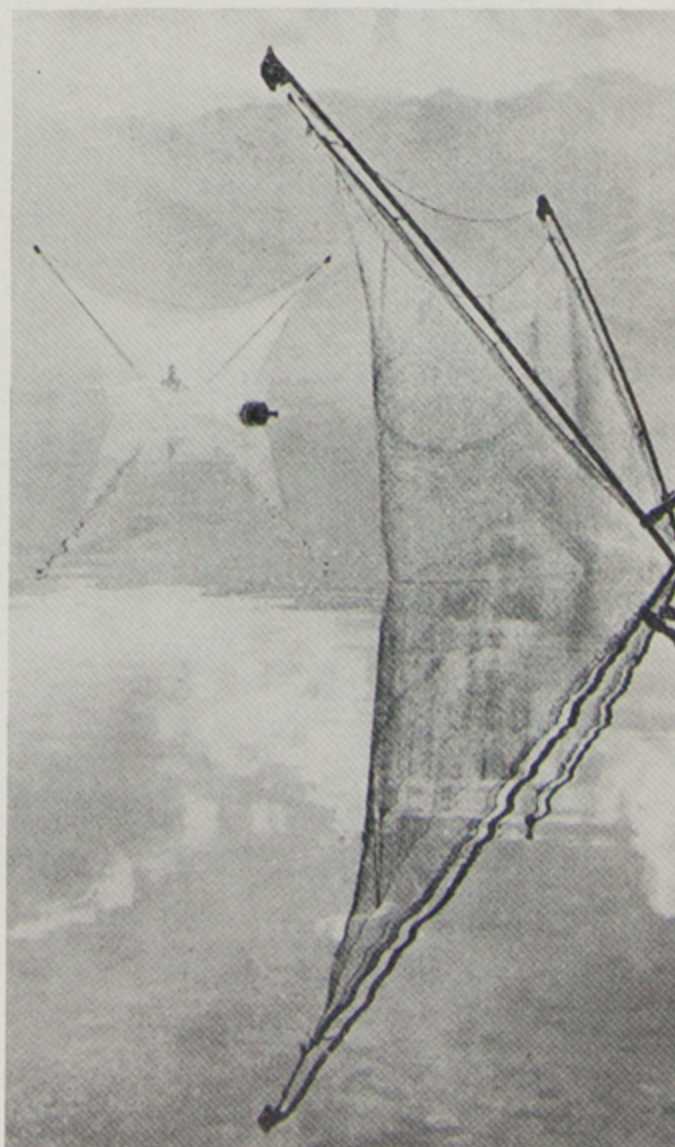
And yet, as the ear is able to distinguish all these separate constituent parts of this confused whole, we are forced to conclude that all these different systems of wave co-exist in the mass of air, and leave one another mutually undisturbed. But how is it possible for them to co-exist, since every individual train of waves has at any particular point in the mass of air its own particular degree of condensation and rarefaction, which determines the velocity of the particles of air to this side or that? It is evident that at each point in the mass of air, at each instant of time, there can be only one single degree of condensation, and that the particles of air can move with only one single determinate kind of motion, having only one single determinate amount of velocity, and passing in only one single determinate direction.

What happens under such circumstances is seen directly by the eye in the waves of water. If where the water shews large waves we throw a stone in, the waves thus caused will, so to speak, cut into the larger moving surface, and this surface will be partly raised, and partly depressed, by the new waves, in such a way that the fresh crests of the rings will rise just as much above, and the troughs sink just as much below the curved surfaces of the previous larger waves, as they would have risen above or sunk below the horizontal surface of calm water. Hence where a crest of the smaller system of rings of waves comes upon a crest of the greater system of waves, the surface of the water is raised by the sum of the two heights, and where a trough of the former coincides with a trough of the latter, the surface is depressed by the sum of the two depths. This may

be expressed more briefly if we consider the heights of the crests above the level of the surface at rest, as positive magnitudes, and the depths of the troughs as negative magnitudes, and then form the so-called algebraical sum of these positive and negative magnitudes, in which case, as is well known, two positive magnitudes (heights of crests) must be added, and similarly for two negative magnitudes (depths of troughs); but when both negative and positive concur, one is to be subtracted from the other. Performing the addition then in this algebraical sense, we can express our description of the surface of the water on which two systems of waves concur, in the following simple manner: *The distance of the surface of the water at any point from its position of rest is at any moment equal to the [algebraical] sum of the distances at which it would have stood had each wave acted separately at the same place and at the same time.*

The eye most clearly and easily distinguishes the action in such a case as has just been adduced, where a smaller circular system of waves is produced on a large rectilinear system, because the two systems are then strongly distinguished from each other both by the height and shape of the waves. But with a little attention the eye recognises the same fact even when the two systems of waves have but slightly different forms, as when, for example, long rectilinear waves advancing towards the shore concur with those reflected from it in a slightly different direction. In this case we observe those well-known comb-backed waves where the crest of one system of waves is heightened at some points by the crests of the other system, and at others depressed by its troughs. The multiplicity of forms is here extremely great, and any attempt to describe them would lead us too far. The attentive observer will readily comprehend the result by examining any disturbed surface of water, without further description. It will suffice for our purpose if the first example has given the reader a clear conception of what is meant by *adding waves together*.¹

Hence although the surface of the water at any



Sails in a Chinese Lake

Photo: Hing-Fook Kan

instant of time can assume only one single form, while each of two different systems of waves simultaneously attempts to impress its own shape upon it, we are able to suppose in the above sense that the two systems co-exist and are superimposed, by considering the actual elevations and depressions of the surface to be suitably separated into two parts, each of which belongs to one of the systems alone.

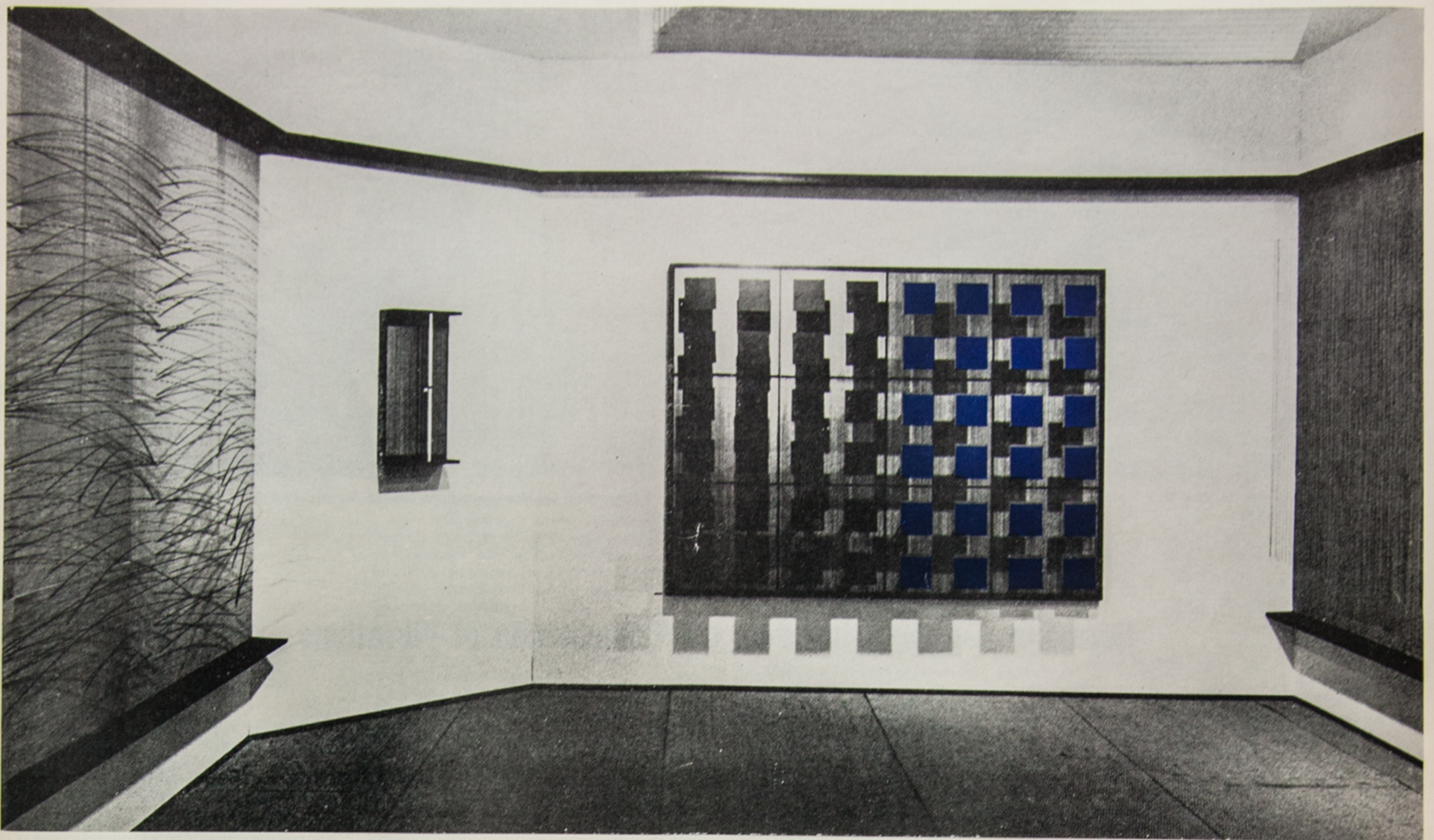
In the same sense, then, there is also a superimposition of different systems of sound in the air. By each train of waves of sound, the density of the air and the velocity and position of the particles of air, are temporarily altered. There are places in the wave of sound comparable with the crests of the waves of water, in which the quantity of air is increased, and the air, not having free space to escape, is condensed; and other places in the mass of air, comparable to the troughs of the waves of water, having a diminished quantity of air, hence diminished density. It is true that two different degrees of density, produced by two different systems of waves, cannot co-exist in the same place at the same time; nevertheless the condensations and rarefactions of the air can be (algebraically) added, exactly as the elevations and depressions of the surface of the water in the former case. Where two condensations are added we obtain increased condensation, where two rarefactions are added we have increased rarefaction; while a concurrence of condensation and rarefaction mutually, in whole or in part, destroy or neutralise each other.

The displacements of the particles of air are compounded in a similar manner. If the displacements of two different systems of waves are not in the same direction, they are compounded diagonally; for example, if one system would drive a particle of air upwards and another to the right, its real path will be obliquely upwards towards the right. For our present purpose there is no occasion to enter more particularly into such compositions of motion in different directions. We are only interested in the effect of the mass of air upon the ear, and for this we are only concerned with the motion of the air in the passages of the ear. Now the passages of our ear are so narrow in comparison with the length of the waves of sound, that we need only consider such motions of the air as are parallel to the axis of the passages, and hence have only to distinguish displacements of the particles of air outwards and inwards, that is towards the outer air and towards the interior of the ear. For the magnitude of these displacements as well as for their velocities with which the particles of air move outwards and inwards, the same (algebraical) addition holds good as for the crests and troughs of waves of water.

Hence, when several sonorous bodies in the surrounding atmosphere, simultaneously excite different systems of waves of sound, the changes of density of the air, and the displacements and velocities of the particles of air within the passages of the ear, are each equal to the (algebraical) sum of the corresponding changes of density, displacements, and velocities, which each system of waves would have separately produced, if it had acted independently²; and in this sense we can say that all the separate vibrations which separate waves of sound would have produced, co-exist undisturbed at the same time within the passages of our ear.

¹ The velocities and displacements of the particles of water are also to be added according to the law of the so-called parallelogram of forces. Strictly speaking, such a simple addition of waves as is spoken of in the text is not perfectly correct, unless the heights of the waves are infinitely small in comparison with their lengths.

² The same is true for the whole mass of external air, if only the addition of the displacements in different directions is made according to the law of the parallelogram of forces.



View of part of J. R. SOTO's retrospective exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON (first floor showroom). Left and right: parts of two vibrating walls. The left wall, measuring 20 feet long, was finished by Soto two hours before his show opened at SIGNALS. The right wall was included in the exhibition SOUNDINGS TWO. In the corner: 'Movements in Opposition'; centre: Grand Relation-Vibration, 24 black squares + 24 blue squares. All these works were done by Soto this year 1965

Photo: Clay Perry

SOTO,

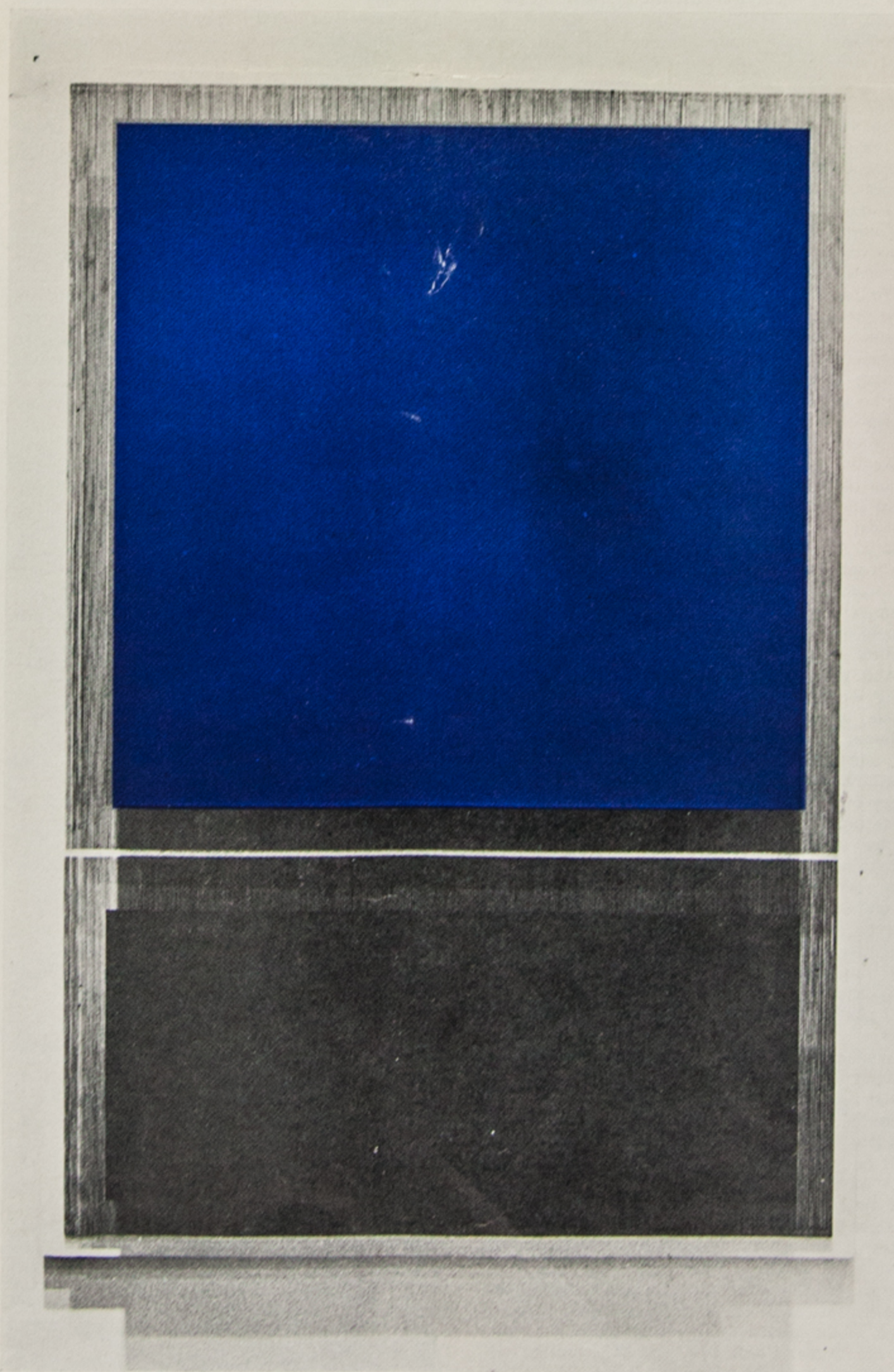
medio mago, medio geómetro, ha logrado, con elementos de plexiglas, hacer vibrar la tela tradicional y camina encantado, a la conquista de dimensiones innumerables y desconocidas. Siempre he imaginado en la plástica arquitectónica, la posibilidad de una nueva actitud, que, como en la época barroca, libere el espacio interno de toda estática de la visión, e imprima en múltiples dimensiones la alegría cinética del color. Soto, con un nuevo aporte, nos abre una puerta sobre el maravilloso paisaje del arte de mañana.

Carlos Raúl Villanueva

SOTO

ha tenido siempre la lucidez, la energía para orientarse en la dirección de las ideas más dinámicas de su tiempo. Más aún, se diría que ha extendido los límites posibles de lo que puede llamarse pintura o escultura hasta lo que llama vibraciones o estructuras cinéticas o ni siquiera se preocupa de clavar a un nombre o una identificación superfluos. SOTO es lo que MERLEAU-PONTY llama la manófenómeno que posee, con la fórmula de un movimiento, la ley de realizarse. De develar el mundo humano de la percepción y del gesto. Como el escultor que quisiera llevar al bronce el júbilo que no habita sino el instante, SOTO hace que el tiempo y el espacio sean más profundos y el sentimiento de la existencia resulte inmensamente aumentado. En la simplicidad de un paso, despliega la suma infinita de espacios y de instantes.

Clara Diamant de Sujo



J. R. SOTO: Grand Vibration-Relation: Blue and Black 1965. Collection of Paul Keeler, London

Photo: Clay Perry

The World of Relations

exists before and beyond the elements.

The value of the elements is only a descriptive reference of the relations.

The element is a secondary factor which I utilise to communicate my idea of relations.

Relations exclude the conception of the void.

Relations have an autonomous existence. My works are executed with this existence in mind.

SOTO

We declare the existence of relations

in every lucid moment of our thinking existence.

We stand amazed at the laws of coincidence without realising that we are only perceiving relations of which we had never dreamed.

The elements plunge into the work of art like fish into water: all these directions, speeds, accidents, positions are ordered by an all-embracing whole, of which they are tributaries and which conditions their variants. Their force is measured by the number of their revelations.

This state, conscious or not, of the contemporary artist has given today's art an astounding wealth of possibilities.

SOTO

Statement written in 1965

Translated from the French by Sebastian Brett. A facsimile of the statement above, in the original French, is reproduced on the cover of this issue of SIGNALS. The original manuscript will be housed in the collection of documents of modern art which will form part of the environmental museum now being planned by Paul Keeler, director of SIGNALS LONDON.

SOTO by Jean Clay
continued from p7

then, one day,' relates the painter Aimée Battistini, 'the news got around: "Soto is painting, doing enormous canvases, he cannot stop. . . ." Suddenly everyone was getting down to it.'

But how was he to live? Otero found him a room in the Hôtel de la Paix on the Quai d'Anjou on the Ile St-Louis. 'One evening, some friends took me to hear some guitarists. I found to my surprise that beside me they were nothing. So I decided to play and earn my living with my guitar. I played in cafés and found jobs in nightclubs, playing from eleven in the evening till five in the morning. I slept till two o'clock in the afternoon, then I painted till eight in the evening. In 1950 I couldn't sell anything. I gave myself twenty years to get my painting known. That's twenty years of guitar-playing. That's why I worked on it a bit more . . . and I still do. I play for an hour and a half after dinner every evening, even if I've got an important commission on my hands, I find music necessary. For me Bach is Mondrian. My music and my painting express the same thing. Like abstract painting, I don't like music to make any reference to the outside world . . . and, of course, the guitar is my independence. I don't worry if an exhibition is going badly. I know that I must do a certain work, that it is I who must do it. I go up to my studio without any feeling of compulsion. I don't ask myself whether the art public will like my work or not.'

Soto is 'proud': he has never solicited the support of any gallery. He walked out of the prestigious *Salon de Réalités Nouvelles* in Paris in 1957 — so important for a young painter — under a cloud, when his friend Yves Klein was turned down by the organisers of that salon. Early this year (1965) Soto boycotted the exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York when the organiser of that show, William C. Seitz, refused to acknowledge Soto's pioneering role in the field of perceptual art. He has been known to turn down requests for interviews from several influential art critics whom he considers 'mere opportunists'.

Nothing surprises Soto. He measures everything up to his own spiritual stature, which is not slight. When he arrived in Caracas as a young man, the modern capital of Venezuela seemed 'normal' to him. In Paris, this peasant of the Orinoco felt in no time 'as if in my own village'. And when today he visits New York one can be pretty sure that in his mind it is New York that should be astonished. 'Those who left for Europe,' remarked a missionary in 1711, who had studied the customs of the inhabitants of the Caribbean and the Orinoco, 'felt nothing in the West of great curiosity. One of them who had the honour of visiting the court of France and the beauties of Versailles, found nothing as beautiful as some animals from his country which he saw in a zoo. . . .'

Soto the aristocrat. . . . He glided like a swan over the hardships of life. . . . In 1952 he got married and in time his French wife bore him four children. 'The immediate problems,' he says, 'are easy.' It is as if he brought out of the poverty of his own country an old-fashioned kind of wisdom. He knows that a man can live off almost nothing — a handful of beans, a little maize. As in the noble figures of Latin-American art in which one can feel the simultaneous influence of two cultures, in Soto two beings co-exist: the peasant, bound by every fibre of his body to his native earth; and the Parisian intellectual, extraordinarily subtle and refined in the way he paints. The miracle is the ease of the passage from the one to the other.

Soto had been in Paris for two months when he wrote to Cruz-Diez, who was still in Venezuela: 'I have discovered some truly fantastic things. I see now that I was ignorant of twenty years of art-history.'

"All right then!" I said in fury when I got this letter,' Cruz-Diez recalls, "'Now you're becoming anti-Venezuelan." At that time I was doing social realist work with a technique akin to the Flemish primitives.'

'What I came to Paris for,' says Soto, 'was Impressionism, and cubism. But when I got here I wondered what had happened in painting since cubism. I was told: Mondrian. But Mondrian was a dead end. . . . For Mondrian, cubism was also a dead end. . . .'

That was in 1950: the beginning of a long period of apprenticeship. It was through his dependence on Mondrian, through studying the Dutch painter's art, that Soto little by little started painting his own work, eventually leaving Mondrian behind. 'To begin with,' says Soto, 'I was all for Mondrian because his forms are truly abstract. He was the only artist I knew who was completely abstract. In Dewasne's work, and in Vasarely's, the forms are clearly derived from the world of objects. . . . Soto travelled to Holland, visiting the Dutch museums. He observed Mondrian's transition from classical figurative work, through expressionism, and thence to cubism. He saw how Mondrian forced himself to extract from each element of the reality before his eyes, a dominant trait, a fundamental law; and how he searched for evidence of this dominant trait, this common denominator in every detail of the figure he was reproducing. If it was the façade of a church, for example, Mondrian would treat each element — arch, window, column — according to its major characteristic: verticality. Similarly, to evoke the sea, its waves and reflections, Mondrian placed on the canvas, like a scientist, a unitary network of small horizontal lines. Having reached this stage of his development in 1917, to arrive at the disciplined style which made him famous, Mondrian needed only to carry his system to its logical conclusion. The whole world was henceforth resolved for him into two basic dimensions: the vertical and the horizontal. Everything in the



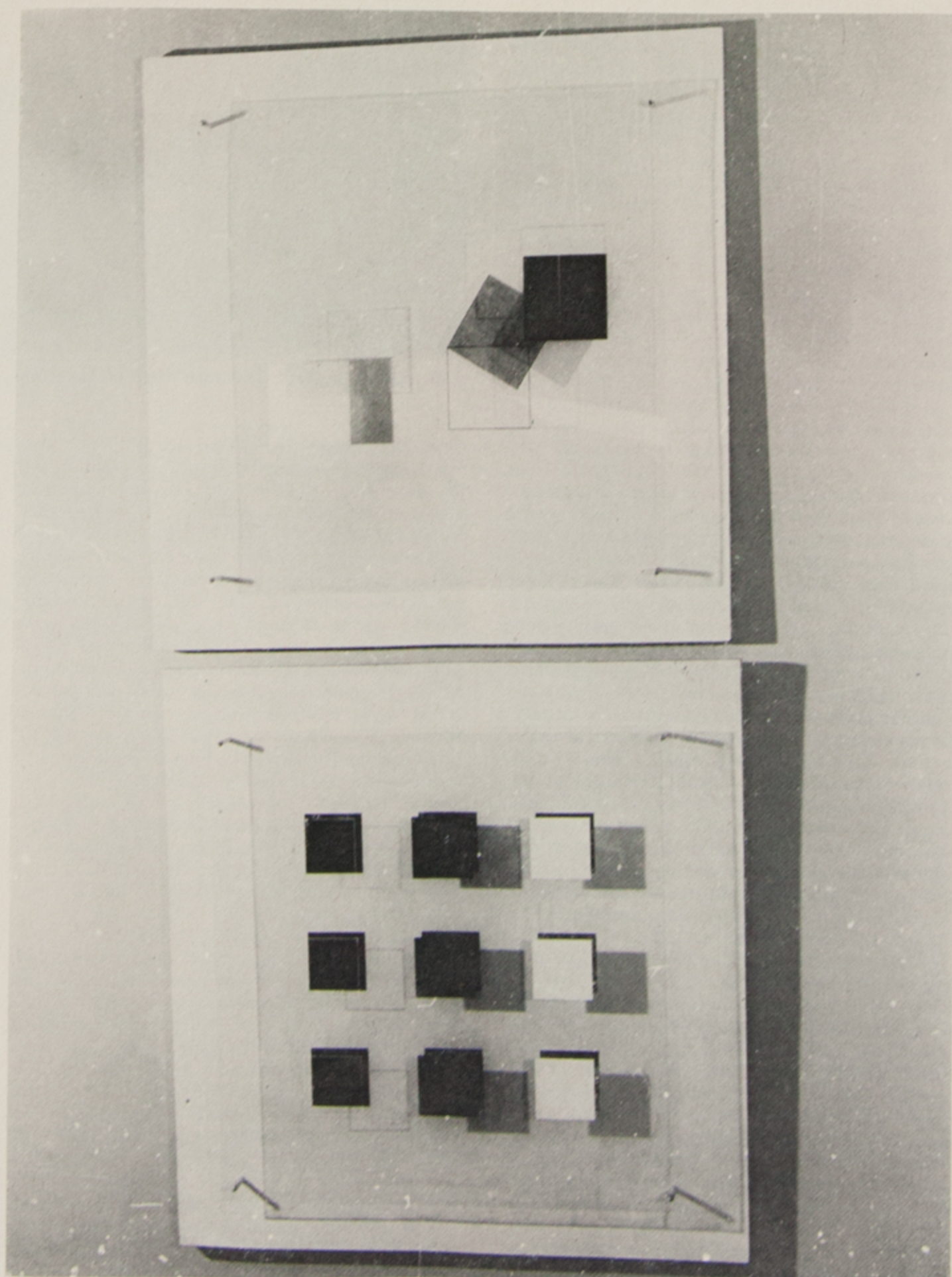
J. R. SOTO: Painting 1950

real world he reduced to these two fundamental signs — the right-angle became the inner structure of life, the hidden skeleton of the world; cleansed uncompromisingly of all anecdote, and all curves, Nature became for Mondrian nothing more than a geometrical structure — by a continued logical process his art entered the sphere of pure abstraction.

This merciless reduction of painting into its barest expression was accompanied in Mondrian by a desire to forbid himself any perspective, any allusion to the third dimension; perspective for him was in itself a realism, an illusionism — it was a prejudice in favour of an anecdotal interpretation of the real world.

Completing a process begun by Cézanne, Mondrian, by balancing scientifically his areas of colour, by enlarging those which threatened to retreat before the eye, while diminishing the more intense to prevent them from 'advancing' from the canvas, by framing the whole with black parallels which accentuated the surface area, Mondrian hoped once and for all to have resolved the problem of space — by destroying it in his work. Painting, for Mondrian, could only be two-dimensional. There must be no allusion to depth in his painted squares.

Such was his law. And then one day, as we have seen, Mondrian himself broke it, and under the influence of the illumined skyscrapers of New



J. R. SOTO: Plexiglass Works of 1955. Top: The Metamorphosis of a Square. Bottom: Suggested Cubes. Both works are in the collection of architect Carlos Raul Villanueva, Caracas

York as seen from Central Park, he passed suddenly from a surface plasticism in perfect balance, to a radically new aesthetic, based on vibration, the incessant play of colours, advancing and retreating relentlessly before the retina. The mystical search for perfection was ended. 'The great battle,' wrote Mondrian at that time, 'is to destroy static equilibrium by the continuous opposition of means of expression.'

Soto was very struck by this courageous change of attitude. As Soto understood it, Mondrian had realised that he had failed in his attempt to eliminate the third dimension, that the most scientific balance of form and colour could never achieve this goal, and that one point was enough to give the impression of depth. 'What is more,' Soto observed, 'when Mondrian's famous black lines, whose function was quite justly to reinforce the surface effect, cross, they express more depth at their intersection than when they are isolated from one another. I said to myself: you can't escape space. It must be integrated with the work of art — without using classical perspective which has given interesting results but which has long served its turn, corresponding to the particular sensibility of a past age. Something different must be found. . . .'

Thus Soto began to leave Mondrian. . . . 'To begin with, in 1950, I made yellow and irregular forms in order to dynamise the impeccable composition of the Dutch master . . . but this experiment did not work. Then I thought: forms must be left behind. If I repeat the same element again and again on the painted surface, I shall take away its importance, and finally make it disappear. What I was doing was groping my way towards vibration and optical art. That was in 1951. Then I started doing superimpositions. A regular grille consisting of little dots inscribed on a plastic surface was placed at certain angles over another grille of the same composition. Thus different densities, unequal concentrations of dots were obtained — and consequently masses in different positions. Here, also, form tended to be annihilated. In the 1954 period, with my *White Dots on Black Dots* exhibited at the *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles*, I created my first kinetic work. I fixed my transparent grille covered with dots no longer directly on to the square background but at a distance of approximately eight centimetres in front of and directly above the square of black dots. Now the effect of vibration could be obtained by the movement of the spectator. As he moves laterally in front of them, the two grilles somehow 'slip' before his eyes with enough speed to cause a retinal disturbance. But the real revolution occurred in 1955, my definite transition from optical art — in which the picture could be embraced in one glance without the intervention of movement — to kinetic art, in which movement and time-duration are directly experienced, becoming a fundamental, constitutive dimension in the work. In April of 1955 I saw for the first time Marcel Duchamp's optical machine, a spiral inscribed on a convex form and activated by a motor. I said to myself that I would make the image move without a motor. . . . That same year Soto exhibited at the Galerie Denise René in Paris his first *Kinetic Vibration* (now in the collection of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany); this work is composed of two spirals, one of which is painted white on transparent plexiglass superimposed at a distance of fifteen centimetres above the other, larger spiral painted black on a white opaque surface. When the spectator moves laterally in front of this work, the lines unite, intersect and separate; the two layers of concentric circles alternately contract and expand; the masses intermittently form and disintegrate. This work is cardinal in Soto's development; in it two fundamental problems are resolved in one: (1) the problem of movement: as we have already noted, time takes its place among the plastic dimensions, since the work can only be viewed in a duration and requires the movement of the spectator; (2) the problem of the destruction of form, the dissolution of matter, since the very movement of the spectator gives birth to the ceaseless metamorphoses of volumes inscribed by the artist. All Soto's art from this moment on had this achievement as a starting-point, and much later research in today's art, such as those being undertaken by various groups in Paris, Italy, Germany, Holland, was and is directly inspired by Soto's first vibration. Soto's spiral-relief 1955 and works of the plexiglass period, along with contemporary works by the Israeli artist Yaacov Agam, were among the first examples of kinetic art.

Soto had taken a real step forward. He was now sure that he had found his true path. Now that the problem of movement was resolved in his art, all his efforts were directed towards the dissolution of matter — the disintegration of forms. 'I could see,' said Soto, 'what the Impressionists wanted to do — convert into light the forms of the outside world; to dissolve trees, water and houses in a luminous vibration. What I aimed at was to break down geometrical objects: the line, the square: not because they are geometrical, but because they are fundamental. . . .'

In 1957 Soto perfected the plastic system which was to become part of his basic vocabulary: a square covered with small, regular, black and white lines, in front of which are placed, a few centimetres away, threads, bars of metal; squares attached in different ways, whose mass is optically eroded according to one's movement — even if it is insensible — by the regular grill against which the elements stand out. If we remain motionless, an impeccable square is superimposed in perfect outline against a larger square — the square of the background. The whole thing breathes harmony, balance and peace. It is the serenity of a Mondrian. We are in a state of suspension, of changelessness. Then we move, and the geometry comes to life, and discreetly, subtly, with extraordinary elegance, a slight agitation is provoked,

a kind of incertitude, as if a shadow of doubt was falling on the compactness, the changelessness of things. The outline of the bar insidiously broken, this solid cajoled by the subtle play of the lines in the background, this delicate questioning of the most evident certainties—what is it but the art of Mondrian revisited, reinvested within with the spirit of today's art? A gulf separates the works of Soto and Mondrian which seem, at first, so close to each other: between them lies the frontier dividing the old and the new.

It now remained for Soto simply to pursue his discovery to the end. With an amazing virtuosity, for years he has been constantly creating new plastic ideas founded on the same principle, constantly refining his sensibility, carrying out works of increasing perfection and beauty. Immediately discordant voices arose: he was accused of repeating himself. French critics who had never found a word to say about his researches in the 'fifties—and few artists have been so scandalously ignored in France as Soto has been, whereas Germany, Sweden, Holland, England and the USA had long since recognised his achievements—these same critics all at once noticed both that he 'existed' and that he was 'drying up'. 'For those who are discovering me, I am a young artist,' Soto explains. 'They are unaware that it took me twenty years of anguish to arrive where I am. It's useless saying this sort of thing, it's a personal affair . . . people want music-hall, they see art as a spectacle which must be different every day. Yet Van Gogh did the same thing all his life, and thank goodness he did. When one has found one's language, one has only to use it. I have no further technical problems. Now, with this language which belongs to me, which is close to me, I have only to speak this truth, which is mine also. . . .'

'Elegance', 'refinement': it is always with ancient keys, one's mouth full of an exhausted vocabulary, that one approaches these new works. It takes a long effort to discover their true message. Why not, for instance, love in Soto certain relations with Nature, the sparkle of rain, or the optical vibration produced by a symmetrically planted forest when one passes in a car? He does not like such comparisons. 'My work is totally abstract. It was born out of a study of painting, not of life.' With Agam, he is part of a generation of artists for whom abstract painting was the first step in art. Unlike Kandinsky, Malevitch or Mondrian, the new artists did not have to carry out a slow and painful metamorphosis, to pass from the figure to the sign. They were born abstract, and the best have remained so.

Others perhaps will like in Soto—as in Vermeer, Poussin or Seurat—the high quality of the plastic relationships—their purity. Soto does not like this approach either. 'Even this word "plastic"; Soto says, 'I reject. I was against "neoplastic art", and I know Mondrian was too. "Plastic" evokes form. But I am against form. I have never believed in the plastic relationships between forms. It is a notion which Mondrian and Malevitch dispelled. The *White Square* of Malevitch, the *Horizontal-Vertical* of Mondrian, swept away all that. Works, for me, are, above all, signs, not material things. . . . I demonstrate abstract data and concepts. It would be a mistake to see in the very work before you the object of my art. *The work is there only as a witness, a sign of something else. . . .*

But of what? For Soto, the work does not exist as a thing in itself: it is a sign—established by the intuition of the artist—which informs us of a constituent of reality. Between the object he creates and the whole cosmic order of things there exists, Soto claims, certain 'relations'. The work, standing on the crossroads of the microcosmos and the macrocosmos, assimilates in its structure a global phenomenon inscribed in Nature. Lost amid the endless mysteries which surround us, and which are constantly enlarging and upending scientific research, the artist makes rules, establishes relations which are his way of reading the universe and interpreting the essential physical laws. In his own way, he tries to realise—always by intuition—the spatio-temporal continuum which constitutes and envelops us.

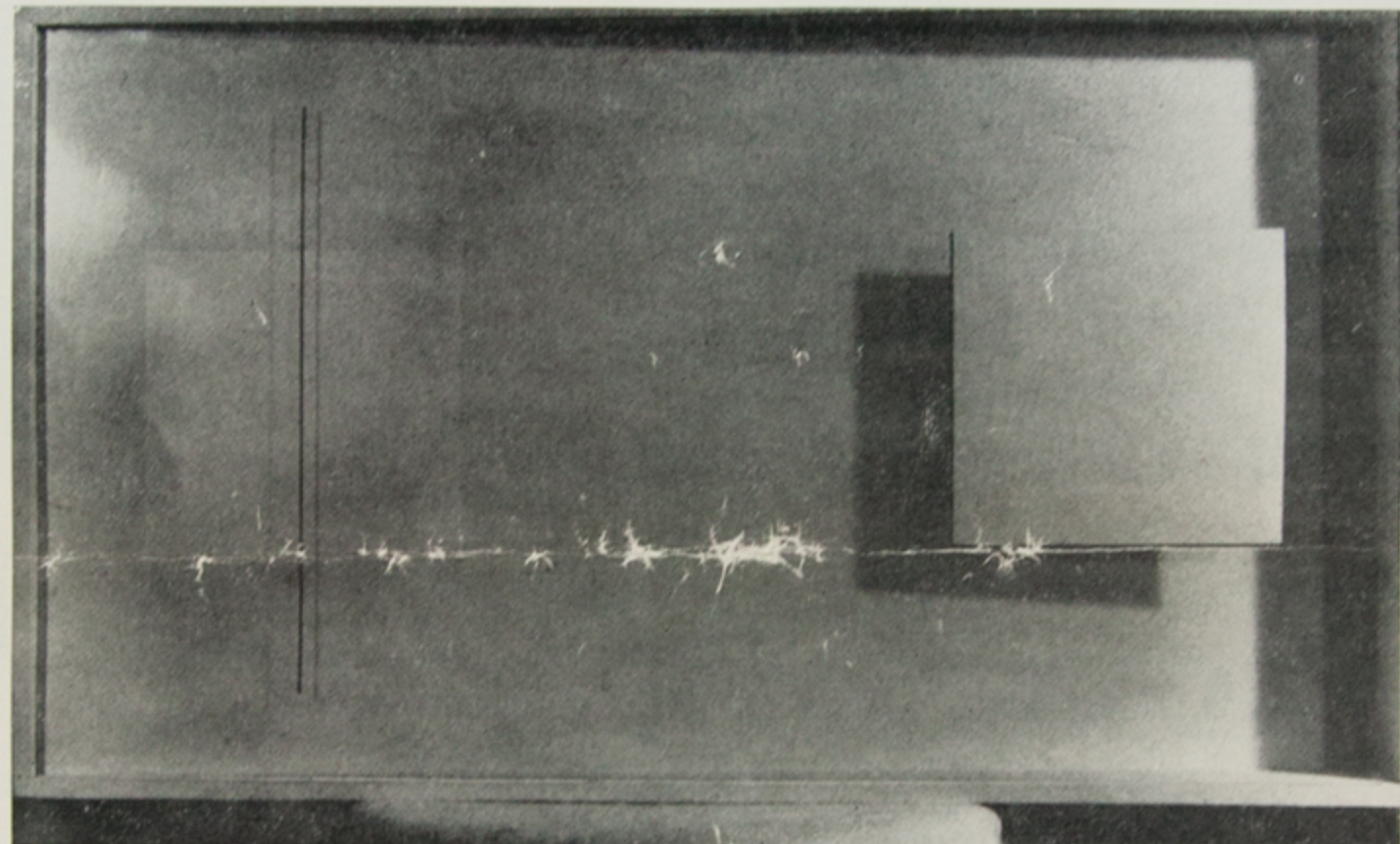
This explains the extraordinary, almost brutally abstract way, so stripped of any traditional 'aesthetic pleasure', in which Soto looks at the great works of the past. He is not far from regarding these works primarily as intellectual propositions. 'Really,' he says, 'I like *thinking* about a work of Mondrian just as much as *seeing* one. Since 1950, when I first saw at the Kroller-Muller Museum in Holland Mondrian's painting of 1917 composed entirely of *plus* and *minus* signs, I have not given a thought to pointillism. I said to myself: there, he has summed up the world with two signs—the vertical and the horizontal. His work is not the juxtaposition of happily balanced surfaces, but an attempt to synthesise the opposite forces of the real world with the simplest possible graphic expression. It is the way onwards from cubism.⁶ If Mondrian's whole work had consisted of only one cross, I would have been just as happy. He did the others only to *deepen and explore the first intuition. . . .* It was the same with Malevitch. There's no need to see his *White Square on a White Background* to admire his painting. It's enough to know the proposition. I saw this painting recently in New York. It didn't strike me any more than the image I had of it. I have known of its existence since 1949, when I thought "Marvellous!" It was the *synthesis* which astonished me. By painting white on white Malevitch was saying: *Let us paint light as light.* Let us put light directly on to the canvas. There is no need to make use of the go-between of objects by which light is normally represented. It was this very proposition which Yves Klein took up in his *blue monochromes*. He took hold of reality and put it on the canvas. It is the sign of reality which he gives us; not an academic, naturalist rendering of it. . . .'



J. R. SOTO: Maquette for an Optical Wall 1952

It is the *proposition* which fascinates Soto. 'Juan Gris was not a great painter. He stylised and embellished cubism. He did not invent the idea. I prefer an imperfect Braque to a perfectly made Gris. . . . But take Turner, for example: a genius. He wanted to show the total destruction of solids and all figurative matter by light. Turner is the first and greatest of the Impressionists. His successors marked a retreat, with their little sketched silhouettes. . . .'

But if the work of art is the sign of our relationship to the cosmos, if it denotes, with the minimum of means, an essential property of our relations with the world, if every true artist finally delivers throughout his life's work one sole and profound message, what is the sign of Soto, what essential truth is he struggling to give us in the constant motion of his compositions beyond their formal beauty? What, in fact, is his proposition? Perhaps just this modern truth: the constant metamorphoses of space and time, of energy and matter, the infinite instability of the real world. 'In microphysics,' Bachelard wrote, 'it is absurd to conceive matter as in a state of rest, since it exists for us only as energy, and sends us messages



J. R. SOTO: The Distance Between Two Squares 1953

only by radiation.' The modern mind has grasped this essential discovery: that nothing in the world is closed, stable and compact, that nothing escapes the universal process of transformation, that nothing in Nature—and in the world of man—is static and definitive. Where could this be better demonstrated than in the works of Soto, in which matter invested from all sides decomposes on our retina in *intangible transient vibrations*—in the very image of the real world?⁷

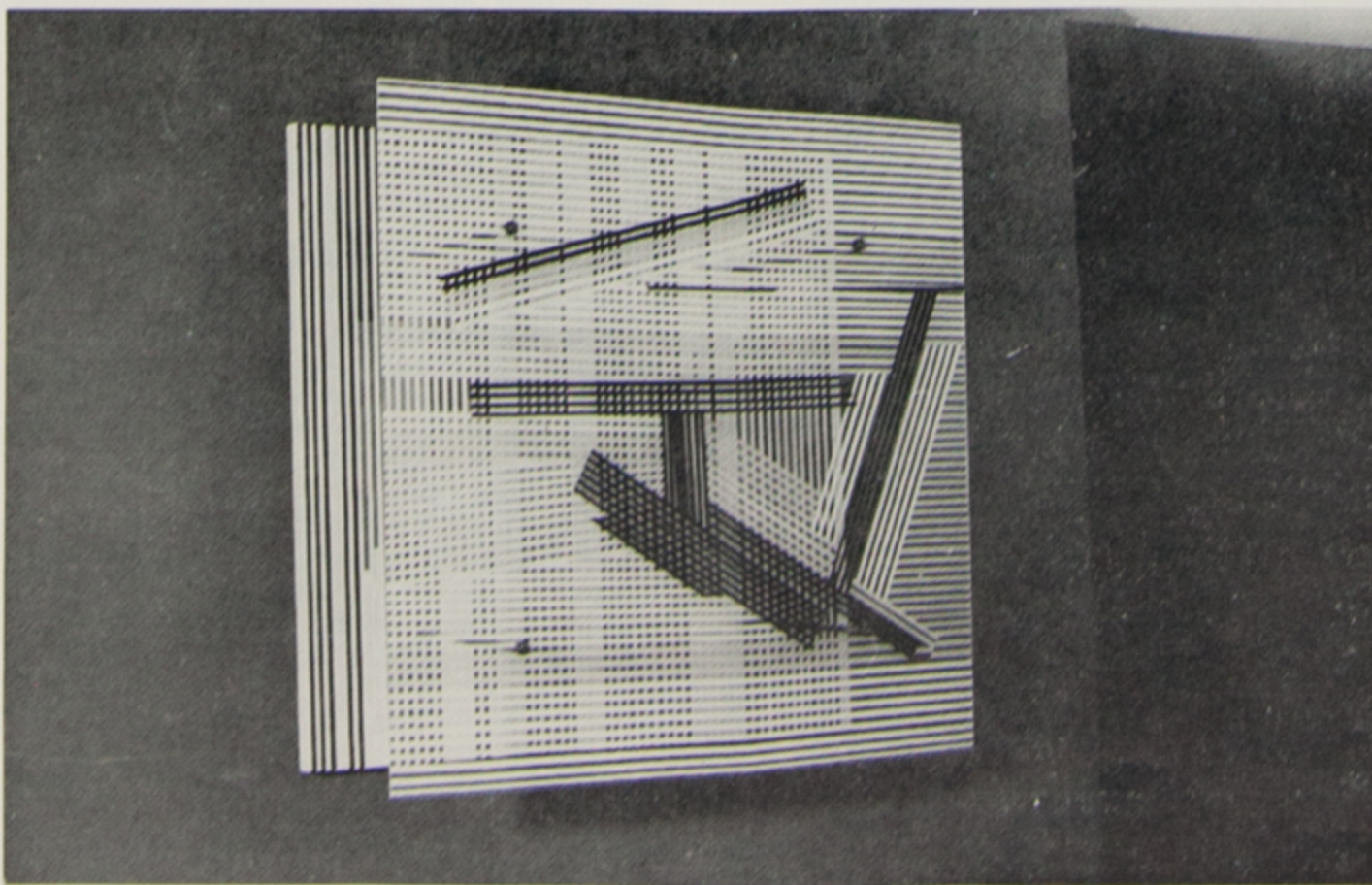
But why this profusion of works when, as he says, 'the proposition alone matters'?

'I don't know why. Perhaps to spread a truth which one senses—perhaps because every new work reveals something else, is an advance. *It is like following a line of thought.* Mondrian said: "*Just one more little step forward.*" . . . One must work for the greatest simplicity, restraint. It is a long process. . . . The best synthesis requires only a minimum of elements. And then . . . the very

fact of creating is a little as if one were forcing the world to exist, to organise itself around the work, as if I was demonstrating—to *myself*—the existence of the world through the work, through this sign, this line I put down. This square is banal and without importance, but as soon as it is there, it conditions and orders the space which surrounds it. . . .'

What kind of proof is Soto demanding, or what doubt is torturing him, that he must search for it in the work of his own hands? 'When I was a kid, in my village, the men never went to church. They did not believe in organised religion. Perhaps, when they are about to die, to please their relatives they would accept a priest, but at no other time. When I was a kid I said to myself: if God saves only those who are baptised, then He is unjust to other men. The Roman Catholic religion imposed things which were absurd in my village. . . . I had some friends who belonged to the Mohammedan faith. . . . Christianity offered no real evidence that it was the only true religion. I consider that to believe that one's own religion is the only true one is to lack respect towards others. . . . And then, too, the Christian religion

destroyed the American Indian civilisations. When I really understood the significance of that act, I was disgusted. The Christians believe other religions idolatrous. . . . The Indian civilisations in America I consider of great purity: they reached a great stage of communication. . . . Later, in Ciudad Bolivar, when I discovered that I had no solution, that there was no solution to the absurdity of life, and death, it was a great shock to me. Since then the problem has not been resolved for me, but I can put it aside when I realise that we humans are almost insignificant elements, minute marks in an immense and miraculous universe. Man himself is not a miracle at all; it is his realisation of his imperfection which brings him to think that sooner or later he will be saved. . . . When I stopped believing in the divine immortality of men, when I understood that we were abandoned in this miraculous world, I said to myself: Life is carried on here for two



J. R. SOTO: Superimposition. Painted plexiglass and wood 1955

things only: for art and for children. The artist is lucky, his work is a way of staying longer, of leaving a mark which lasts longer than memory, inasmuch as his message goes on after the moment of contemplation. It is repeated from one work to another, from generation to generation, through the collective sensibility. In fact, it worries me greatly that my children shall soon have these metaphysical problems to work out. Already when they question me about death, I feel a bit guilty having placed them in this situation . . . but the human race must go on, I am realistic: art is only a fragment of eternity. It may last for centuries, but that is nothing. The human race may die, or the globe may disintegrate . . . even without the bomb. . . . The sun is very old, it is beginning to totter already. . . . It's funny how the other creatures in Nature don't worry themselves with these problems. Everything for them—food, sex—is settled. It is as if, in his anxiety, man were seeking a lost or inaccessible secret. That is why many poets have looked in primitive civilisations for their happiness, this kind of balance which the animals have. So art seems to be a compensation for our disorder, our anxiety, something that counterbalances human imperfection. If it is not, I don't see that it has any point: it would be colourless. Man is so imperfect! When you think that people can come together to condemn a man to death and execute him . . . that does not go on in the animal world. Not this formality, this ceremony . . . done in cold blood. Since my childhood I have observed the impurity of the human condition. My friends tell me of my serenity, the way my life is so organised. That always astonishes me. I may not be a romantic tormented type, always drunk or threatening suicide . . . at least in my work I put anguish in parentheses. There are three possible attitudes. The cry of anguish: that is Artaud, I admire him. Artaud amazes me. But it's not my way. You can also deny and destroy everything, cut everything down to the ground. That is Dadaism. I try to make something that will spare other people anguish. I try to give a serenity—a harmony which does not exist in the real world. What else can one give? I've got another thirty years ahead of me. I want to paint until I am ninety, like Franz Hals who painted *The Regents* at eighty-five. . . . Those thirty years give me a feeling of power, of being able on my small scale to help other people and wake them up. They may look, and for a few seconds they may see harmony. They will have escaped for an instant from the prison of their daily lives. They have seen an image of man, a climate: possible serenity. Of course I realise very well that beside the anguish of our race, it is very little. It is even terrible, this disproportion between the absurdity of life and what one can give—that is the true anguish—but what else can be done, but create this little spark which awakes the taste of what is possible, and gives a feeling of hope? Hope that one day man may be a little less imperfect. . . . My works are very fragile, and perhaps express the fragility of life—a way of integrating the fragility of existence. That is possible. I have always felt this transcendence. . . . One passes so quickly in a world which is so vast. . . . There are many people who, confronted with the absurd, say—what's the good? I react quite naturally—it isn't even voluntary—by searching to create a parcel of harmony. If I were to measure the role of this work in the universal chaos, I would be powerless to act. But I make no comparison. I work as one sings, as one lives. . . . My work is optimistic, an attempt at communication. One of man's rare noble characteristics is his ability to bring home something new, to widen the field of the possible, to make man greater. . . .'

Harmony? Balance? In Soto's thoughts we witness words arise which we had thought were long banished from modern art, and which seemed more appropriate describing the wonderful geometry of Mondrian—in its determination to escape contingency, time, and history—than the attempts of the kinetic artists, in their effort to proclaim the changing profusion of matter, the intangible complexity of space-time. The fact is that we stand at the heart of a struggle, at the crossroads of two contradictory temptations, of two antagonistic visions of art: on one hand, the metaphysical vision, bound by anguish through the realisation of man's finitude, and which gives birth to an art of illusion, in which the desire for harmony predominates, and works which struggle in their perfection to escape time and death. This is the choice of Vermeer, of Poussin, and of Mondrian. It is found in the immaculate 'boxes' of Soto, in the changeless elegance of their proportions. On the other hand, there is the plunge into the modern universe, the intuitive participation in the great technical, scientific and psychological upheavals of the age. There is the work in tune with its time, which reflects its uncertainty and its chaos, which involves itself entirely in reality, which no longer chooses to escape time but to reveal it, which expresses in its own terms the modern doubt over the integrity of solids, the perpetual metamorphosis of matter, and which at the same time accepts death, and proclaims it, for the artist and man in general, as the inexorable limit of time. In short: to transcend time or to accept it, to deny it access to the work or to integrate it in the work, to escape the age or to embrace it—this is the fruitful contradiction underlying Soto's work, a contradiction which illustrates the gulf between man's will to participate in the future of the human adventure, and the limits of his destiny.

It is possible that the evolution of thought and science will give birth in the future to psychological upheavals, so that the collective anguish of man will dissolve, and cease bleeding our civilisations, in which the morbid is often the comple-

SOTO by Jean Clay continued from p9

ment of leisure. It is possible that tomorrow the spirit will be so transformed that man will not live every day face to face with his death.

Perhaps. But we are not there yet. That is what Soto's work tells us. Aristocratic, lucid, stoical, it is among the first of its age to bear witness both to the struggle of humanity and to our endless strivings towards a human utopia.

Paris 1965. Monograph written specially for SOTO's retrospective exhibition at SIGNALS LONELON.

NOTES TO JEAN CLAY'S MONOGRAPH ON SOTO

¹ One bolivar is equivalent to one shilling and sixpence.

² Art et Technique. Editions de Minuit, Paris.

³ Mondrian. Flammarion, Paris.

⁴ Andre Breton could still write in 1952: 'Insofar as there have been able to show any concern about the science of their time, the poets and artists whom I have known seem to me to have adopted an attitude of protest towards it, and, in what concerns them, to have chosen a deliberately reactionary standpoint.'

⁵ Shown in June 1955 by the painter and film director Robert Breer to the Director of the Museum of Modern Art of New York, this work [Spiral Relief: Vibrationstructure 1955] left the Director of New York's Museum of Modern Art 'cold'. It's not surprising that ten years later, in the same museum, in the exhibition entitled The Responsive Eye organised by William C. Seitz, SOTO's considerable contribution to the development of kinetic and optical art was neglected—while a large number of 'super-impositions' and works using the moiré principle, directly inspired by SOTO's researches, were exhibited.

⁶ Mondrian, in his theoretical writings, gave the following explanation of his views on geometry: 'In Nature we establish that all relationships are dominated by one primordial relationship, that of the extreme one, in face of the extreme other. Now plastic abstraction of these relationships gives a precise representation of this relationship by the duality of positions which forms the right-angle. This relationship of position is the most stable of all because it expresses in perfect harmony the relationship of the extreme one and the extreme other, and bears within it all the other relationships.'

⁷ Cf Francaesetel again in Art et Technique: 'Nature is now conceived on a system of vibrations, in which man is no longer the centre, nor even the microcosm, but in which he constitutes a fugitive and secondary meeting-place of the displaced forces.'

Oh claro honor del liquido elemento por Luis de Gongóra

Oh claro honor del liquido elemento, dulce arroyuelo de corriente plata cuya agua entre la hierba se dilata con regalado son, con paso lento!

Pues la por quien helar y arder me siento, mientras en ti se mira. Amor retrata de su rostro la nieve y la escarlata en tu tranquilo y blando movimiento,

véte como te vas; no dejes floja la undosa rienda al cristalino freno con que gobiernas tu veloz corriente;

que no es bien que confusamente acoja tanta belleza en su profundo seno el gran señor del húmido tridente.



Hands at a harp

Tied to the Live music: Alasdair Clayre

© Alasdair Clayre

Hawthornberries

A man and a girl were walking when the wind sun frung
cold and red A man and a girl were walking And the
Man leaned down to the girl and said

words & music Alasdair Clayre

SONGS

by Alasdair Clayre

The Old Man's Song

When I was young & married my wife, you couldn't get a job to
save your life. With my wife and son in either hand For
two long years I travelled this land And
kick-on I've served my time

words & music © Alasdair Clayre

Tiny Newman

They call him Ti-ny New-man be-cause he was so small, No
high-er than a lamp post, and so broad as he was tall, His job was fit-ting
motor-tyres he did it with his hands And took some home when his
mother made him to use for e-tas-tic bands the stones
uses the same
tune as the
verse

words © Alasdair Clayre
tune: Patsy Fagan (traditional)

I started writing songs about three years ago, and after a time I came across Charles Parker. He and Ewan MacColl taught me a new way of song writing that they had derived from the ballads. The folk song tradition until then had been a source of melodies and images, but the words I wanted were like written poems set to music, not like traditional songs. Their approach was different. They regarded the printing press as a potential enemy, and were concerned with the living rhythms of vernacular speech, and with the way oral tradition had preserved and distilled the ballads, while print could fix and kill them. Portable tape recorders had given them the possibility of new ballad forms. Charles Parker works for the BBC, and over ten years they produced a series of Radio Ballads, whose texture was recorded speech set among songs written from the same speech in folk song forms. When English people are saying what they feel most strongly, they still speak in spare rhythms full of concrete imagery. The Radio Ballads were a way of drawing on that strength, and at their best they had the texture of the traditional songs they were derived from.

I worked in this form with David Kennard last year and produced a radio programme about a big factory. Below are two of the songs from it. One song is a fantasy about a real man, Tiny Newman, a giant who used to fit motor tyres with his hands in the early days of the Morris works. The other song is about the experience which haunts most older people's minds—the Depression of the 1930s. With them are two songs written in the other way, like poems.

I am producing two pieces in the radio ballad form at the moment, one about love, one about war, expiation and peace. Michael Jessett, the composer and guitarist, works with me; and I sing with Vashti, a young songwriter now preparing for her first long-playing record of her songs and ours.

Below are some of the things said to David Kennard and myself in the factory:

The Factory

Well, after coming out of the building line which is an open air job, I felt shut in; I felt like a bird in a cage, what's been used to wild life and it wants some sticking, the machinery.

There's one department there which they call Trip Hammers, and you can't even hear yourself think let

alone speak—it's terrible. One trip hammer is about twice as bad as a pneumatic drill and you've got at least six of those all going at once.

Hold it up by hand, put your foot down on the pedal and it starts, and it makes a hell of a din. Just up and down. It's terrible... what can I liken it to? Have you ever heard an Oerlichen gun? You know, where there's boom, boom, boom, boom. Oh, faster than that.

Your overalls will stand up on their own very nearly with the oil and dirt on the body department, working on steel.

On the cleansing department, they're the lowest paid men in the works and yet they've got the dirtiest and filthiest jobs. Because everything's got to be cleaned you see. It must be clean and tidy. To clean out a pit, a sludge pit you see, that's where all the dross is going off, the smell's enough to drive a man insane.

We used to have safety belts to go down, then dig it out in buckets and you used to be pulled up out of these tanks—a dangerous job. You was only allowed down there so long and you hollered when you'd had enough. We used to wear a mask but no more of that, it's a terrible job and it could only be done at night.

The Depression

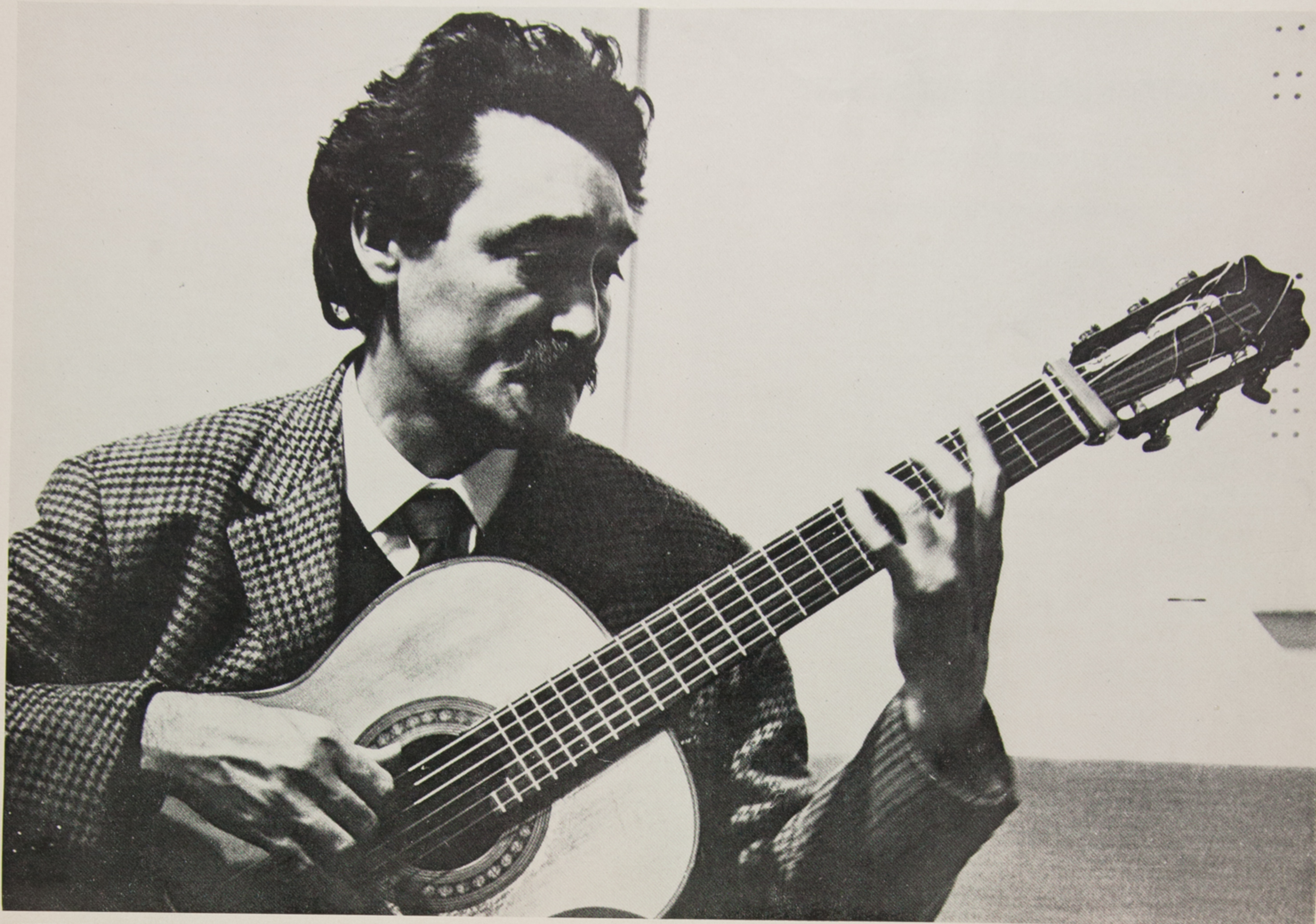
You hear these people talking about the good old days but I think that's a lot of hooey. There was no such thing as the good old days. In the good old days you had to graft like hell, didn't you? They'd just come along and say 'Get your cards and get out!' And the people who had to work and wander round the country looking for jobs, you had to take what was going on the job. And if you didn't like it you had to move around, there was no barbed wire round the old hut like, you just had to get out and that's it.

When I was a child at school I've had to stand at six o'clock in the morning outside the pawn shop and take things to be pledged to get the money for the week's food.

Give me the present day. Pre-war men were like rats, scavenging for food. That's what they used to remind me of—fighting for food. I mean if you see a rat and you throw it some food, and they all fight for it, well, that's just what it was like before the war. You'd grab anything that was coming your way.

Well, of course, today it's a different matter. You have a guarantee, you have a guaranteed waiting time and so on, which is a good thing what the Unions have done. And at that time the Union wasn't in being.

When I was young and married my wife, you couldn't get a job to save your life;



JESUS-RAFAEL SOTO playing the guitar at SIGNALS LONDON

Photo: Clay Perry

with my wife and my son in either hand,
for two long years I travelled this land.

(refrain)
And I reckon I've served my time.

My shoes were out and my coat was torn,
and here we had our daughter born;
then I found this job and I got them bread,
clothes for their backs and a roof to their head.

They were cut-throat years, you were fighting your
mate,
with another man queuing for your job at the gate;
if the foreman didn't like your face one day
you got no work and you got no pay.

Then we'd had enough, we learned how to strike,
it was six hard weeks but we won our fight:
the work to our hands and the waiting wage,
it was waking up in a golden age.

The young men come and they dress so fine,
but they don't know how we won the line;
they're getting too young to know my face
and their work comes to me at the devil's pace.

And I reckon I've served my time.

Some day all this is going to change I feel absolutely sure about this. I mean animals have to hunt and scout around for things to eat, and make their own shelter. But we want something different.

Tiny Newman

Chap called Tiny. It was when they first started fitting the tyres on the wheels, he could pick up a tyre and put it on with his hands without using a lever or anything like that.

A tremendous man, I should think he was about six feet four, but he'd got shoulders almost as broad as he was high.

He used to put the tyres on with his hands. Tiny used to sit there hours all day long and used to swing the tyres on with his hands, the strength in his hands. He was a terrific sized man; he weighed about eighteen stone.

Oh yes. Old Tiny Newman. He had hands like legs of mutton. And he could put tyres on blooming near as quick as they could put them on with machinery today. And people came from all over the world to see him put them on.

I remember one instance, he lived at Headington. On a bus going up Headington Hill he picked a chap up and held him over the side of the bus, that was the open top buses in those days you know. He annoyed him and he picked him up and hung him over the side. He was that sort of chap. Very in-offensive.

They called him Tiny Newman because he was so small
No higher than a lamppost, not so broad as he was tall
His job was fitting motor tyres, he did it with his hands,
And he took some home when his mother made jam to use for
elastic bands.

Today Soto is not only a great painter, he is also a magnificent musician. Those who heard him play the guitar, with Cruz-Diez and Juvenal Ravelo, on the evening of the private view of Cruz-Diez's exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON last September 23, 1965, confirm this view. The following note was sent by David Medalla to Paul Keeler the morning after that event:

'You are right: Soto's handling of the guitar is masterful. Not unlike, I imagine, the way a master Zen archer handles a bow and arrow. With clarity, precision. Effortlessly, because he knows the true meaning of discipline. Lovingly, because he knows the true meaning of freedom. Detached, because he knows the true meaning of action. Unflinching, because he knows true passion. Unerring, because he has true direction. Inspiring, because he has wisdom.'

Tiny was a peaceful man, his fights were short and few
But a mate of his in an argument once stood on a different
view.
He held him out the top of a bus between the road and sky
When he dragged him in that mate and him saw exactly eye to
eye.
Well astronomers from all the world are gathering in their
crowds,
To ask why flying saucers now come whistling through the
clouds;
They'll tell you they're phenomena only science understands,
But they're Tiny Newman's rejects going hurtling from his
hands.
And if your little daughter points a finger at the sky
And asks why there are stars there so sparkling and so high
You can tell her Tiny Newman is the man who is to blame
Since the night he took to welding things have never looked
the same.

The Cold Wind Blows

words & music © Alan Clavin

One day there was a power cut, the coal supply was low,
The presses all dropped idle and the line went creeping slow,
So Tiny turned it with his hands and sent it thundering past,
Till a copper ran him in for driving about two hundred cars too
fast.

Where's Tiny Newman, come sun or rain or snow?
Where's Tiny Newman when the morning hooters blow?
Turn left at number fifteen gate and that's where Tiny stands,
With motor tyres all round him and he's fitting them with his
hands.

Hawthorn berries

A man and a girl were walking
when the winter sun hung cold and red;
a man and a girl were walking
and the man leaned down to the girl and said:

Do you see those crimson berries
that hang there high on the hawthorn tree?
As cold as those red berries
my blood will bleed if you go from me.

Do you see that yellow apple
that hangs alone on the empty bough?
As round as that one apple
is my only love that I give you now.

Do you see the blackthorn branches
with the sloes between now, that no leaves hide?
As sweet as those dark branches
will be this midnight at your side.

The cold wind blows

There's a cold wind blows you cannot see
it shakes the thin leaves from the tree
blows the small birds' singing away to the south
it drives black dust in a young girl's smiling mouth

There's a strong wind blows you will not hold
it brings you pleasure, lets your body grow cold
blow makes your hair free, turns it dark then grey
lets you laugh and sing before it lifts your voice
away.

That wind was blowing before the breath of man
straying on the water before the world began;
takes each young body to play its slow tune on
that wind will be blowing when we and our love
are gone.

SOTO'S ACHIEVEMENTS

by Umbro Apollonio

Curator of the Historic Archives of Modern Art, Venice Biennale

The changes occurring in modern civilisation present aspects, for the most part, of a contrasting nature: they represent the idea that no fixed truth exists which can be contained within one particularised form. These changes propose to achieve that fusion of mind and feeling which only the creative act can fulfil in terms of duration, by framing the inventive and not the stipulated moment. Nevertheless, the various perturbations which characterise such procedure are not the same in value, for in the majority of cases they are limited to a transformation of established iconography, that is, to a prolongation of already known linguistic patterns without, however, passing into the dimension of fully actualised history, of reality. It is actually on the basis of a new concept of reality, as opposed to the one codified on previous speculative schemes, that one must formulate the critical judgment of value, identifiable in the overcoming of all formal incongruity. I would say that the attentive observation of artistic phenomena must at a given moment impose a choice by acknowledging certain premises and facts which in the end emanate unflinchingly from those factors of a perfectly controllable energetic quality, rendering time irreversible and space to the same degree unbounded.

There exists, therefore, an historical development—too often blinded by irrelevant superimpositions owing to a still legitimate reaction of existential character—which must be closely pursued for the assurance of a constructive presence capable of giving significance to the organic unity of the relationship between historical-cultural, conceptual-imaginative, speculative-intuitive data. To art historians must be given the task of discovering this development, perhaps by means of delicate excavation; but when it will be unearthed for all to see, it will no longer be the case to lament the exclusion of the name of Jésus-Rafael SOTO, still missing in too many histories of contemporary art, though generous they may be in their citations of various accomplishments. It is strange, to say the least, that after more than a decade of qualified activity, after having made his work known with striking lucidity through his numerous exhibitions, after already attracting imitators and followers, his work, though not altogether ignored or completely disregarded, is hardly celebrated, considering the importance of his pertinent innovations. SOTO's ability became evident when, in 1950 after leaving Caracas, he established himself in Paris; in 1952 he exhibited in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles; three years later he participated in the exhibition 'Le Mouvement' at the Denise René Gallery, where, in 1956, he was given a one-man show. However, since certain priorities must not go unheeded, especially in an era which lends itself to the rapid diffusion and the rapid exploitation of ideas (of course, one must not equivocate on the effective value of priorities, since not all of them are willed and conscious), it is noteworthy that actually in the 1955 *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* he exhibited the first kinetic object—obtaining a spiral effect by superimposing at a measured distance a white serigraph on plexiglass on to a black serigraph on wood. This piece, whose basis is a vibrating structure from which he derived other variations for his personal show in Paris the following year, and still other versions for the 1958 Venice Biennale, is today in the Krefeld Museum. This model in a short time gave inspiration to artists for analogous constructions. His research in 1951 on the effect of vibration reached by two or three colours in relief was also the 'first' in its field; it was shortly after employed by other artists.

Having emphasised this point, I feel I must state that SOTO reached full maturity in 1955 when he invented his type of kinetic structures. About 1950 he had investigated movement through simple contrasts of a geometric nature—directional straight and curved lines impressed against sectoral backgrounds, but all of them ordered without rigour so that the general effect based on antagonism and superimpression lacks verifiable and stylistic homogeneity. Shortly afterwards (1951) the potential movement in his paintings was formulated on an organisation of horizontal bands in relief, some in black and white, others in black, white, or another colour—reliefs which acquired visual 'life' through extremely simple means. There then followed his research on progressive motion in order to demonstrate the mobility of space on the surface by means of organised unities; that is, from a system of relations, even in opposition to each other, he passes gradually to an associative process. But behind SOTO's experimentation one always perceives the deliberate intention to create a constant, repetitive vibration (which exactly goes back to 1950 when the sequence of his lines implied a repressed oscillation). It was actually in 1955 that the vibration became more explicit and continuous, homogeneous in quality, strongly characterised and predominantly on a three-dimensional scale.

SOTO's painting problem is thus primarily concerned with diffused spatial vibratility, and if one were to seek an illustrious comparison, no works could be more pertinent than those of SEURAT. In SEURAT's paintings the continuity

of vibrations based on the cohesive force of the various formal units is such that any separation between one object and another is suppressed; all participate without interruption in a unique sentiment. Vibratility in the atmospheric environment was achieved by the Impressionists through pictorial fusion. In SEURAT's paintings the unity of the various parts, of the various corpuscles, is determined in a mental, all-embracing space. SOTO, by other means and by other methods of verification, is today restating that expressive problem as it can be understood and evolved by a contemporary spirit, a spirit, nevertheless, aware of a reality not based on empirical experience and sensibility, but more on procedures and objectivity, where each particular situation is articulated according to rules concerning a global situation.

On the contemporary cultural scene, SOTO is a creative figure who doesn't make use of second-hand artistic language, but who has, in fact, transformed the given situation by the emancipation of features towards a concrete innovation of visual poetry. He has not been immunised to certain

While many artists who work in the same direction have come to rely upon the utilisation of speculative technical approaches, SOTO works intuitively, giving free play to forms and graphic contexts. His creations are more invented and less verified, for he intuits the problems, being neither theorist nor theoriser: he begins with a purely formal base, and it is through the pattern provided by this localisation that the study of the problem begins. Therefore, with regard to often complicated and ambiguous phenomena of kinetic tendency or plastic structure, SOTO's procedure is antipredictive, in a way controlled and rationalised, but not to the extent of technical intellectualisation. In a word, his procedure is concentrated in the rhythmic scansion of movement, empirically grasped but not verified, and without cultural connotations. In fact, the vibrant elements he uses are specifically germinative. Such particular attribute is worth while putting in evidence, for it constitutes one of the most conspicuous merits of SOTO's work, since through the medium of such germinations, his compositions acquire unestimated value and are destined to remain integral and dominant in the eclecticism of the endeavours afforded by the aesthetic experience of our time.

While much modern narrative hastens to embody intuitive and fantastic stimuli with an analytical and essay-like tone, one cannot deny that the conclusive text on SOTO presents a circumspect sequence of rational logic and imaginative excitement. These two levels not only look for a syntactic connection, but they face each other and unite in a swift, fluent manner; a correspondence, that is, sustained by precise measures, which articulates space through the elementary balance of the components, whose effects, by the way, are emphasised by the addition of colour, so that shade, plane, and lines

The fame that Jésus SOTO has attained as painter is almost unanimously considered as important. His research in the field of dynamic plasticism has placed him in a most privileged place in contemporary painting. Because of this, SOTO today belongs to the world and to his public; and we mention this in order to explain the reason for publishing now two of his manuscripts, two intimate letters, written shortly after his first arrival in Paris.

One of them reads as follows: '. . . Paris, like all new life, produces a crisis that only time can overcome; I feel better today, after having received during the past three months a series of shocks, sensations and apprenticeships in gigantic proportions, for which at times I felt quite weak; now there has started for me a period of analysis and—in a certain way—of looking at things and evaluating them more calmly. There were moments so terrible that even the good and the bad were confused for me as if I were only an upstart; painting was thirty years ahead of me and it was those thirty years that crushed me when I first came. Up to cubism everything was familiar; from cubism (1913) onwards to the present time there were thirty-seven years that I knew nothing about. Abstract art started with KANDINSKY in 1910; at the same time when the CUBISTS were covering themselves with glory because of their great revolution, MONDRIAN was starting to prepare the great synthesis of neo-plasticism and was succeeding in resolving—in the most non-objective manner and using only the horizontal and the vertical—the rigour of the octagonal conception which had so tormented CEZANNE and which had been propounded with some genius by PICASSO, BRAQUE, DELAUNAY, JUAN GRIS, etc. in their cubist conclusions. Thus, for the last twenty years, abstract art had been nothing new to the world, and had become the greatest revolution so far in the history of art, solving problems which had vanished with the Italian primitives, and had later been restated by cubism, thus setting the base for the new plasticism.

'I have set the prow of my expression towards new horizons; . . . because there is no greater truth than the creative responsibility of the artist, arm in arm with his time, until he succeeds in expressing and representing it, and this is achieved only by exploring the mystery of the unknown until it yields the new roads which mark progress.'

This letter is dated 14th January, 1951, Paris, and we have deemed it interesting to publish it now because it contains disclosures made by one of the leaders of dynamic painting a short time before devoting himself completely to the work which at present is being hotly debated in intellectual circles.

Another letter of the same period, addressed to a contemporary Venezuelan painter, reads as follows:

'As far as you are concerned, there is no other way; the only thing you really must do is to come over here; I'd like to tell you all about what is being done in painting, but without documentation and even more without the process of all that has been done over forty years in abstract art, you will not be able to understand the reason for all these things.

'I want to advise you very seriously to withdraw from anyone who tries to turn you from your preoccupations as a responsible man of your time. It is absolutely false that we should go back to VELASQUEZ and no intelligent man would ever think of it; four centuries have gone by between the Renaissance and our time; EINSTEIN wouldn't want to think as COPERNICUS did.

'I am warning you about this because each and every time I tried to delve into the problems of my time, the voices of the retarders raised a cry to prevent me from advancing.

'Remember that while I was struggling to understand PICASSO's message, the most absurd arguments and the blackest lies were contrived against that which the entire world had accepted twenty years before.'

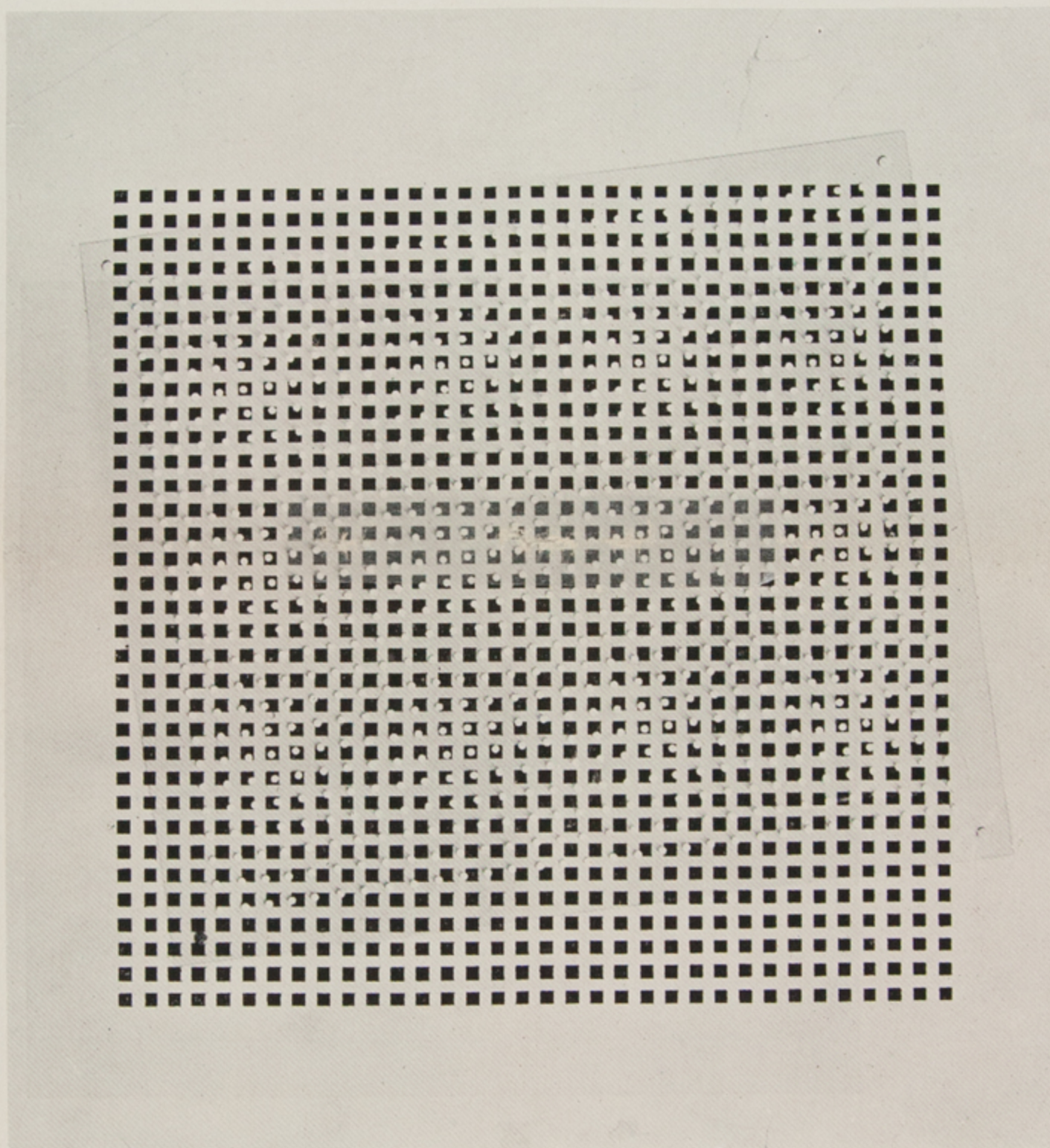
Farther on in the same letter SOTO adds: 'Painting has acquired its absolute freedom. The painter, like the musician, advances towards the creation of his own intimate world. We had always said that the model was only an excuse; why don't we remove that excuse? What is the role of an excuse in creation?'

'The only contribution to the progress of painting is made by accomplishing a task, like CEZANNE did; if there is one thing we all should learn from CEZANNE, it is the need to give to plastic expression a new direction which will help its further development. CEZANNE summed up impressionism, just as, in turn, cubism summed up CEZANNE, and that's all; humanity benefits from these solutions already. And we, don't we have the same responsibility? Are we parasites or CREATORS?'

by A. S. R.
from *Panorama* of Maracaibo, Venezuela

SOTO IN PARIS (1951)

Translated from the Spanish by ANA TERESA SERNA



J. R. SOTO: Metamorphosis 1954. Painted plexiglass fixed on a painted board

rather fleeting mediations as a result of simultaneous aesthetic experiences: for instance, the antithesis between an area of graphic bands and an area covered with pictorial density, or otherwise the insertion of extraneous objects (a wheel, etc.), forcibly bringing to mind certain Neo-Dada efforts. But these episodes, besides being irrelevant in the foundation of that authentic reality he seeks, furnish proof of the intrinsic potentiality at his disposal, capable even in moments of uncertainty and lesser purity of leaving a personal imprint—that matrix on which he bases his research. Every element in SOTO is at the disposal of his own vision, resulting in the removal of disturbing or dispersive elements.

We might now note a predominantly graphic vocation in SOTO's work, evidenced by the texture of his more or less entangled signs, but we would also note his inclination for the use of relief in so far as it provokes virtual movement by its three-dimensional layout. This signifies that the graphic material, which is, however, of primary importance to the economy of the work, is employed, combined, organised, and shaped in order to make possible the effect of oscillation. In any case, the problem always lies within a visual order, each component having no other aim than that of defining a situation, never involved in exchanging its properties for any representative ends, thus finding itself in a condition of equity with the other components for the materialisation of a balanced continuity between imagination and technique, perceptive order and visual learning, between constructive precision and economy of means.

make up a compound or visual suspension. There lies in SOTO some kind of delectation for austere ideality which considers but does not yield to the incidentals of existential events; he affirms the magic value of the exploration of space and of its vibratility, normalised within controllable limits and, therefore, brought to lucid awareness. SOTO's vision is untouched by metaphysical and fallacious tensions, being established on logical equations. Its fullness of different perceptive sources implies the recovery of reality where ideative and imaginative duality is determined as the fundamental moment of the creative spirit, actively present with its options and argumentations in the shaping of historical context. We need only to penetrate into and intercept the soft modulation of his black and grey tones, their warm opaqueness, the imaginative projection of graphic fibres against a rectangular background, the gravitation of gradating shades, the vibration of thin suspended wands, the subtle three-dimensional link, to comprehend all this in its actual and unresolved coagulation. One encounters a mutual interplay where the hiatus between stillness and vibration is extremely reduced, and where expression is given to a magic net of highly simplified encounters impressed on the crest of time to which SOTO has given awareness, as a vicissitude which, splendid and trembling, modulated and emotive in its message, had not yet been commemorated with so unprepared and efficient titles of stylistic merit and inedited characterisation.

Venice 1965



J. R. SOTO: Vibrations 1957

SOTO'S Movement

by Frank Popper

Movement in SOTO's works is best appreciated when one knows that his starting point had been an irritation against the general behaviour of spectators in art exhibitions.

SOTO had noticed with dismay that the great majority of visitors moved on from picture to picture—whether masterpieces or not—as if drawn by an invisible power and generally after having thrown only cursory glances at the pictures.

He set out very consciously to capture the attention of the spectators with the most subtle artistic means and almost to force them to stop at length in front of each work. In fact SOTO's constructions only reveal their essence after a very prolonged and active contemplation involving often several kinetic media. One of the most original aspects of SOTO's works is that even the least prepared spectator feels at once this need for a pause in which to discover progressively their nature.

SOTO's research in this direction started in 1951 and has continued without interruption to this day.

Before 1951 the problem of movement was for SOTO still linked to the form. *Répétition optique* (Damier) and *Tableau optique* (Rrr) exhibited first in 1951-52 contain a 'vibration' through repeated elements. This kind of repetition becomes a novel means of expression for the artist which enables him to jettison the worn-out concepts of form and composition regarded by him as appendages of figurative representation.

In this manner SOTO becomes aware of true 'abstraction' in the plastic arts and commences to operate a sort of 'transfiguration' by means of movement as an aesthetic element. However, movement remains for SOTO mainly 'optical' and 'virtual'. In the *Répétition optique* he introduces elements in relief which foreshadow his future discovery of 'true' optical movement and place his research between or rather beyond the traditional classifications into painting and sculpture. In 1952 he begins to seek solutions for complex graphic problems in a picture named *Synthèse*. This first phase is followed by a research into the superimposition of basic geometric elements, such as the systematic spreading of coloured 'points' over a surface.* SOTO with this technique manages already to convey a pure sensation of movement without having to resort

to a 'composition'.

In 1953 the artist is ready to pursue what he calls a 'free inquiry' ('*investigation libre*') into the rich possibilities of 'optical' movement.

At this point he introduces his first 'kinetic' backgrounds, regularly striped surfaces apt to cause *moiré* effects. Divers materials begin to enter into his works as 'subject-matter'. However, SOTO's interest is never focused on form or subject, but on 'relationships'. These still concern sometimes the interplay between different elements, but more often they relate to different materials or different movements. One may assume that the artist wishes thereby to refer also to the general relationships that govern our universe.

SOTO's concern with the superimposition of plastic elements and their almost mathematical progression on 'transparent' surfaces led him, quite logically, to his principal discovery: the *structures cinétiques*. These are spirals traced on plexiglass and superimposed in the third dimension.

Point Blanc sur Point Noir, which was first shown at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in 1954 (and is now in the collection of Carlos Villanueva at Caracas), and *Structure cinétique*, shown at Galerie Denise René in 1955, are the most striking early examples of SOTO's discovery. The artist creates here 'optical movement' by studying the distance at which two plaques of plexiglass, or one of plexiglass and one of wood, have to be placed so that the superimposed spirals engender an optical sensation of movement with a definite aesthetic value.

This 'vision of movement', as SOTO calls it, differs widely from the one obtained previously by the mere repetition of elements on a flat surface, but it is also of a different order than movement obtained by mechanical means. This kinetic principle is going to govern all further research by SOTO.

In 1956 suspended mobile elements enter the scene.

During the succeeding phase SOTO experiments mainly with metallic objects and coils of wire which he places before his 'kinetic' backgrounds. This free juxtaposition of very diverse materials offers a wide scope for SOTO's imagination to exercise itself in a rather unexpected 'baroque' manner. This phase, begun in 1958, involves like the preceding stages the kinetic element of spectator participation. The movement of the observer forms in fact an integral part of the majority of these works.

SOTO

par Karl K. Ringstrom

Les oeuvres insolites de SOTO attirent inévitablement la curiosité du spectateur fasciné et intrigué par le mouvement constant des éléments d'une veut, antipictural, mais il contient un message pictural profond, émouvant et extrêmement fécond, qu'il a développé et approfondi pendant des années.

Depuis 1950, la forme n'a pour lui aucun attrait; son imagination s'orienté vers ce qu'il appelle 'LES RELATIONS'. Mais sa conception est opposée à la conception classique où les relations n'existent qu'entre les objets. SOTO considère l'étendue, le temps, le mouvement, etc., comme des réalités (au même titre que n'importe quel objet) qui existent en soi.

Les 'relations', selon SOTO, existent en deçà ou au-delà des éléments et non ENTRE. L'inter-

prétation courante sépare les objets d'une distance et la peinture a toujours accepté cette notion. SOTO s'y oppose; il cherche à animer la surface par le grand 'vide' métaphysique ou mystique. Les objets font partie des relations car, pour SOTO, il n'y a pas de 'vide' entre eux. C'est précisément cette vision de synthèse qui l'intéresse et qui enlève toute importance aux éléments employés.

Le point de gravitation de son art est, répétons-le, 'les relations'. Ses recherches, extrêmement importantes, ne sont au fond qu'une solution presque réelle d'une conception picturale presque irréalité par l'intermédiaire d'un espace lumineux. Il veut immatérialiser la matière, détruire les éléments solides et réels, comme fils de fer ou barres de fer. Il les suspend devant un fond composé de lignes blanches sur fond noir. Ce fond, devenu presque uniformément gris par son effet optique, intensifie les vibrations de ses compositions et souvent il n'est guère possible de distinguer les matériaux utilisés. Ils ont perdu leur aspect concret ou, plutôt, les formes se dématérialisent dans l'espace lumineux qui les englobe.

SOTO fait aussi des recherches sur la pesanteur des couleurs, leur intensité optique, avec des carrés d'acier éloignés du fond, dont un ou plusieurs sont peints. Leur surface augmente ou rétrécit selon la position du spectateur, selon la lumière, sans que l'équilibre en souffre. SOTO refusant de se servir d'effets purement optiques qui réduiraient le tableau à une composition technique où l'essentiel disparaîtrait: le mystère, et il y réussit.

Après des années d'une expérience très approfondie, ses oeuvres possèdent aujourd'hui leur entité: les relations s'expriment par un langage propre, un mystère propre, par une réalité et une vérité propre.

SOTO est un artiste pour lequel le secret de la création est le véritable mystère de l'art et sa profonde raison d'être.

Paris 1963

Aphorism by José Garcia Villa

Between two points, there can be,
A, straight line,

A, curve,

A, zigzag,

A, spiral :

But, most important, of, all,
The, mysterious, invisible, line.

New York 1958



J. R. SOTO with his Spiral-Reliefs of 1955. Photo taken in 1963

One of the first hanging constructions, the *Grille de Fer*, is of considerable proportions (7 m x 5 m). It was shown at the World Exhibition in Brussels in 1958. Like most of SOTO's three-dimensional constructions, this elaborate work was conceived in a pictorial manner and it has to be stressed that this artist considers himself first and foremost a painter or 'plastician' and not at all a 'model-maker for architects'. It is true to say that his working method corresponds entirely to this conception: SOTO proceeds slowly but surely by small plastic discoveries.

The main discoveries of this research are made by subtle variations on a 'suspended' theme in front of the 'kinetic' background whose principal function is to prevent the vision from becoming sluggish.

SOTO, whose main concern remains the 'vibratory vision of movement', has become a great master in the development of this idea. It enables him to operate a transformation, a real transposition of matter.

His latest works, *Barres suspendues*, *Petit Cube* and *Horizontal-vertical Vibrations*, go a long way towards the dematerialisation of 'plastic propositions'. *Piège de lumière* (1964) captures the light in such a way that the materials employed 'disappear' altogether.

Light has played a part in SOTO's research into the visualisation of movement from the outset. *Première Boite transparente* incorporated light as a kinetic element since the movement of the spectator was associated with the light effects that seemed to 'follow' him. SOTO's latest works blend very subtly light movement with the movement of the spectator and of the work itself.

However, these movements are always subordinated to the mainstay of his research: optical movement. SOTO thereby affirms his concern with *relationships* rather than with agitated objects.

On the other hand, SOTO's kinetic works have little in common with two-dimensional works based on the illusions of depth and of movement. The art of SOTO is conceived and executed in depth in order to cause optical movement.

The purely artistic attitude adopted by SOTO towards his daily creations is also the key to his 'sources'. In fact he denies the existence of any 'natural' influences on him and discourages any interpretation of his works along these lines. Outside elements may have entered his works through the admiration he feels for much which is sound and subtle in modern art—the Cubists, Klee, Mondrian and Calder.

Yet one has often the impression that SOTO's optical movement has a secret relationship with music. Not only on the transcendental or poetical level, but also by its resemblance with an abstract algebra.

Paris, September 1965

Marcel Marceau by Anthony Barnett

Monsieur Marceau, tell me: were you born
once before or many times before?
How many times have you mocked the
mask maker in the face?
You tell a white lie (or a little joke).
The dancer has sprung to the great
heights of a kite
and the clown has always played around
somewhat with the audience.
Yes, of course: Laforgue knew you!

* The three primary colours, the three secondary colours, white and black are the eight elements with which he constructs works such as *Etude pour une série*.

PURE RELATIONS

by Guy Brett

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IX/7, October 1965

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editor, Art International

Perhaps because of their natural reserve and dislike of sensationalism, recognition has so far done little more than hover about the modern South American artists. Yet, taken together, the work of OTERO, SOTO, CRUZ-DIEZ and MIRA SCHENDEL among painters and draughtsmen, and CAMARGO, LYGIA CLARK, GUZMAN and OTTICICA among sculptors, amounts to an exceptionally exciting achievement, and one rich in possibilities. The most impressive thing about them is their clarity; conscious of a process of evolution in modern art, they have been able to extend it, welcoming equally nature and the spectator without sentimentality. SOTO has lived in Paris since 1950 and his 'vibrations' have been seen at many one-man and mixed exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale, but we shall get

our first chance of seeing his development as a whole at the retrospective of fifteen years' work which SIGNALS LONDON are mounting this November and December in their showrooms at 39 Wigmore Street, W1.

SOTO is one of the most purely lyrical artists working today; each of his works has the self-sufficiency of a piece of music. As he has sought to express this lyricism solely through plastic means, the creative act—for SOTO—has meant in part a rigorous process of aesthetic pruning. This is why, in its bareness and simplicity, his work appears to many at first uninviting.

The 'Vibrationstructure' illustrated on this page is a work of last year. It consists of a hand-painted ground of thin white lines upon black, over which a spatial structure of welded wire is held anchored at several points. As one moves in front of the work the material solidity of the wire appears to dissolve in several places, transformed into a series of flowing immaterial waves, moving in different directions across the surface and out to the edges of the relief. The relief presents simultaneously many different degrees in the pro-



J. R. SOTO: Vibrationstructure 1964. Collection Paul Keeler, London

Photo: Clay Perry

cess of this transformation of matter into energy; thus the elements which make it take on an additional 'life', a life which does not exist in each element separately but results entirely from their interaction in time.

This relationship doesn't come from the deployment of forms in space. If it did, the problems would be those of sculpture; but SOTO is a painter and has always stressed the fact. Although he places his elements within a space of shallow depth, no sensation of depth is felt by the spectator, at least not in the sense of a diminishing perspective with a single point of view. Rather, the relationships appear to take place within a void, which they define. SOTO's works are perceptually two-dimensional. Looking at them, one tends to forget one is seeing a free-swinging bar, a spatial construction of wire, or squares raised inches from the surface. One is aware of a mobility which can be physically sensed, but which, in most cases, one knows does not in reality exist. Is this the paradox it seems to be? I don't think so. Our eyes are deceived, yet we welcome the deception and derive great satisfaction from it; we are convinced that SOTO does not deceive for the sake of deception like the *trompe l'oeil* painters of the past. He exposes the fallibility of our retinal judgement, yet in doing so, allows us to reveal to ourselves 'a reality we had not thought of'. We are given the illusion that we are being taken deeper than the level of appearances, to experience pure movement. That is why it makes sense to talk, in SOTO's case, of a liberation of the surface, therefore a liberation of painting itself.

Modern art has taught us that aims which may

appear minute and hardly ambitious in the context of the external world can be of enormous importance to the evolution of plastic art. In the statements of many of the great painters of the last hundred years are references to this area of tiny shifts of degree by which the elements of the painted surface may be detached from the dullness of their static nature and transformed into a pure dynamic rhythm. If the canvas itself could be animated and ordered according to its own laws, it would no longer be the expression of an individual personality, but would take its place naturally in the scheme of things. For CEZANNE the external landscape was a relative matter: 'I could keep myself busy for months without moving from one spot, just by leaning now to the right, now to the left.' Similarly SEURAT spoke of the aims of his art simply as that of 'hollowing out a canvas', and his own word for his atomisation of the surface was 'divisionism', not pointillism.

The concept of relativity, in fact, has been as important to art as it has to science: 'When we attempt to analyse form physically, we do not arrive at smaller and smaller replicas of the form we see; as the analysis proceeds the form gradually disappears and is replaced by a system of happenings,' writes a crystallographer, S. HUMPHREYS-OWEN. Exactly the same process took place upon the modern picture surface—the disintegration of particular, static forms and the search for universal dynamic relations. The belief that these relations are most clearly expressed by the interaction of elements of no intrinsic interest

please turn to page 20



J. R. SOTO: Vibration (informal period) 1959



J. R. Soto, Carlos Cruz-Diez and Paul Keeler at SIGNALS LONDON

Photo: Clay Perry

The SOTO retrospective marks the first anniversary of the opening of SIGNALS LONDON's showrooms at 39 Wigmore Street, W1. The following are some of the exhibitions presented by SIGNALS LONDON at Wigmore Street in the space of a year:

November-December 1964: First exhibition comprising sixty works devoted entirely to TAKIS's magnetic sculpture of the last seven years (SIGNALS' inaugural exhibition).

December 1964-February 1965: First individual show in Europe of bronze sculpture and wood reliefs by Sergio de CAMARGO, winner of the international sculpture prize at the 1963 Paris Biennale and this year's (1965) winner of the National Sculpture Award of Brazil at the Eight Sao Paulo Biennale.

March 1965: First London exhibition of watercolours and engravings by Rossini PEREZ, winner of the international prize for engraving at Carrara, Italy.

April 1965: Anthology of Kinetic Sculpture and Perceptual Art, featuring works by David MEDALLA, Antonio ASIS, Liliane LIJN, Jesús-Rafael SOTO, Carlos CRUZ-DIEZ, Sergio de CAMARGO, TAKIS, Alberto GUZMAN and others.

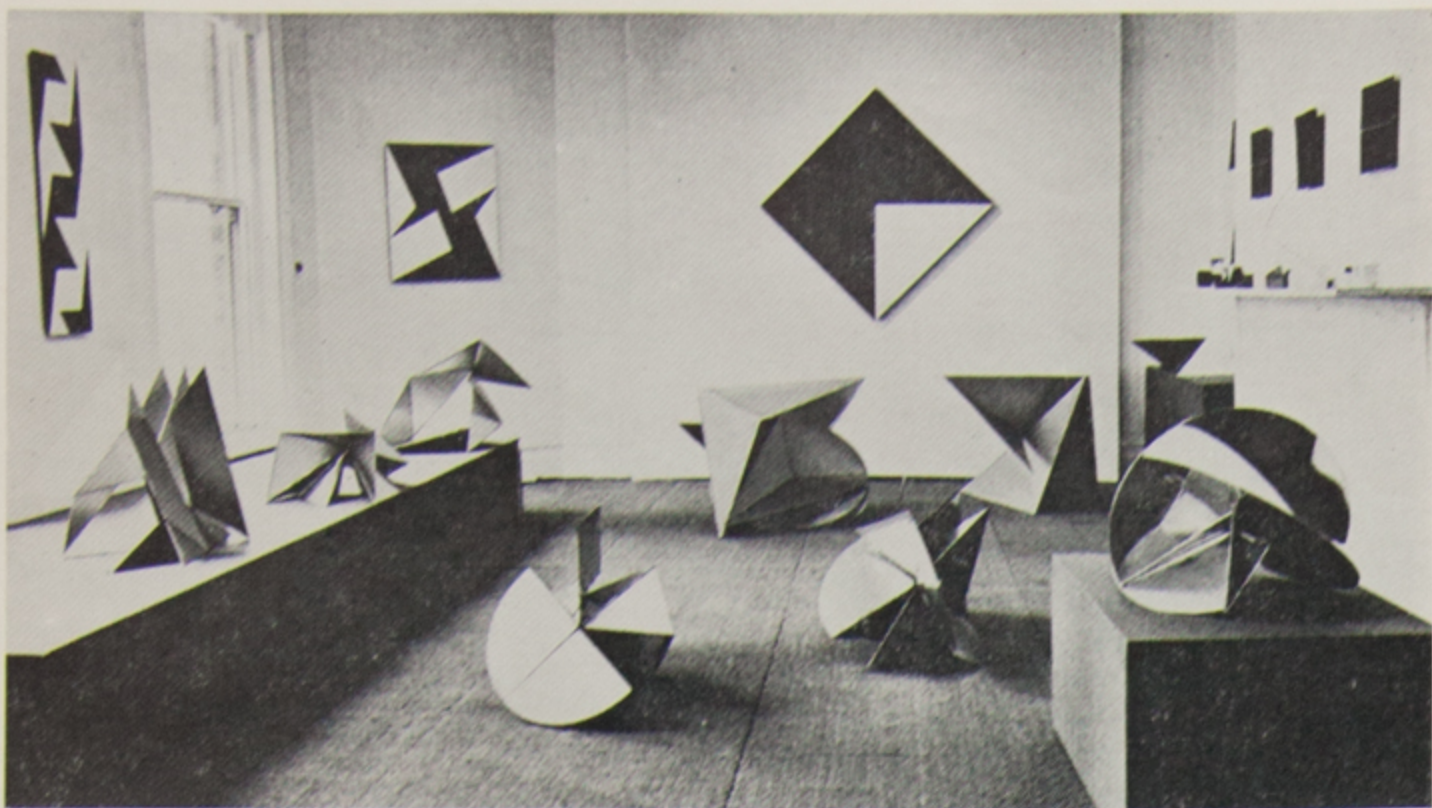
May-July 1965: First individual exhibition in Great Britain of abstract reliefs, architectural projects and articulated sculpture—spanning fifteen years' work—by Lygia CLARK, pioneer of kinetic art and winner of the prize for the best Brazilian sculptor at the Sixth Biennale of Sao Paulo.

July-September 1965: SOUNDINGS TWO at SIGNALS LONDON, an international exhibition of modern art organised by Paul KEELER from the pioneers of abstraction (GABO, DUCHAMP, KANDINSKY, MALEVITCH, SCHWITTERS, MOHOLY-NAGY, LISSITZKY, NICHOLSON, CALDER, etc.) to the most significant exponents of kinetic, optical and elemental art, including key works by Antonio CALDERARA, Mira SCHENDEL, Helio OTTICICA, Alejandro OTERO, Li Yuen-Chia, and others.

September-October 1965: A Decade of Psychromies by Carlos CRUZ-DIEZ.

SIGNALS LONDON has cooperated in various exhibitions of modern art held in schools, universities, art clubs and provincial art centres in Great Britain. Before moving to Wigmore Street, SIGNALS LONDON presented at Cornwall Gardens, SW7, two important pilot shows of kinetic art and the First Festival of Modern Art from Latin America. Paul Keeler also organised an exhibition of mobile constructions on the grounds of Palladio's Villa La Malcontenta, by the Brenta canal outside Venice, last year (1964). The first four exhibitions which Paul Keeler organised (before we adopted the name SIGNALS LONDON) were: a retrospective exhibition of drawings and paintings by David Medalla, held in 1962 at the Mayflower Barn, Jordans, Buckinghamshire; an exhibition of modern art by international painters held in 1963 in Windsor, Berkshire; an exhibition of kinetic works by Soto, Takis and Pol Bury, held in the foyer of the Lamda Theatre, London, in connection with Peter Brook's 'Theatre of Cruelty' presentation, 1964; and an international exhibition of modern art entitled *Soundings One*, held at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, under the sponsorship of the Oxford University Art Club, also in 1964. Full documentation on all our exhibitions appears regularly in *SIGNALS Newsletter* (edited by David Medalla), which has now completed its first volume.

The SOTO exhibition is the second of three major retrospectives by three leading artists of Venezuela. The first retrospective was devoted to 'A Decade of Psychromies by Carlos CRUZ-DIEZ' (September 23 to October 23, 1965), while the third will be devoted to 'A Quarter of a Century of the Beautiful Art of Alejandro OTERO' (January 20 to March 19, 1966).



View of one part of LYGIA CLARK's exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON (May-July 1965). On the walls are reliefs done between 1955 and 1959. On the floor and on the stands are Lygia Clark's articulated constructions, 1960-1964
Photo: Clay Perry

Continued Vitality of Abstract Art

by the Art Critic of *The Times*

from *The Times*, 25 May 1965

Not so long ago one of the most widely held opinions in the art world was that abstract art had run its course. It appeared, under the guidance of relentless minds like that of **Mondrian**, to have reduced the vital variety of the visible world to a diagram of increasing rigidity and bareness. Many people thought that this was the result of the intrusion in creative fields of over-intellectual minds, and that vitality must be brought back into art. This feeling helps to explain the tremendous popularity of the American school of painting, whose keynote was action rather than thought, and the subsequent, rather under-talented schools of 'assemblage' and 'pop' art, where the variety of the visible world, in all its particularities, was indulged in as never before.

Now it seems that this process of reasoning rests on a misunderstanding. Abstract art has recently given such evidence of its continuing vitality that it has not only established a direction for development in the future, but has also thrown into new light the so-called 'dead-end' activities of the abstractionists of the past. This is born out by two exceptional exhibitions at the **Stedelijk Museum**, Amsterdam, which run until the middle of June; one a retrospective of **Naum Gabo**, so long overdue, and the other a very imaginatively produced exhibition of young artists called 'Nul'.

Gabo's career, of course, spans the whole development of abstract art. He was a young man when the first **Cezannes** were shown in Moscow. Both he and **Malevich** (whose work can be seen at the **Stedelijk** as nowhere else) rejected an art based on the human figure, which both had practised, but neither rejected nature. Yet instead of depicting nature's indi-

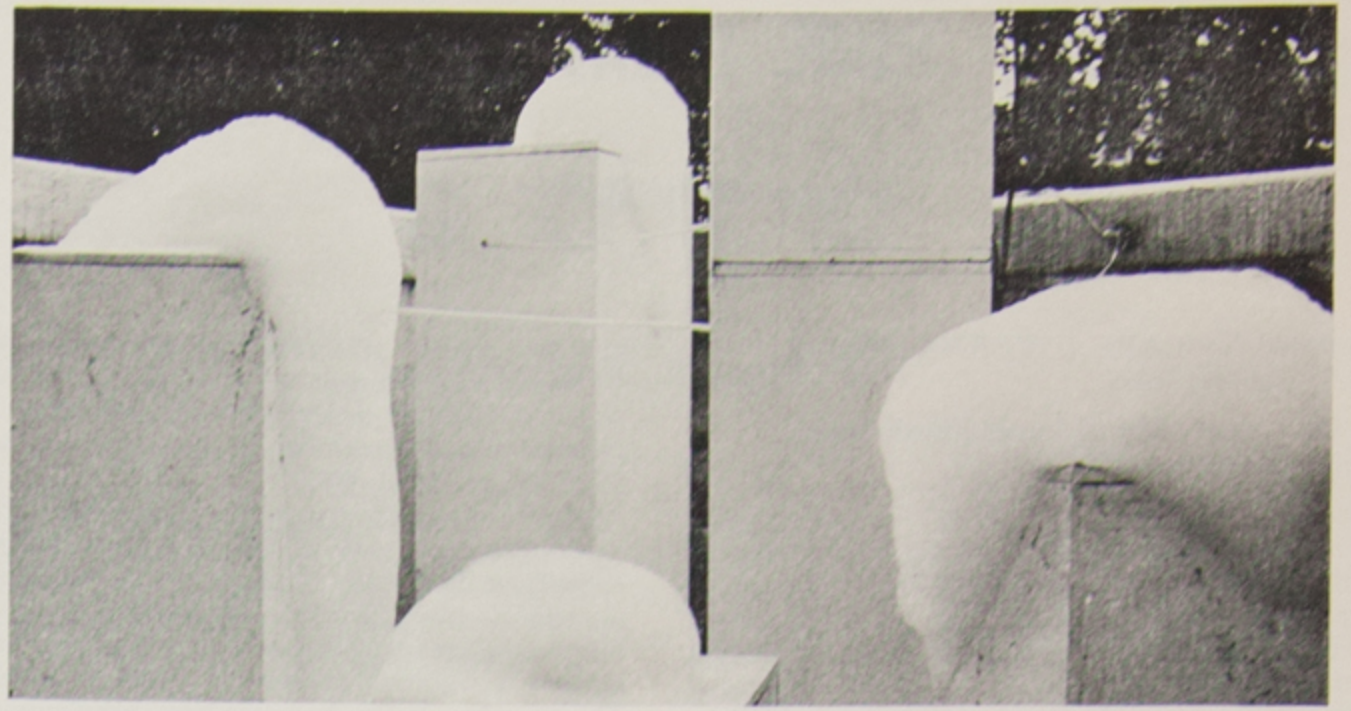
vidual aspects they tried to evoke its laws, which they found to be in the form of pure relations, as in music or mathematics, but grasped intuitively, and which could never become a recorded system. And by doing this, they also felt they approached what was profoundest in their own spirits, that the two were really interconnected. This was not a process of 'abstracting' from nature a bloodless structure, as one dehydrates food, but of 'renewing the appearance nature has for the eyes of men' (in **Apollinaire's** phrase), which is also renewed by the empirical enquiries of science. There is no escapism. **Mondrian** wrote: 'Precisely on account of its profound love for things, non-figurative art does not aim at rendering them in their particular appearance', and **Gabo**: 'These . . . shapes, lines, colours, forms, are not illusory, nor are they abstractions; they are a factual force and their impact on our senses is as real as the impact of light or of an electric shock'.

Looking at the **Gabos** at the **Stedelijk**, one is aware of two qualities which abstract art is widely supposed not to have possessed—closeness to nature and great possibilities of future development. **Gabo's** most beautiful work, in fact, seems to derive from a fine tension between the organic and the reasonable—he rarely uses straight lines or obvious curves. From the red stone carving, like a giant mollusc, he moves to the increased freedom and fluidity of dimensions with the clear plastic and stretched strings. Yet in the midst of a construction as clear as a suspension bridge he will often introduce a curved piece of black plastic which gives the whole object the density of a rose. This 'density' in the abstract form, which one feels so strongly also in **Brancusi** and **Malevich** and which makes it so difficult to fake a **Mondrian**, is what **Gabo** means by a 'factual force'.

The progress of **Gabo's** career is an invitation for further development, although each of his objects is realized and complete. The stretched strings lightly define an aerial volume, but the vibrating wire of 1920 produces a volume which is virtually unbounded, and all his works suggest further ways in which both the spectator and the surrounding elements may be involved in the life of the work. And one feels this invitation for greater freedom on the part of the artist, the spectator and the material itself, taken up by the younger artists downstairs.

In fact in many cases it is possible to designate to each of these abstract artists a natural domain (as it is possible to say that **Turner** is a painter of mist and light, or **Samuel Palmer** of the earth), although their intentions are not descriptive. **Pol Bury**, for instance, is an artist of the undergrowth; his forms are dark and sinister, often made of varnished wood; the machinery he uses is always hidden, and the forms, indeed, seem to move according to hidden laws like the random and alarming bursting of seed-pods. **Yves Klein**, on the other hand, whose ideas have had a liberating influence on contemporary art, is a painter of the sky—nearly literally because his best paintings are monochrome blue all over, a mysterious, substanceless blue that suggests endless space. From descriptions, of course, it sounds a little absurd, as all things tend to sound whose aims have nothing to do with description.

But **J. R. Soto's** room is really the revelation at the **Stedelijk**. Although his work has its own wavelength and is uninviting at first, in his hands the concept of 'optical' painting reveals itself as a genuine evolution from the last paintings of **Mondrian** in the direction of



DAVID MEDALLA: Cloud Canyons, bubble mobiles 1964

Photo: Clay Perry

further freeing the material. Using very few elements—the square and the line austere-ly coloured—and the technical principle of the *moiré* pattern, he transforms these solid objects into pure optical vibrations with great poetry.

Actually each work contains the process of this transformation from solid state to immaterial vibration and back again, by means either of the spectator's movement or the movement of part of the work itself. The marvellous thing is that in spite of the uncompromising elements and the artist's prodigious restraint, each work has great limpidity and grace and the full subtlety of ripples on a pond rising and falling under the wind. In an enormous work which was made specially for one 8-metre wall of his room, the material is transformed so completely into energy that it is difficult to judge even the distance of the work from the eye.

It could be that vitality in art is too often confused with literature and description. It is impossible to convey the vitality, even the thought, in a work by **Gabo** or **Soto** in words because the vitality and the thought are plastic, and the achievement of modern art has been to get rid of what was not plastic and build from there. But once the language has been learnt, even geometry itself can be invested with a kind of animal vitality. For example, the Brazilian sculptor **Lygia Clark** calls her folding geometric sculptures of hinged plates 'Beasts' and 'Grubs', although they

Revelación de la Vida por Vicente Gaos

Y de repente dije: esto es la vida. Esto y no más. Palpé su forma cierta. Lo adiviné mortal. El alma, alerta, vibró un instante toda estremeçada.

El rojo amor con honda sacudida—oh vida, oh viento—abrió la última puerta. Y allá, en el fondo de la estancia abierta, brilló mi muerte entre la luz dormida.

Esto es la vida, dije, esto es la muerte, ésta la tersa luz, la honda luz suave, la cósmica pasión, el sueño inerte.

Esto eres sólo, sí. Y con paso grave me adelanté hasta el fondo para verte, llegué a la puerta y di vuelta a la llave.

make no concession whatsoever to representation or description. Her work can be seen later this week at **SIGNALS LONDON**. The striking thing about these very simple objects, beyond the fact that the spectator is involved to the extent of being able to change the shape of the sculpture almost entirely, is their truth to organic experience, so that although we do not see the surface of any beast, we feel its life.

Reprinted by kind permission of *The Times* 25. V. 1965.

El Viejo y el Sol por Vicente Aleixandre

Había vivido mucho.

Se apoyaba allí, viejo, en un tronco, en un gruesísimo tronco, muchas tardes cuando el sol caía.

Yo pasaba por allí a aquellas horas y me detenía a observarle.

Era viejo y tenía la faz arrugada, apagados, más que tristes, los ojos.

Se apoyaba en el tronco, y el sol se le acercaba primero, le mordía suavemente los pies y allí se quedaba unos momentos como acurrucado.

Después ascendía e iba sumergiéndole, anegándole, tirando suavemente de él, unificándole en su dulce luz.

! Oh el viejo vivir, el viejo quedar, cómo se desleía!

Toda la quemazón, la historia de la tristeza, el resto de las arrugas, la miseria de la piel roída,

! cómo iba lentamente limándose, deshaciéndose! Como una roca que en el torrente devastador se va dulcemente desmoronando,

rindiéndose a un amor sonorisimo,

así, en aquel silencio, el viejo se iba lentamente anulando, lentamente entregando.

Y yo veía el poderoso sol lentamente morderle con mucho amor y adormirle

para así poco a poco tomarle, para así poquito a poco disolverle en su luz,

como una madre que a su niño suavísimamente en su seno lo reinstalase.

Yo pasaba y lo veía. Pero a veces no veía sino un sutilísimo resto. Apenas un lévisimo encaje del ser.

Lo que quedaba después que el viejo amoroso, el viejo dulce, había pasado ya a ser la luz y despaciosísimamente era arrastrado en los rayos postreros del sol,

como tantas otras invisibles cosas del mundo.



David Medalla and Jesús-Rafael Soto at SIGNALS LONDON

Photo: Clay Perry

In the winter of 1962, after seeing **Soto's** work for the first time at **Edouard Loeb's** in Paris, **Medalla** sent the following note to **Paul Keeler**:

'... an artist who has annihilated all our past concepts of form: creating pure vibrations. He establishes a series of relations among the simple elements of the work and between the work and the spectator. ...

'Like a ray of sunlight, like a snow-crystal, like love, his work is simple and complex and profound. ...

'... imagine, Paul, a work which exists visually in time, a work in which space, autonomous, contains infinite possibilities of harmony and order. ...

'Elements in perpetual tension—and at the same instant, in perfect equilibrium. ... Chance is at a maximum and yet nothing is left to mere chance. ...

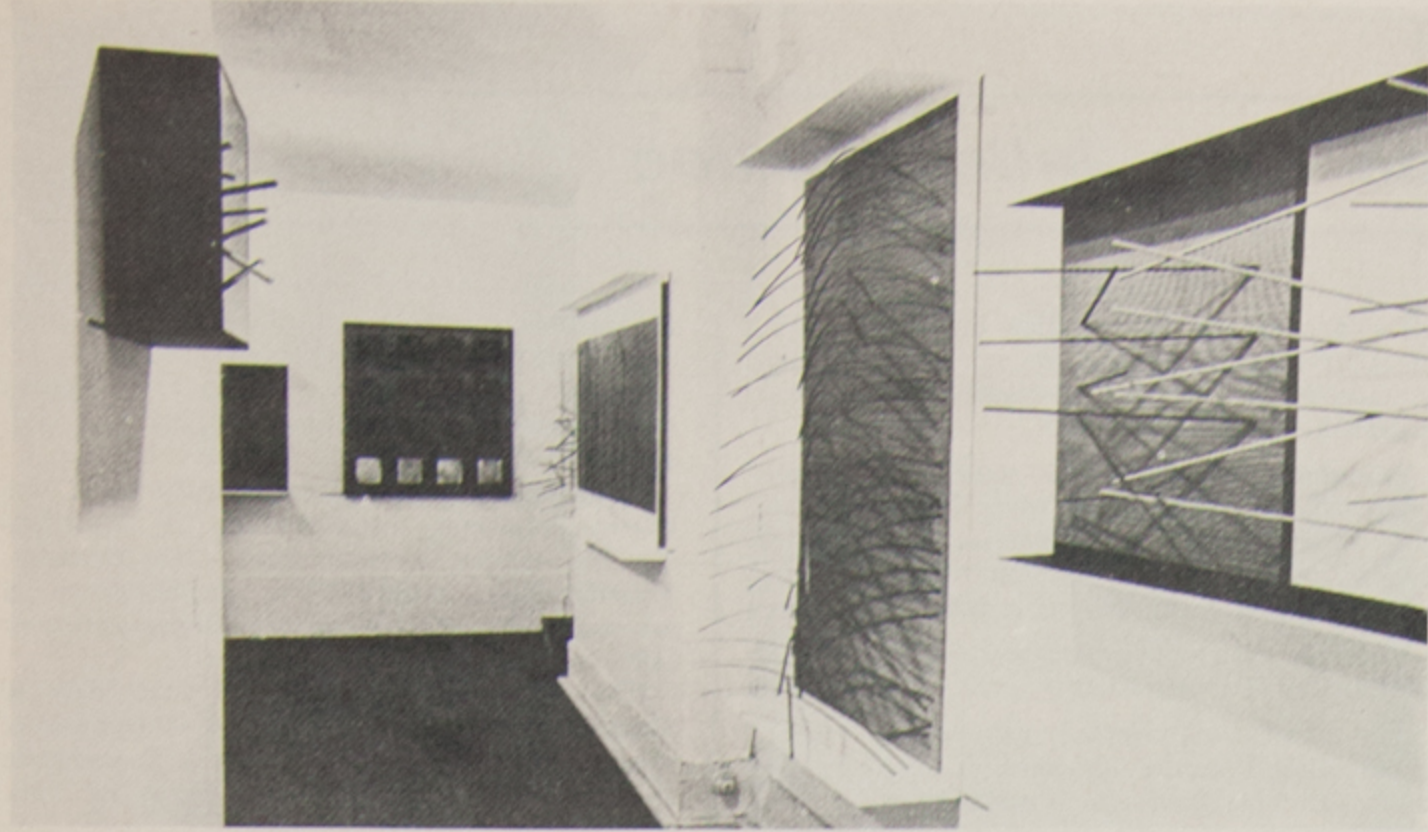
'The elements themselves mean nothing, are nothing. Only in their inter-actions, in the mind of the viewer, that the elements, displaced in precise relations, vibrate together and acquire a life of their own. ...

'Words cannot plausibly describe the revolutionary greatness of the work of this man. He has accomplished in painting what **Takis** has achieved in sculpture: he reveals to us, by the simplest means, the presence of the unseen energy which animates all existence. ...

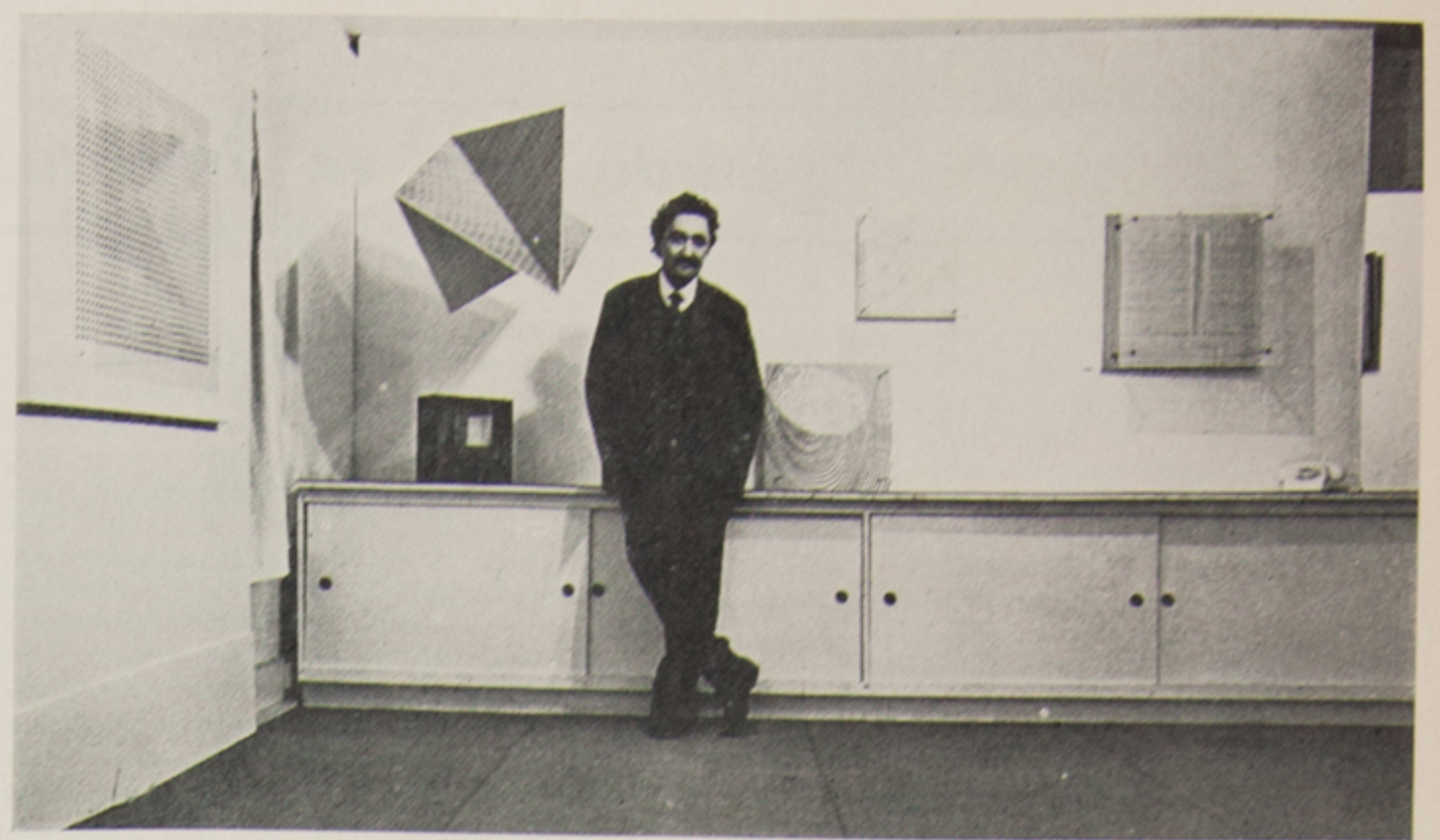
'You must come to Paris soon to see them, for only by seeing them can one experience these extraordinary vibrations. With your receptive mind, I'm sure you'll find them amazing, as I find them. ...

'They're by a Venezuelan who lives in Paris: a musician, too, I hear: his name is **Soto**. ...'

Shortly after receiving this letter, **Paul Keeler** went to Paris and there saw **Soto's** vibrations for the first time. ...



Passage leading to the second-floor showroom of SIGNALS LONDON. Works by J. R. SOTO done between 1962 and 1965. Photo: Clay Perry



J. R. SOTO in the third-floor showroom of SIGNALS LONDON. Works done between 1954 and 1957, including a suspended mobile construction painted with a moiré pattern. Photo: Clay Perry

Camargo's one-man show at SIGNALS LONDON

The one-man show of sculpture by Sergio de Camargo, which opened at the showrooms of SIGNALS LONDON last 29th December, 1964, turned out to be a great success. It is rare for a first one-man exhibition by an artist who is virtually unknown in England to receive enthusiastic reviews as the Camargo show did. The art critic of *The Times* praised the exhibition as 'a most refreshing visual experience.' French art critic Marc-Albert Levin of the art magazine *Cimaise* regarded the show as the best then on in London. Other favourable reviews were written by the young Indian art critic Suneet Chopra; the art critic of *Sennet*, news-bulletin of the University of London Union; Paul Grinke, of *The Financial Times*; Peter Stone, of *The Jewish Chronicle*; Edwin Mullins, art critic of *The Sunday Telegraph*; Nigel Gosling, of *The Observer*; Oswald Blakeston, of *What's On in London*; and Sturt-Penrose of *The Arts Review*. *The Arts Review*, incidentally, selected Camargo's *Wood Relief 1964* for its cover on 9th January, 1965. The Camargo exhibition (which was extended to 27th February, 1965) was made the subject of a film produced by London's Central Office of Information. The film, directed by Hazel Swift and Leo Eaton, has commentaries in Spanish, Portuguese, English, Italian and French, and is now being shown all over the world.

GABO Retrospective at the Tate

A retrospective exhibition by Naum Gabo will be held at the Tate Gallery in early spring of next year. It is tentatively scheduled for the end of March 1966. The Gabo retrospective is long overdue, and we at SIGNALS look forward to it with great excitement.

The work of Naum Gabo is a constant inspiration to us at SIGNALS LONDON. 'Gabo is a fountain of spiritual ideas,' Sergio de Camargo said to Paul Keeler when Camargo visited England early this year. And Takis said to David Medalla, when Takis was in London for his magnetic exhibition: 'It is Gabo who began most of it all... Artists should think twice before making claims of "originality" for their ideas... The avant-garde today are only extending what Gabo and a handful of other artists such as Brancusi, Kandinsky and Mondrian, started half a century ago. Gabo contributed a great part to the formation of the "language" of modern sculpture, and you and I, and a few of our contemporaries, are simply adding to the vocabulary of this new language so rich in possibilities.' When Argentinian artist Antonio Asis visited SIGNALS LONDON for the exhibition *Soundings Two*, he said to Guy Brett: 'Gabo's "Linear Construction: Suspended", of 1957, is a poem par excellence to the spirit of twentieth-century man. Gabo is a master...'

SOTO on art and poetry

from an interview by
Pedro Espinosa Troconis :

published in LA ESFERA, 2nd March, 1960

ESPINOZA: What do you search for in art? What does your painting represent?

SOTO: My researches have nothing to do with finding objects, or representing them. I have always tried to produce an art in which given forms do not count, not even geometrical forms. In my paintings I try to represent actual motion, vibration, light, space, time: things that exist but do not have definite shapes, and the only way I have found in representing these is by presenting their relations. Relationship is an entity: it exists: therefore it can be represented. Let us take an example: look at that picture... [SOTO points to a composition on a black background over which there is a screen of fine white wires crossing each other.] Remove the white wires and all the impression of space, motion and vibration disappears. Therefore, it was only the relation black background/white wire which created the picture and once those elements are separated from one another, the relation no longer exists and the picture loses its content, its object or justification.

ESPINOZA: In what sense, then, would your researches be informal, for you say that you are

not interested in forms, not even geometrical forms?

SOTO: In the sense that I do not let myself become a prisoner of form; in my endeavour to create vibrations, to represent light and motion, which have no form at all; in the sense that my painting is neither a form nor an anecdotic structure. I want to strip my pictures of all anecdote.

ESPINOZA: In other fields of modern creative activity, attempts have been made similar to those of abstract art. Their intention was to seek the essence of reality. Are your researches related in any way to the work of a poet, such as VALERY for instance?

SOTO: No, for two reasons: first, because I have never read VALERY, and secondly because poetry and painting are two completely different things. In their pictures, the surrealist painters, who thrived on literature, are the worst painters of motion, whereas those whose art confined itself to the plastic plane exclusively accomplished wonderful things. These are two different ways of expression, maybe in the end both have the same goal, but their ways of expressing this goal are entirely different.

ESPINOZA: What is your stand as regards the polemics between abstract art and figurative art?

SOTO: None. I paint. I am not a polemicist, I am a painter.

Translated from the Spanish by ANA TERESA SERNA

Paul Keeler, director of SIGNALS LONDON, is now making plans for the erection of an environmental museum in London. Keeler hopes to build this new museum, which will be devoted to the best in contemporary art, within the next decade. Several private collectors have already offered to donate their collections for SIGNALS's environmental museum, while a number of artists have promised to make special works for the museum's grounds. A site for the museum has not yet been decided, and several offers are being considered.



SERGIO DE CAMARGO in Rio de Janeiro with the maquette for his monumental mural now being erected in the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brasilia. Photo: Kraejerberg

Inscriptions

by Jorge Luis Borges

English Translations
Sebastian Brett

1 'Dreamtigers'

In childhood I was a fervent tiger-worshipper; not the spotted tiger of the floating islands of the Parana and of the Amazon jungle, but the striped royal tiger of Asia which alone can confront men of war as they sit perched on a dais atop an elephant. I used to linger endlessly in front of the cages of the zoo; and if I appreciated the vast encyclopedias and natural history books, it was for the splendour of their tigers. (I can still remember the pictures, though I can never remember correctly the face or the smile of a woman.) Childhood passed, tigers and the passion for tigers disappeared, but in my dreams their presence persisted. In that deep and chaotic tapestry, they were the predominant features. Thus, in my sleep, some dream or other distracts me, and immediately I know it is a dream. Then the idea comes to me: 'It is a dream, a pure distraction of my will, and since I have boundless power, I am going to create a tiger.'

Oh, incompetence! my dreams will never be able to create the desired beast. The tiger appears all right, but dissected, or debilitated, or with some impure variations on its form, or of the wrong size, or too fugitive, or looking too much like a dog or a bird.

2 Nails

During the day gentle stockings caress my toes, nailed leather shoes fortify them, but they do not pay heed to these things. Nothing interests them, except sprouting nails: horned bayonets, semi-transparent and elastic, to defend themselves — from whom? Stupid and suspicious like nothing else, they never cease preparing their flimsy armament. They reject the universe and ecstasy in order to continue their endless elaboration of vain points, which suddenly roar and roar again, the brusque



clashes of the scissors of Solingen. After ninety twilit days of prenatal seclusion, they have set in motion this unique industry. When I am held in the Recoleta,¹ in an ash-coloured house encrusted with dried flowers and talismans, they will continue their obstinate work until corruption quietens them. They, and the beard on my face.

3 Argumentum Ornithologicum

I shut my eyes and I see a flight of birds. The vision lasts for a second, perhaps less. Their number, was it definite or not? The problem envelopes the existence of God. If God exists, the number is definite, for God knows how many birds I saw. If God does not exist, the number is not definite, because nobody could have counted them. In this case, I have seen a number of birds, let us say, less than ten, and more than one, but I have not seen nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, or two birds. I have seen a number of birds between ten and one, which is neither nine, nor eight, nor seven, nor six, nor five, etc. This entire number is inconceivable; therefore, God exists.

¹ Cemetery of Buenos-Aires.

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is central to the art of SOTO: *'I always work with the fewest and most anonymous elements, to get as far away as possible from description. French painters have tended always to use "beautiful" forms, forms still close to figuration, forms with a decorative function. The elements I use are absolutely without value in themselves, they are used simply to demonstrate relations. By means, for example, of the endless repetition of the square, the square itself disappears and produces pure movement.'**

All this contributes to one's first impression that SOTO's work is uninviting. But one has to dispel the feeling that the elements should be attractive in themselves or that there should be a cohesion of modelling binding the object together. One should remember the lady who asked MONDRIAN why he always put squares into his paintings, and received the reply: *'Squares? I see no squares.'* She took for squares what were, in fact, related spaces, and her objection was similar to those who reprimanded CEZANNE for 'never finishing' his paintings. 'Continuous modelling' can only define static, figurative form. If solid material is to reveal the presence of dynamic relations it must be able to suggest tensions beside those materially realised, to draw the attention of the spectator to empty space. For SOTO, the painter who made the decisive break with figuration was TURNER, in advance of the Impressionists, and SOTO goes so far as to say: *'In fact, after TURNER, one can move directly to pure abstraction — to KANDINSKY for example.'* Certainly, for most Victorian critics TURNER appeared to have gone to verges of insanity, so radically did definition and modelling appear to have been sacrificed for the sake of intensity.

I have begun with the past, a thing often regarded with suspicion by those who think that a new departure is a new invention. SOTO is extremely careful about the dating of his works, not so much because he wishes to claim 'firsts' (though he is entitled to several important ones) but because he sees his work as a journey of exploration, set within the larger journey of the evolution — in which he believes passionately — of plastic art: *'I am very conscious of the historical process in which I am placed, and my ambition is to develop this process from the stage at which I found it. It's no good setting out with the intention of inventing something, some "new reality". The artist does not look forward, as many people suppose, but looks deeper. The artist foresees new visions entirely by discovering new values, new possibilities, in what already exists. I am sure that new discoveries are often in the form of revelations, but revelations cannot occur to those who are not prepared for them. When KANDINSKY came home and discovered his landscape painting upside down on the easel, in one stroke he thought of abstract art. But one must understand all the foregoing preparations, emotional and spiritual, for that moment, which make it unique, but at the same time logical.'* One cannot help noticing here the absence of the egotistical striving of the fashionable 'innovator', SOTO establishes a direct link with MONDRIAN: *'We need not try and foresee the future; we need only take our place in the development of human culture.'* (MONDRIAN: *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art, 1937.*)

In fact the jumping-off point for SOTO was this consciousness of his place. He describes it himself as simply at first a desire to 'make the last works of MONDRIAN move'. He decided on this course about 1950 in Paris when *tachism*, for example, would have been a way to more immediate success. Thus it was not adopted arbitrarily but from a belief in the clarity of this process of evolution. *'If CEZANNE had lived he would have been a cubist, if MONDRIAN had lived he would have been kinetic.'*

SOTO's work of the last fifteen years has been marked at intervals by a series of important leaps forward. Each imaginative leap has propelled the development of two principal beliefs: the limitation to essentials of the material means of the painting, and a realisation of the full poetic richness and vitality of optical movement. The first was to bring to the painting equilibrium and purity; the second, freedom.

In 1950 SOTO moved to Paris, after three years as Director of the Maracaibo School of Fine Arts in Venezuela. He was convinced that MONDRIAN, shortly before he died, was moving towards the province of optical illusion in order to realise a purely dynamic abstract painting, and in his early Paris paintings SOTO restricted himself to optical problems.

In 1951 he worked with the repetition of simple geometrical forms in light and dark colours on a flat surface. *'Vibration Blanc et Vert'* creates a powerful horizontal movement, and is already a painting of pure optical energy. The identical elements are progressively elongated across the canvas, drawing the eye into the compulsive vibration.

From 1951 to 1954 SOTO worked at the problem of producing optical movement on the surface by the spatial relationship between small dots of equal size but different colours, an idea close to serialism in music. The dots were not crowded together, which would have produced the danger of an 'atmospheric' effect, but widely and evenly spaced.

In 1954 he made his decisive liberating discovery — superimposition. He began by extending the dot theme — fixing a perspex sheet, also painted with dots — several inches from the surface. At once the elements appeared to be detached from their rigid material existence and

float in space. He quickly saw the possibilities of the *moiré* effect, for it was this apparent 'detachment of the elements' that he had been searching for. It not only opened up a field rich in possibility, but also served as a release for his innate lyricism.

1956 was the year of the final and most fully realised perspex works — the coolly shimmering three-layer constructions, and the well-known spiral piece now in the Krefeld Museum. This year also marked SOTO's emergence into the outside world: *'I wanted to test the relationships between my researches and those of the painters*

around me, to be associated with them.' These were the years of *Part informel* and assemblage in Paris, and SOTO sought to subdue it all to his new concept of optical movement. During these years he superimposed complex and densely interwoven structures of wire upon free, almost gestural strokes for the background lines; he juxtaposed areas of soft, textural paint-work next to the strictly delineated area of the optical vibration within the same work; he experimented with large areas of bright colour; and he submitted subtly chosen objects of all kinds to the process of transformation by optical illusion.

This tremendous flowering of confidence seems to me to stand as an essential half-way stage between the monastic severity of the patient early experiments and the celebration of real as well as illusory movement in his recent works. The 'informal' period brought indispensable riches and SOTO's recent work, although the simplest and most lyrical he has yet produced, has a density of sensual matter which is absolutely unmistakable. It makes one convinced that the experience of the 'baroque' period is still there, in purified and sublimated form.

1962-1965: The large number of works he has produced in the last few years testify to the variety, grace and fecundity of SOTO's vision. Each piece brings to realisation a separate sensation of movement; each is a natural flowering of that particular movement in material terms. Nothing disturbs the equilibrium of each individual work. Whatever formal idea it is founded on — the undulating march of equidistant squares, the trembling disintegration of wire filaments, the sliding refraction of horizontal bars — each operates within its chosen cycle, concentrating an intense optical activity within honestly stated limits. Even with a single theme — say the suspended bar — the variations SOTO reveals are remarkable; the bar may be hung within a dark box or upon a white board, the board may be round or square, so may the plaque with lines, the bar may project beyond or be enclosed within it, and so on. And in each, the austere, withdrawn, yet warmly absorbent colour-systems, superbly judged, subtly vary the sensuality of the vibrations themselves.

Each SOTO contains a tiny drama of material dematerialised continually re-enacted within a perfectly balanced visual situation, which is nevertheless flexible enough to permit the intrusion of many subtle and unexpected cross-currents. This process of the transformation of matter into energy gains its power by being reduced to its simplest manifestation, by concentrating upon those minute changes in the material, and in our own vision, where stillness begins to yield to movement. His works are rather like a sheet of calm water, upon which is continually being traced and effaced the passage of the wind above, the passage of the fish below and the stable reeds which puncture the surface. *'We marvel at the laws of chance without realising that we are only being made aware of realities we had not thought of. The elements plunge into the work like fish into water; all these directions, speeds, accidents, positions, are ordered by the containing whole, to which they contribute and which controls their variations. Their force depends upon the number of their revelations.'* SOTO has written.

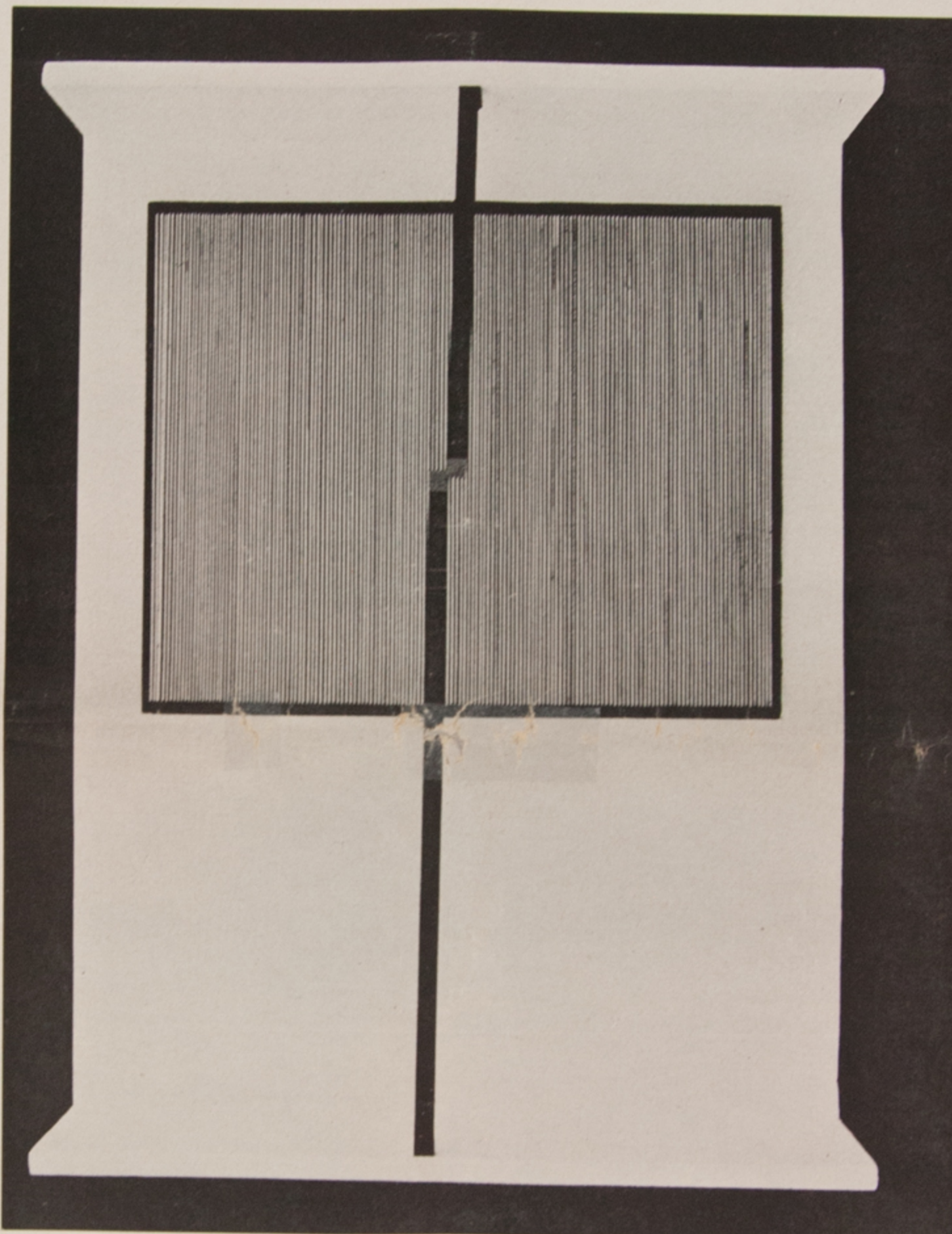
Ever since it first appeared, abstract art has been criticised with being something ideal and unreal, something with no real basis in human life or in nature, and there have been many excessively animalistic and literary styles to bolster up this opinion. How close, then, is SOTO's work to nature? As we have seen he has purged the elements themselves of any associative or descriptive meaning whatsoever, and he says: *'The problems of abstract painting are problems of pure dynamism — the more obviously organic work, such as that of ARP, belongs to figuration.'* But what exactly are we to understand by the phrase 'pure dynamism'? Certainly not the dynamism of the futurists, which was a romantic view of the visible surface of the modern world — cars, aeroplanes and the noise and bustle of machinery. Attacking futurism, GABO alluded to another view of dynamism: *'Look at a ray of sun — the quietest of the silent strengths — it runs 300,000 kilometres in a second. Our starry sky — does anyone hear it?' (Realist Manifesto, 1920.)* GABO's work was indeed founded, more than that of any other sculptor of the pioneer generation, in the attempt to re-express organic experience purely in terms of the interaction of forces in space. It is interesting also that a contemporary artist like TAKIS, who uses machinery directly in his sculpture, should only choose parts of instruments for making visible the emptiness of space — radar and so on. Modern abstract art has in fact approached a nature which is in reality invisible or immaterial, which is not tied to the particularities of visible form, which seeks out, in KLEE's words, 'the powers which do the forming, not the final forms themselves'.

So we may see SOTO's 'pure dynamism' as a system of intuitively grasped relationships, 'a harmony parallel to nature', revealing themselves both in time and space. *'I no longer see waves but the pure repetition behind the waves — grey, green, blue. But what happens when you see the work is that you discover nature in it. One invents nothing in the plastic arts — all one does is demonstrate the existence of things.'* Therefore, because of the relative nature of the elements and their perfect equity within the work, the relationship between spectator and work is real and direct. He is not confronted by some abstract conception of the exterior world, but by a real and organically inter-related series of events. The work needs the spectator, for it is through the weaknesses of his perceptual faculties that the work leads him to new values. In all this the ego of the artist does not intrude, although his intuitive sense of relationships has given the form to the dialogue between spectator and work. We do not think of the work as an image of some external 'absolute'; we acknowledge the spiritual force of the relationships themselves, that they reveal an 'absolute' that exists within us. A sentence from E. HERRIGEL's famous book about Zen archery seems to me to illustrate the role of relations in SOTO's work: *'How intoxicatingly the vibrancy of an event is communicated to him who is himself only a vibration.'*

London 1965

Pure Relations by Guy Brett

(continued from page 15)



J. R. SOTO: Two Red Points 1965. Collection of Mr & Mrs Jean Clay, Paris

Photo: Clay Perry

Midnight

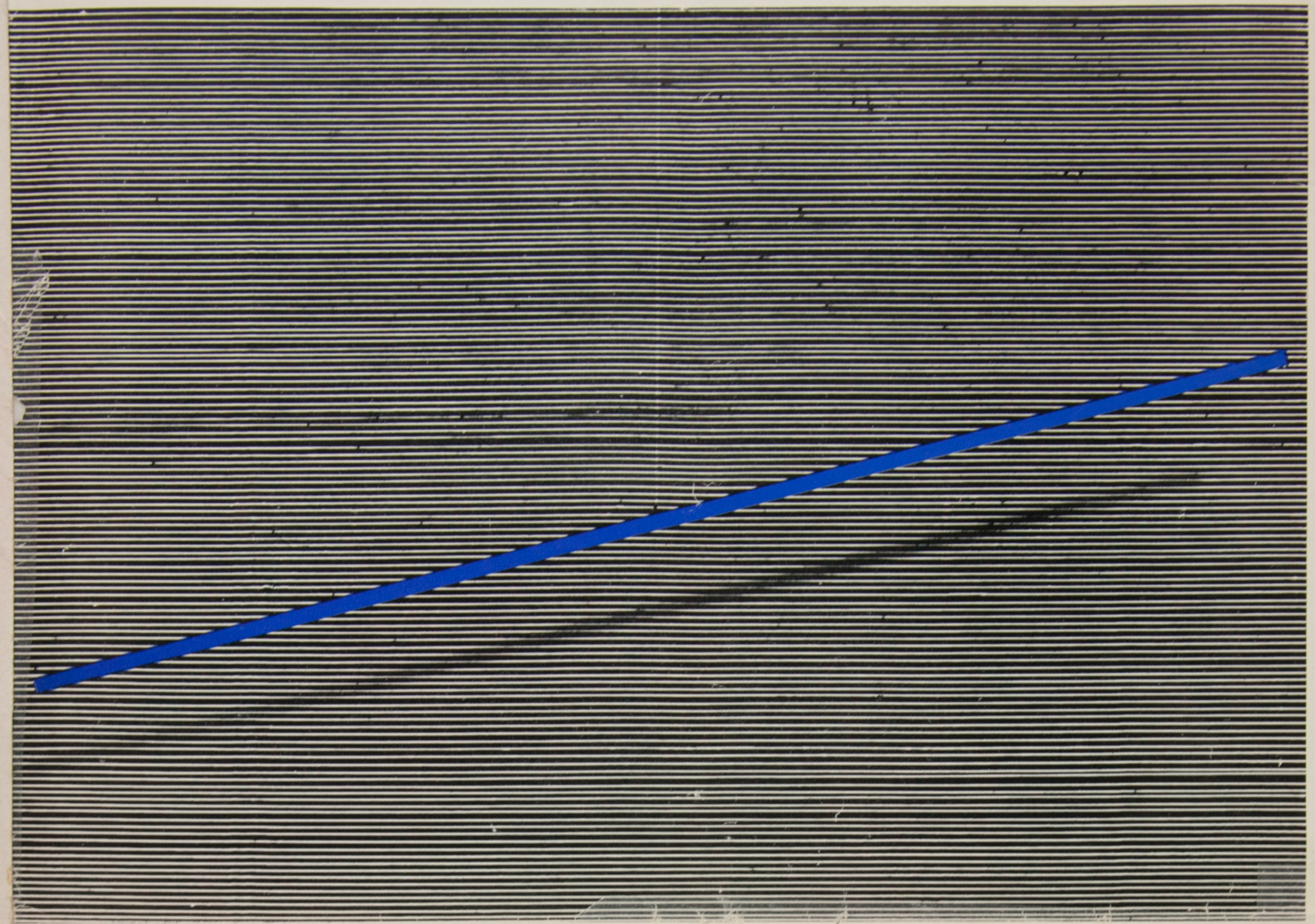
by Henry Vaughan

(English poet, 1622-1695)

When to my eyes
(Whilst deep sleep others catches.)
Thine hoast of spies,
The starres, shine in their watches,
I doe survey
Each busie ray,
And how they work, and wind,
And wish each beame
My soul doth streame,
With the like ardour shin'd;
What emanations,
Quick vibrations
And bright stirs are there!
What thin ejections,
Cold affections,
And slow motions here!

Thy heav'ns (some say)
Are a fire-liquid light
Which, mingling, aye
Streames and flames thus to the sight.
Come then, my god!
Shine on this bloud,
And water in one beame,
And thou shalt see
Kindled by thee
Both liquors burne and streame,
O what bright quicknes,
Active brightnes,
And celestially flows
Will follow after
On that water,
Which thy spirit blowes!

* This and subsequent quotations in italics are part of a conversation I had with the artist in his Paris studio, April 1965.



J. R. SOTO: Vibration 1963. Collection of the Tate Gallery, London. This work, the first vibration by Soto to enter a public collection in Great Britain, was brought to England by Paul Keeler on December 24, 1963. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Mr Norman Reid, director of the Tate Gallery, London. Tate Gallery catalogue number T 649

SNOW by Mao Tse-tung

*This is the landscape of the northern land:
A hundred leagues are sealed with ice,
A thousand leagues of whirling snow.
On either side of the Great Wall:
A glacial vastness,
From end to end of the great river
The torrents are frozen, lost,
The mountains dance like silver snakes,
The highlands roll like waxen elephants,
As if they sought to vie with heaven in their
height,
And on a sunny day
You will see a red dress thrown over the white,
Breath-taking in its loveliness!
Such great beauty like this in our landscape
Has humbled countless heroes in the past.
But alas those heroes! — Chin Shih Huang and
Han Wu Ti
Were rather lacking in culture;
The emperors Tang Tai Tsung and Sung Tai Tsu
Were rather lacking in literary talent,
And Genghis Khan,
Beloved Son of Heaven for a day,
Knew only how to bend his bow at the golden
eagle.
Now they are all dead and gone:
To find men truly great and noble-hearted
We must look here in the present, among us.
Composed by Mao Tse-tung in August 1945, aboard a
plane bound for Chungking, on his first flight over China*

SOTO on motion

from *Clarín Dominical* of Venezuela
'Jésus SOTO or Pure Visuality', an interview
conducted by Ludovico Silva

Is your painting a painting of motion?
'Not specifically. Motion is one of the elements
that I avail myself of. There are other things which
are equally important to me, such as vibration in
its pure state and the metamorphosis of matter —
obviously, in their visual aspects.'

*Vibration in its pure state, would that be such as
that in the string of a harp?*

'Yes, as long as it is not the visual image of the
string itself but only that of the sole pure vibra-
tion. That, despite the fact that my research is
only visual and not musical.'

SOTO

por Guillermo Meneses

El nombre de Jesús SOTO significa una de las contribuciones más valiosas que venezolano alguno haya dado el arte universal. El camino de SOTO, desde su Guayana de misterio y verdes brillos poderosos — fuerzas de oro y piedras, de aguas multicolores, de aventura y humano riesgo — se realiza en diferentes pasos seguros: el muchacho inventó los primeros rasgos, los primeros chispazos sobre las paredes de la casa; vino luego el tiempo del aprendizaje, la tarea guiada a lo largo de la copia de los yesos y de los modelos vivos; fué también muy pronto el que sirvió para que otros hicieran junto a él la lección permanente.

Cuando SOTO llega a París (hacia 1950) su actividad ya ha estado unida a la función pedagógica en la Escuela de Bellas Artes de Maracaibo. Tal vez por eso, por haber realizado estudios, por haber llevado a cabo labor dirigente también dentro del ordenamiento académico, tiene toda la libertad del que decide comenzar con la cabal escogencia de la más exigente disciplina.

Los paisajes que elaboraba SOTO en sus primeros tiempos de pintor están realizados con una pincelada seca, inventora de inquietas caligrafías; lo que hace en sus primeros tiempos de París, corresponde con los conceptos de la pintura plana, del color limpio y puro, aplicado a formas precisas que ocupan el cuadro en muy honesta composición directa.

Unos cuantos años más tarde se incorpora SOL al mundo del movimiento; descubre que el pintor puede no sólo inventar una semejanza de espacio con los recursos de la perspectiva; sabe, del mismo modo, que se puede negar todo espacio y fabricar el mundo de las dos dimensiones, el

mundo plano, sin profundidad falsa y, por todo ello, afirma también que el espacio puede ser elemento utilizable, materia que se incorpora a la obra con toda sinceridad y crea por la ilusión del movimiento, la verdad del tiempo.

Esa es una de las condiciones esenciales del 'cinetismo'; mientras una forma se va haciendo en el espacio, mientras se desarrolla una imagen por la contraposición y la destrucción de otras imágenes, la obra que incluye esa noción del movimiento está diciendo que el tiempo va pasando.

La obra de SOTO dentro del 'cinetismo' es lo que se conoce por su 'época del plexiglas'. Fué una excelente tarea, por la cual llegó a tomar para sí los colores que pasaban de uno a otro plano cristalino en el más sorprendente y vivo juego de arte. El siguiente paso de SOTO fué la incorporación de los alambres a un fondo plano de rayas. Fué el momento de sus 'VIBRACIONES', continuamente mejorado por el muy sabio uso de los colores y de las manchas.

Después llegó el momento de la incorporación de los objetos encontrados y la invención de esas obras que reúnen volúmenes, condiciones efímeras, chatarras admirables. Afortunadamente, continúa muy lejos del apego a cualquier fórmula, igual que lejos está de la insistencia en la curiosidad de los 'experimentalismos'. Jesús SOTO va realizando el trabajo de su vida con toda seguridad, con toda exactitud, con toda pasión. Por ello ha logrado una de las más valiosas contribuciones que venezolano alguno pueda haber ofrecido al arte universal.

From the catalogue of the Second Biennale Armando Reverón, Caracas, Venezuela, 1963

'Hazard is, for me, the living element' SOTO

from *EL NACIONAL* of Caracas,
12th April, 1961:

declarations made by Jesús SOTO upon his
arrival in Venezuela from France

*SOTO, you have often spoken of freedom: in
your art, what does freedom mean?*

'In the past I used to produce a picture as one would realise something already foreseen, something already preconceived and previously determined. However, later on in life, I came to attach more value to the elements of chance: to the "finds" which I may fall upon during the production of my work. I never make a model or draw a plan, I work my pictures directly, straightaway, and each work gives me elements that I emphasise.'

SOTO, what does chance mean in your work?

'For me the work of art must provide a surprise: it must give me a shock, just as, when seeing the work of an excellent artist, a certain part or zone of it gives one a shock. Hazard is, for me, the living element. It gives me a sort of surprise. It is something that comes to me from the outside. That is to say, it is a series of elements, alien to myself, which I incorporate into my work by means of valorisation.'

★ ★
'... it is like finding yourself before a forest. You like it, and then you enter it. Strange elements then surge around you, and you choose between them. Those are the possibilities of chance...'
Translated from the Spanish by ANA TERESA SERNA

SIGNS

from David Medalla's notebook
'On Simple Arithmetic' (1965)

Malevitch	—
Mondrian	+
Soto	==

**next SIGNALS: special OTERO number
to mark OTERO's retrospective exhibition
at SIGNALS LONDON (opening January 20, 1966)**

JESUS-RAFAEL SOTO INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1949 Caracas, Atelier Art Libre.
 - 1956 Paris, Galerie Denise René.
 - 1957 Brussels, Galerie Aujourd'hui, Palais des Beaux-Arts. Caracas, Museum of Fine Arts of Caracas.
 - 1959 Paris, Galerie Iris Clert.
 - 1961 Essen, Germany, Galerie Rudolph Zwirner. Caracas, Museum of Fine Arts of Caracas.
 - 1962 Antwerp, Belgium, Galerie Ad Libitum. Paris, Galerie Edouard Loeb.
 - 1963 Krefeld, Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Haus Lange.
 - 1964 Stuttgart, Galerie Müller.
 - 1965 New York, Kootz Gallery. Paris, Galerie Edouard Loeb.
- London: SIGNALS LONDON:** first individual show in Great Britain: **The Achievements of Jesus-Rafael SOTO : 15 years of vibrations : 1950-1965**, a retrospective exhibition organised by Paul Keeler to mark the first anniversary of SIGNALS LONDON's showrooms at 39 Wigmore Street, W1.

Jésus-Rafael SOTO : Awards and Distinctions

- 1957 Prize for Abstract Painting, Galeria Don Hatch, Caracas.
- 1960 National Painting Prize of Venezuela.
- 1960 Virgilio Corao Prize, Caracas.
- 1963 Prize of the 2nd Biennale 'Armando Reveron', Caracas.
- 1963 Wolf Prize for Painting, 7th Biennale of Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- 1964 David Bright Foundation Prize for Painting, 32nd Biennale of Venice, Italy.
- 1964 Grand Prize of the 2nd Biennale of American Art, Córdoba, Argentina.
- 1964 Prize for Painting of the City of Córdoba, Argentina.
- 1965 Grand Prize of the 1st Pan-American Salon of Painting, Cali Arts Festival, Cali, Colombia.

The following films have been made on J. R. SOTO's work:

- 1958 Paris: 'Vibrations', directed by Angel Hurtado, Eastman colour. 16mm. Running time: ten minutes.
- 1962 Caracas: 'VIBRATIONSOTO' por Angel Hurtado (director). 16mm. Running time: seven minutes. Eastman colour.
- 1962 Caracas: 'Asi Nace un Mural' ('Thus a Mural is Born') by Angel Hurtado and Clara Diamant de Sujo. Black & White documentary. 16mm.
- 1963 Brussels: SOTO: a tv film made by Télévision Belge.
- 1964 London: Mobile Sculpture at the Lamda Theatre, by Soto, Takis and Pol Bury: part of a British Movietone News release. Black & White. 35mm. Shown in cinemas in Great Britain.
- 1964 London: Soto, Takis, Pol Bury: a tv film made by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the programme 'Tonight', BBC-tv 1.
- 1964 London: Kinetic Art Comes to London: A film made by the Central Office of Information. Director: Hazel Swift. In several languages. Black & White. World-wide release.
- 1964 London: Kinetic Art, works by Soto, Camargo and Takis: a tv film made by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the programme 'Town and Around', BBC-tv 1. Introduced by David Medalla.
- 1964 London and Oxford (Ashmolean Museum): 'Did you see your statue move?' J. Arthur Rank film, part of the Look at Life series. 35mm. In colour. Shown in cinemas in Great Britain.
- 1964 London: Latin American Art Today: a film made by the Central Office of Information, London, with the full cooperation of SIGNALS LONDON. Black & White. 16mm. and 35 mm. In five languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian. World-wide release.
- 1965 London: Science and the Artist: a tv film made by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the programme 'Horizon', BBC-tv 2, in which a vibration-structure by J. R. Soto was featured among examples of kinetic art. Black & White. Forty minutes. Introduced by Dr Alex Comfort and David Medalla. Director: Ramsay Short. Producer: G. Rattray Taylor.
- 1965 London: Soundings Two at SIGNALS LONDON: a documentary film made by the National Broadcasting Corporation of America for television release in Canada and the USA.
- 1965 London: SOTO AT SIGNALS LONDON: a tv film currently being made by the BBC for the programme 'New Release', BBC-tv 2. Director: Jack Bond. Producer: Melvyn Bragg. Commentary by David Medalla.

International Collective Exhibitions in which Jésus-Rafael SOTO participated

- 1943 to 1949 Caracas: Annual Salon of Venezuelan Art.
- 1951 Caracas: Galeria 4 Muros, First International Exhibition of Abstract Art. Paris: Salon des Réalités Nouvelles.
- 1952 Havana, Cuba: International Exhibition of Abstract Art. Paris: Salon des Réalités Nouvelles. Paris: Galerie Suzanne Michel, 'Exposition Espace-Lumière'.
- 1953 Paris: Salon des Réalités Nouvelles.
- 1954 Paris: Salon de Mai. Paris: Salon des Réalités Nouvelles.
- 1955 Valencia, Venezuela: International Exhibition of Valencia. Paris: Galerie Denise René, 'Le Mouvement'.
- 1956 Marseilles: Cité Radieuse Le Corbusier, First Festival of Avant-garde art. Paris: Salon des Réalités Nouvelles.
- 1957 Rouen: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, exhibition organised by 'l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui'. Caracas: International Exhibition of Abstract Art. Paris: Galerie Creuze, 'Dictionnaire de l'Art Abstrait', exhibition organised by Michel Seuphor. Sao Paulo, Brazil: Biennale of Sao Paulo: Venezuelan Pavillion.
- 1958 Venice: Biennale of Venice: Venezuelan Pavillion. Paris: Salon des Réalités Nouvelles. Brussels: International Fair of Brussels: Venezuelan pavillion, for which SOTO made three environmental works: an interior mural measuring 7 metres by 10 metres; an exterior mural, one metre by 18 metres; and a sculpture in the open-air.
- 1959 New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, Group Show. Vienna: Young Contemporary Artists. Leverkusen, Germany: Städtisches Museum of Leverkusen. Charleroi, Belgium: Art of the 20th Century. Antwerp, Belgium: Movement. Paris: Galerie Arnaud, Group Exhibition. Caracas: National Salon of Venezuelan Art. Sao Paulo, Brazil: Biennale of Sao Paulo: Venezuelan pavillion.
- 1960 Zurich, Switzerland: Museum of Zurich, 'Concrete Art'. Paris: Exhibition of Avant-garde Art. Stockholm: Editions MAT exhibition. Milan: Editions MAT exhibition. Krefeld: Editions MAT exhibition. Zurich: Editions MAT exhibition. Havana, Cuba: International Exhibition of Modern Art.

WORKS BY J. R. SOTO are in private collections in Great Britain, Europe, North and South America; too many to mention them individually here. SOTO is also represented in the permanent collections of the following public art galleries and museums:

The Tate Gallery, London; The Museum of Fine Arts, Caracas; The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; The Cali Institute of Fine Arts, Cali, Colombia; The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Museum of Contemporary Arts, Sao Paulo, Brazil; The Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; The Kaiser Foundation, Cordoba, Argentina; The Palace of Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium; The Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Holland; The Museum of Modern Art, Jerusalem, Israel; The Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany; and the Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA.

Among works for architecture, SOTO executed a sculpture for the garden of the School of Architecture of the University City of Caracas, and two murals and a sculpture for the Venezuelan pavillion at the Brussels International Fair in 1958, as well as environmental works for homes in Venezuela and France.

- 1961 Amsterdam, Holland: Stedelijk Museum, Movement exhibition. Stockholm, Sweden: Moderna Museet, Movement exhibition. Copenhagen, Denmark: Louisiana Museum, Movement exhibition. Dusseldorf, Germany: Zero exhibition. Paris, France: rue Jean Mermoz, 'Art Temoin' (novembre). (A personal room was devoted to SOTO in the Movement exhibitions held in 1961 in Amsterdam, Stockholm and Copenhagen.)
- 1962 Ghent, Belgium: Forum '62. Barcelona, Spain: Palacio de la Virreina, 'Krit-Punto 2'. New York: 17 Venezuelan painters. Haifa, Israel: 17 Venezuelan painters. Tel-Aviv: 17 Venezuelan painters. Paris: Galerie Marcel Dupuis, Group exhibition. Antwerp: Zero exhibition. Caracas: National Salon of Venezuelan art. Paris: Galerie XX Siècle, 'Le Relief'. Amsterdam: Zero exhibition. Venice: Biennale of Venice, Venezuelan pavillion. Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne, Latin American Artists in Paris. Rotterdam, Holland: Anthology of Invented Forms.
- 1963 Spoleto, Italy: Festival dei due mondi. Paris: Galerie 7, 'L'Oeil de Boeuf'. Berlin: Diogenes Gallery, Zero exhibition. Milan: Galleria Cadario, 'Nouvelle Tendence'. Paris: Galerie Le Gendre, 'Naissance d'un Art Nouveau', organised by Michel Ragon. Frankfurt: Galerie D, The European Avant-garde. Paris: Galerie Diderot: 'structures vivantes'. Nantes, France: Galerie Argos, 'Naissance d'un Art Nouveau'. Ghent, Belgium: Forum '63. Paris: Galerie Le Gendre, 'The Box and Its Contents'. Sao Paulo: Biennale of Sao Paulo, Venezuelan pavillion. Brussels: Galerie d'Art Ravenstein, 'transition'. Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne, Salons Comparaisons. Le Havre, France: Venezuela: from landscape to plastic expression. Barcelona, Spain: Venezuela: from landscape to plastic expression. Geneva, Switzerland: Venezuela: from landscape to plastic expression. Madrid: Venezuela: from landscape to plastic expression.
- 1964 London: foyer of the Lamda Theatre, 3 pioneers of kinetic art: Soto, Takis, Bury, an exhibition organised by Paul Keeler in connection with Peter Brook's 'Theatre of Cruelty' presentation. Arras, France: Palais Saint Vast, 'L'aujourd'hui de demain'. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, Soundings One, an international exhibition of modern art organized by Paul Keeler under the sponsorship of the Oxford University Art Club. Córdoba, Argentina: 2nd Biennale of American Art. London: First Pilot Show of Kinetic Art: SIGNALS LONDON. Mexico City: 20 South American Artists Selected from the 2nd Biennale of American Art at Córdoba, an exhibition sponsored by the Kaiser Foundation of Argentina. Oakland, California: 20 South American Artists. New York: 20 South American Artists. Washington, DC: Pan-American Union, 20 South American Artists. London: 2nd Pilot Show of Kinetic Art: SIGNALS LONDON. Paris: Galerie Davray, Group exhibition. Bielefeld, Germany: Venezuelan Art Today, an exhibition sponsored by the Neumann Foundation of Caracas. Paris: Galerie Kerchache, Soto, Cruz-Diez, Bury, Kramer. London: Redfern Gallery, 'structures vivantes: mobiles, images'. Venice: Biennale of Venice, Venezuelan pavillion. Paris: Galerie Denise René, 'Mouvement II'. St-Etienne, France: Musée de St-Etienne, '50 years of collages'. London: First Festival of Modern Art from Latin America, organised by Paul Keeler for SIGNALS LONDON.
- 1965 London: Anthology of Kinetic Sculpture and Perceptual Art, works by Soto, Takis, Camargo, Chillida, Lygia Clark, Medalla, Cruz-Diez, Guzman, Asis and others: SIGNALS LONDON. Buffalo, New York: Albright-Knox Art Museum. Cali, Colombia: First Salon of Pan-American Art. Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Academy, Art and Movement, an international exhibition organised by the Scottish Committee of the British Arts Council with the full cooperation of SIGNALS LONDON. Glasgow: Kelvingrove Gallery, Glasgow Art Museum, Art and Movement same exhibition as the Edinburgh one above. Both the Glasgow and Edinburgh exhibitions were coordinated by William Buchanan). Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne, Salon Comparaisons. London: Hampstead Festival of Arts, Sonomontage, spoken poetry, electronic sounds, kinetic art, organised by Rosemary Tonks with the full cooperation of SIGNALS LONDON. Tel-Aviv, Israel: Museum of Tel-Aviv, Movement exhibition. Rome: Galleria del Obelisco, Perpetual Motion. Nottingham: Midland Group of Artists, Kinetic Art: Spatial Art: Spatial Exploration Machines, organised by Michael Granger with the full cooperation of SIGNALS LONDON. Amsterdam: Galerie de Bezige Bij, 'De Nieuwe Stijl'. Paris: Galerie Denise René, 'De l'art construit a l'art cinétique'. Bern, Switzerland: Galerie Aktuell, 'Aktuell 65'. Liverpool: University of Liverpool Students Union, ArtScience 65, Link Week exhibition, organised by David Canter with the full cooperation of SIGNALS LONDON. Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne, Latin American Artists in Paris. Bern, Switzerland: Kunsthalle of Bern, 'Lumière et Mouvement'. Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, Nul 65, in which an entire room was devoted to SOTO's vibrations. London: Soundings Two, an international exhibition of modern art organised by Paul Keeler on the pioneers of abstraction to today's most significant exponents of kinetic, optical and elemental art: SIGNALS LONDON. Windsor: Eton College, Art School, Selections from Soundings Two, organised by Hardress Waller on behalf of the Alexander Cozens Society of Eton College with the full cooperation of SIGNALS LONDON.

GNALS DINNER FOR MR & MRS J. R. . .



A Toast to SIGNALS . . .

The dinner took place at the Hellenic Restaurant, 30 Thayer Street, W1, on Thursday, the 28th October, 1965, at eight pm, one hour before the opening of SOTO's retrospective exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON.

The photographs on this page are 'stills' from the film 'SOTO AT SIGNALS LONDON' made by the British Broadcasting Corporation for the BBC-TV 2 programme 'New Release'. Director: Jack Bond. Producer: Melvyn Bragg. Cameraman: Feroze Herosh. The film will be shown on that programme this December 1965.

'Work is good, and reading is good, but friends are better.'
— The Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell in a letter to his friend Litchfield.



Mrs J. R. Soto



Sergio de Camargo, David Medalla, J. R. Soto



Paul Keeler, Takis Vassilakis, Guy Brett



Pensive moments : Carlos Cruz-Diez, Sonia Sanoja



Narciso Debourg, Francesca Fischer

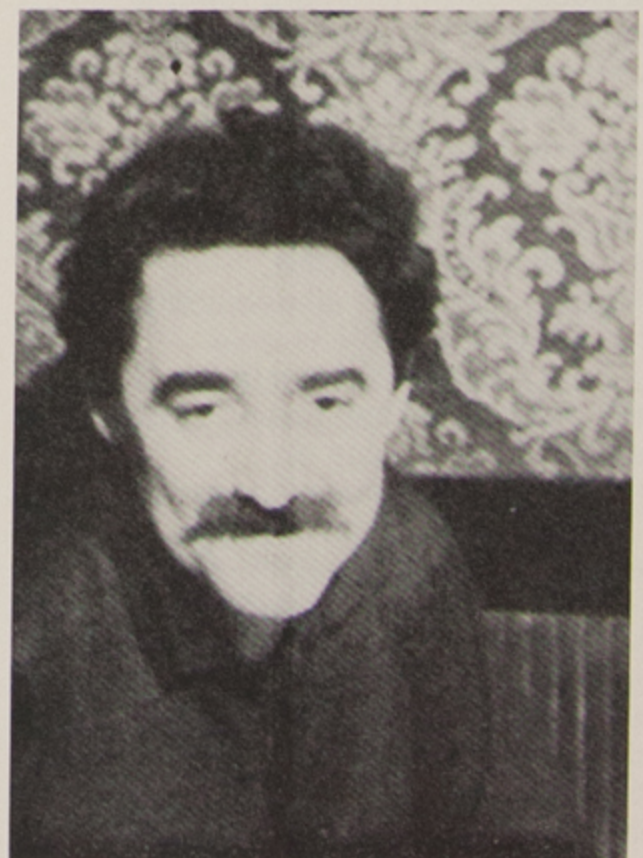


Sergio de Camargo, David Medalla

The Guests:

Mr & Mrs J. R. Soto.
Mr & Mrs Jean Clay.
Miss Michelle Bonbiquand.
Miss Francesca Fischer.
Miss Nina Gabo.
Miss Carol Laws.
Miss Patricia Rogers.
Miss Sonia Sanoja.

Antonio Asis.
Guy Brett.
Sebastian Brett.
Sergio de Camargo.
Leo Cero.
Carlos Cruz-Diez.
Narciso Debourg.
John Frazer.
Timothy Hardacre.
David Keeler.
Paul Keeler.
Anthony de Kerdrel.
David Medalla.
Takis Vassilakis.



. . . and J. R. SOTO!

J. R. Soto:
 a retrospective exhibition
 at Paul Keeler at
SIGNALS LONDON,
 11 Regent Street, W1, from
**October 28 to December 24
 1965** → exhibition on three floors

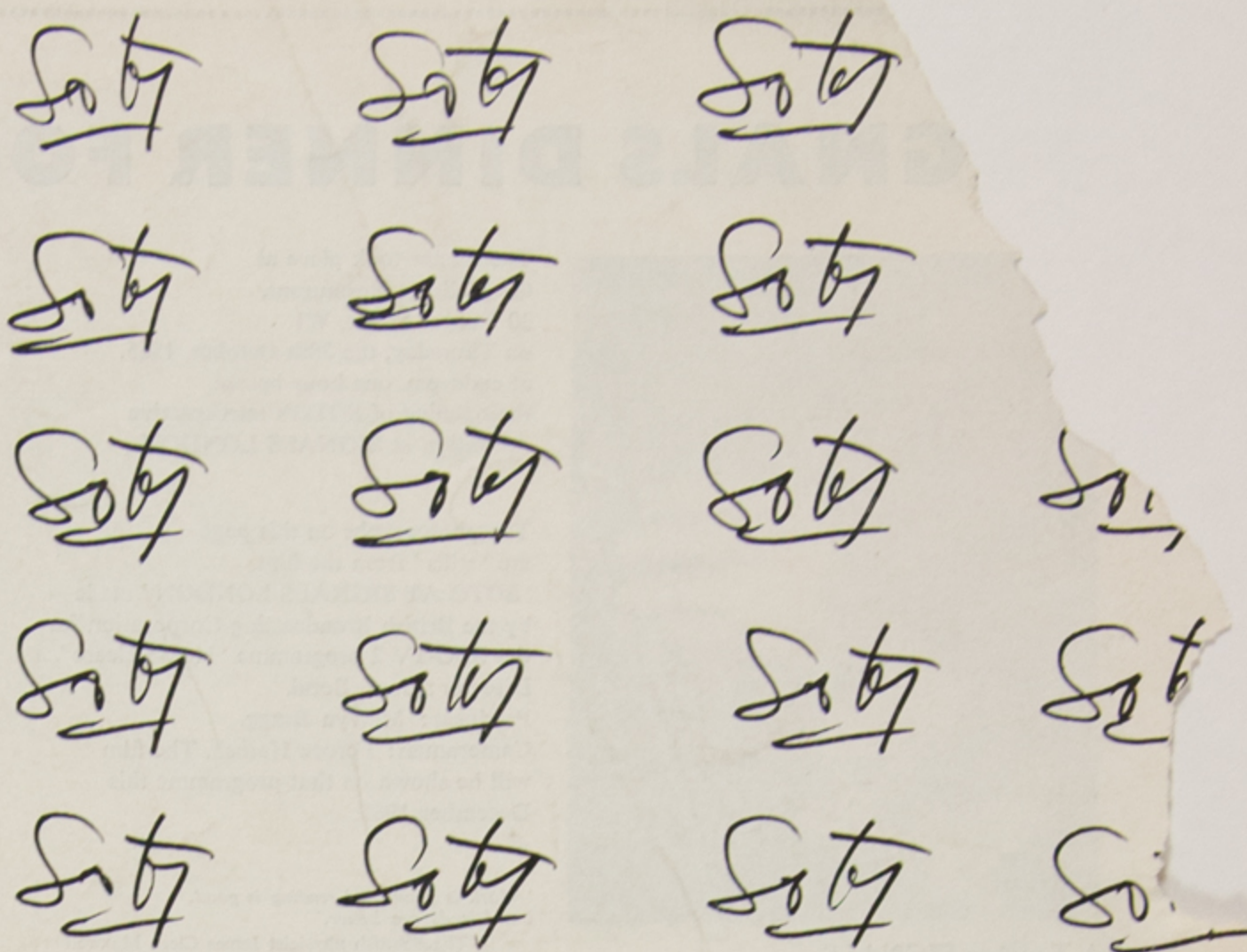
STOP PRESS 2: The Felton Bequest has purchased from SIGNALS LONDON a large work, 'London Writing 1965', by J.-R. SOTO, for the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art of Melbourne, Australia. The Contemporary Art Society of London has purchased from SIGNALS LONDON a relief, 'Vibration with 11 Bars 1965', by J.-R. SOTO. The Museum of Modern Art of Tel-Aviv, Israel, has purchased from SIGNALS LONDON a large work, 'Immaterial Curves 1965', by J.-R. SOTO. The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has purchased two works by J.-R. SOTO from SIGNALS LONDON: a 'Luminous Box' of 1955 and a 'Grand Relation-Vibration with 4 silver plaques and 12 black plaques,' 1965. For other museums' purchases, see STOP PRESS 1: page 2, column 1.

WINTER
 (an extract)

James Thomson
 (English poet 1700-1748)

To thy loved haunt return, my happy muse:
 For now, behold! the joyous Winter days,
 Frosty, succeed; and through the blue serene,
 For sight too fine, the ethereal nitre flies,
 Killing infectious damps, and the spent air
 Storing afresh with elemental life.
 Close crowds the shining atmosphere; and binds
 Our strengthened bodies in its cold embrace,
 Constringent; feeds, and animates our blood;
 Refines our spirits, through the new-strung nerves
 In swifter sallies carrying to the brain —
 Where sits the soul, intense, collected, cool,
 Bright as the skies, and as the season keen.
 All nature feels the renovating force
 Of Winter — only to the thoughtless eye
 In ruin seen. The frost-concocted glebe
 Draws in abundant vegetable soul,
 And gathers vigour for the coming year;
 A stronger glow sits on the lively cheek
 Of ruddy fire; and luculent along
 The purer rivers flow: their sullen dæeps,
 Transparent, open to the shepherd's gaze,
 And murmur hoarser at the fixing frost.

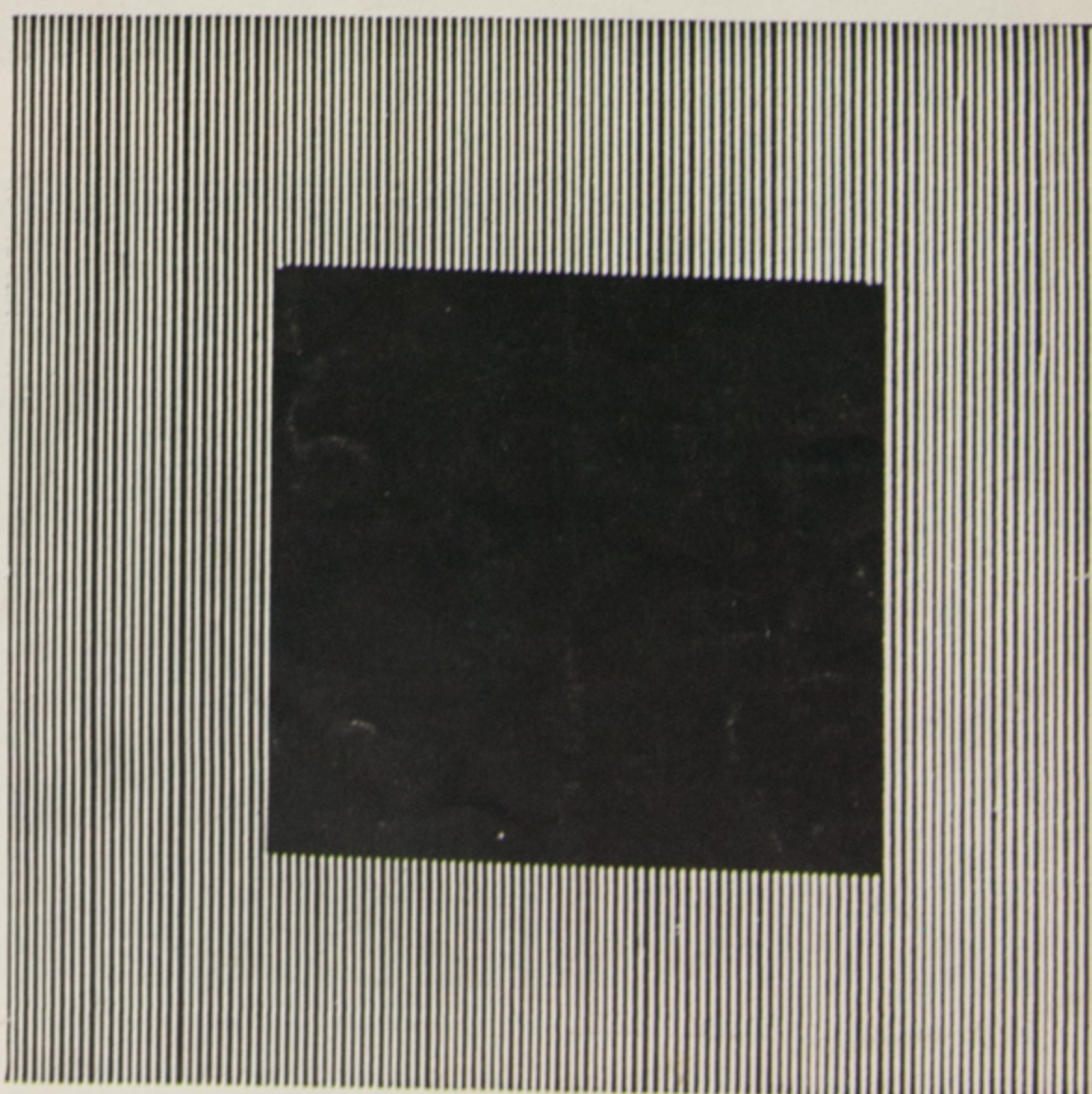
What art thou, frost? and whence are thy keen stores
 Derived, thou secret all-invading power,
 Whom even the illusive fluid cannot fly?
 Is not thy potent energy, unseen,
 Myriads of little salts, or hooked, or shaped
 Like double wedges, and diffused immense
 Through water, earth, and ether? Hence at eve,
 Steamed eager from the red horizon round,
 With the fierce rage of Winter deep suffused,
 An icy gale, oft shifting, o'er the pool
 Breathes a blue film, and in its mid-career
 Arrests the bickering stream. The loosened ice,
 Let down the flood and half dissolved by day,
 Rustles no more; but to the sedgy bank
 Fast grows, or gathers round the pointed stone,
 A crystal pavement, by the breath of heaven
 Cemented firm; till, seized from shore to shore,
 The whole imprisoned river growls below.
 Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
 A double noise; while, at his evening watch,
 The village-dog deters the nightly thief;
 The heifer lows; the distant waterfall
 Swells in the breeze; and with the hasty tread
 Of traveller the hollow-sounding plain
 Shakes from afar. The full ethereal round,
 Infinite worlds disclosing to the view,
 Shines out intensely keen, and, all one cope
 Of starry glitter, glows from pole to pole.
 From pole to pole the rigid influence falls
 Through the still night incessant, heavy, strong,
 And seizes nature fast. It freezes on.
 Till morn, late-rising o'er the drooping world,
 Lifts her pale eye unjoyous. Then appears
 The various labours of the silent night —
 Prone from the dripping cave, and dumb cascade,
 Whose idle torrents only seem to roar,
 The pendent icicle; the frost-work fair,
 Where transient hues and fancied figures rise;
 Wide-spouted o'er the hill the frozen brook,
 A livid tract, cold-gleaming on the morn;
 The forest bent beneath the plummy wave;
 And by the frost refined the whiter snow
 Incrusted hard, and sounding to the tread
 Of early shepherd, as he pensive seeks
 His pining flock, or from the mountain top,
 Pleased with the slippery surface, swift descends.



'The Soto exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON is nothing less than sensational. On three floors more than 50 paintings, reliefs and constructions are displayed in a retrospective show covering his output since 1951.

Hardly known in London until Paul Keeler introduced his work here two years ago, Soto now commands high prices — in this show from about £600 to £1,000 (\$1,680 to \$2,800). The exhibit is almost a sellout, with purchases having been made by the Tate Gallery [two large works] and public collections in many parts of the world.'

Charles S. Spencer in 'The New York Times',
 Tuesday, November 16, 1965 (extract)



J.R. SOTO: The Little Yellow 1965