

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 riote comportement

Nous nous emerveillous des lois du Hasard, sans nous rendre courte que nous ne faisons que prendre conscience de realitées aux quelles nous n'avous jas songé

Les elements flongent dans l'œuvre comme le poisson dans l'eau toutes ces directions, vitesses, accidents positions sont tradonnées far un tout environment dont ils sont hibrataires et qui conditionne le leurs revelations cet état conscient au non de l'artiste contemporain à donné à l'ait de notre temps cette sur premante richesse de possibilitées

Soto

## SIGNALS

director: paul keeler

editor : david medalla

vol one number ten 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!



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 physichromie, no 123, 1964, by
CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ.

Another physichromie 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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Director : Paul Keeler Editor : David Medalla

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

of tensile sculptures by Takis.

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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.

## 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 connaisance 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.

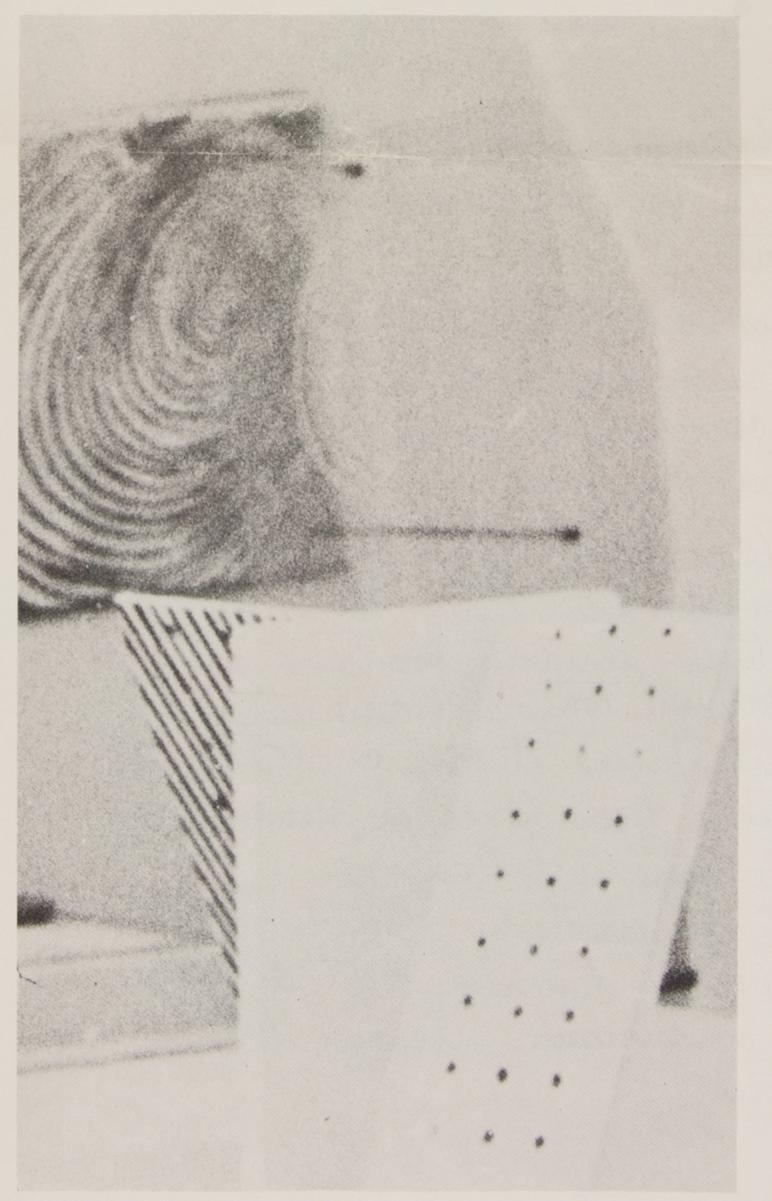
Le contemplateur active les structures dans la mesure de sa propre activité, s'il commence à être actif, lui-même, dans le jeu libre, sans aucune conformité perceptible aux lois. Ces structures en repos sont arrangées tellement qu'elles contiennent une tension qui se développe au même moment dans lequel 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 MALE-WITSCH et MONDRIAN. Tandis que les deux grans 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.

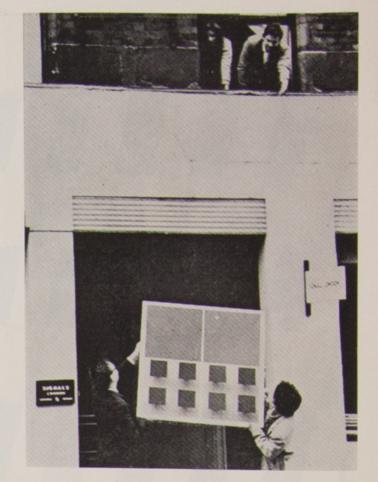
Si MALEWITSCH fait usage du carré, du cercle, du triangle, de la croix, et MONDRIAN du dualisme des lignes droites qui se rencontrent à angles droits, SOTO, d'une part, emploie des éléments semblables, mais dans une application plus libre, d'autre part, il présent un déplacement et élargissement du dualisme par suite de ses structures doubles de nature spaciale 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 con-

Krefeld 1963

scient de soi-même.



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 abracadabrizing 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,

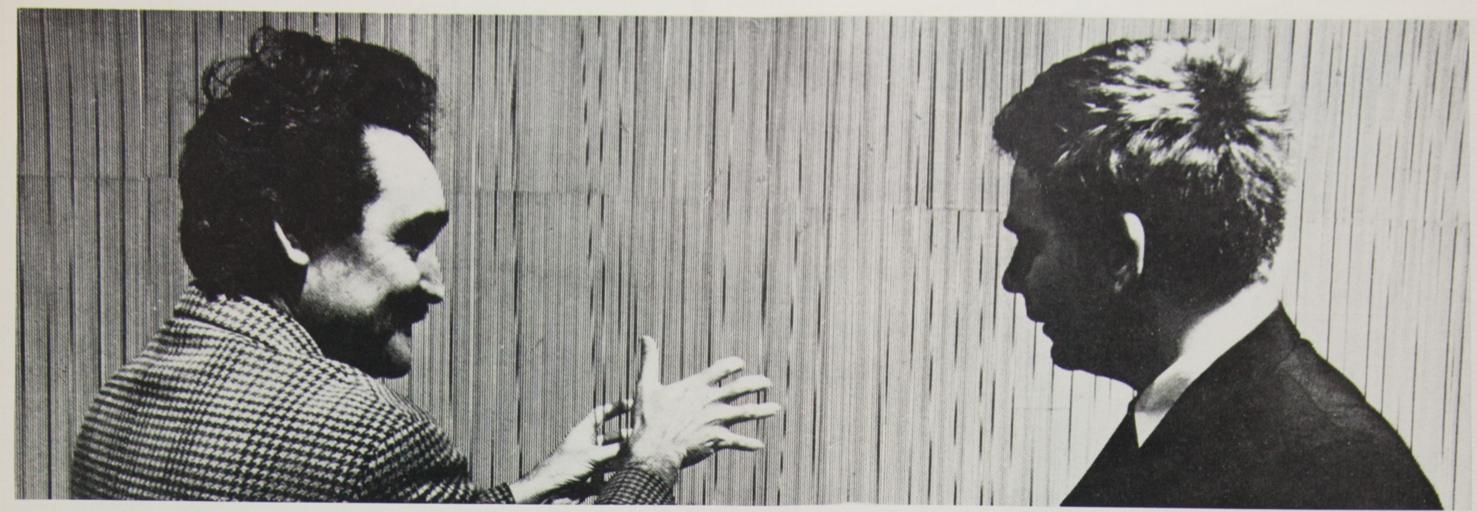
Dore Ashton.

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 SO! SHOOTS MUTE. COSA? MOOTS SHUTE. CASO! SOUS TOMATES OCH! TO SMOOTH SAUCES? OU CA HE TOSS MOST. TOOTHSOME? A CUSS! EATS TOO MUCH SOS! CUSTOM? SHOO EAST! STOMACH TO SOUSE? SO USE SMOOTH ACT! MOOS AT COT'S HUES! US SHOE SCOOT MAT! SAT! COOTS HOE! SUM! HO SOT! USE MASOT! ME TOO? SHOT? SCUSA! OHO! SCOT SUE'S MOAT? AUTOMOOSE! SCHTS!

> 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 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 car 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 [c to F], from the lips of the women waves of 2 to 4 feet in length [c" to c'], 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

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.

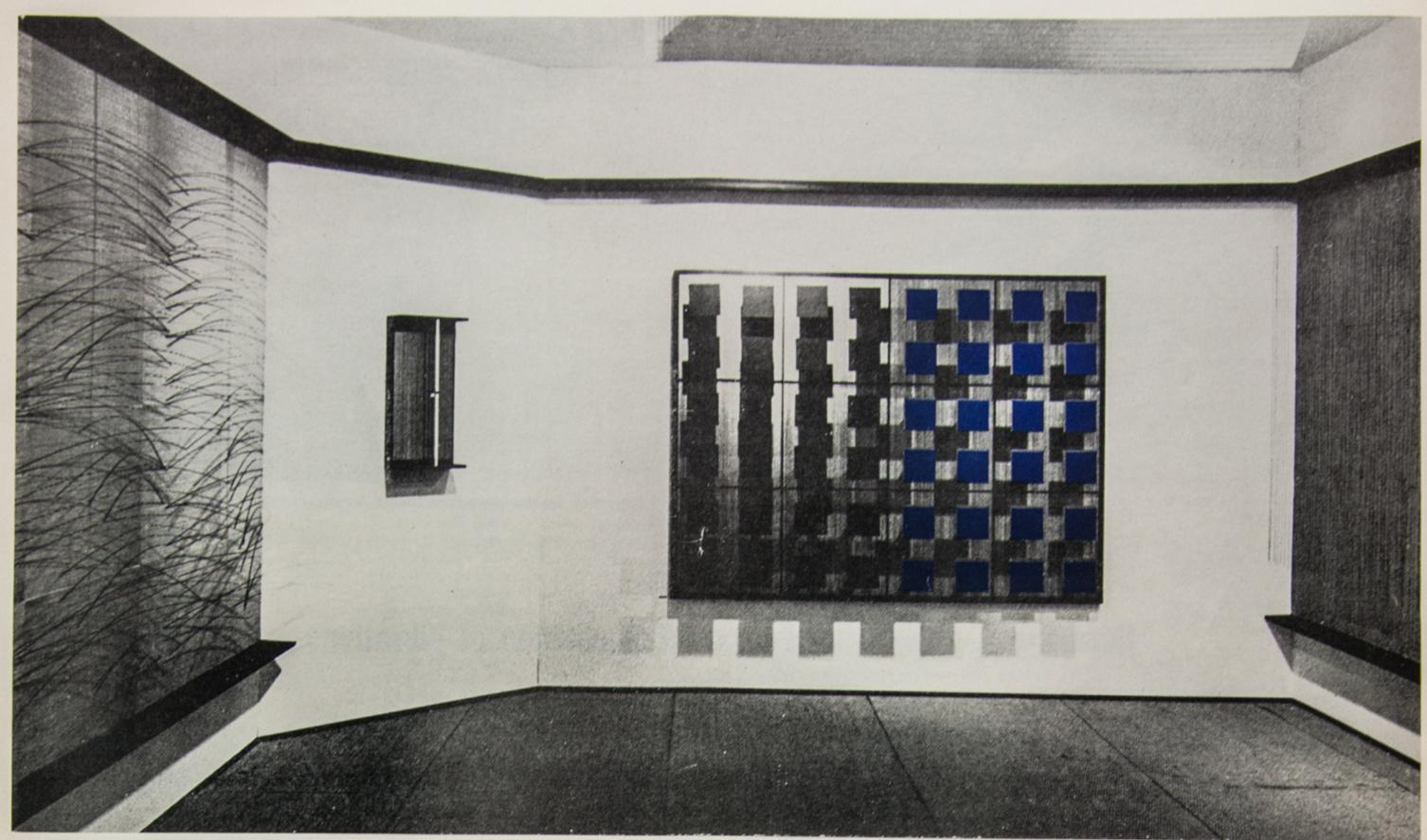
In the same sense, then, there is also a superimposition of different systems of sound in the air. By each train of waves of sound, the density of the air and the velocity and position of the particles of air, are temporarily altered. There are places in the wave of sound comparable with the crests of 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 independently<sup>2</sup>; 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.

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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 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 Photo: Clay Perry

### SOTO,

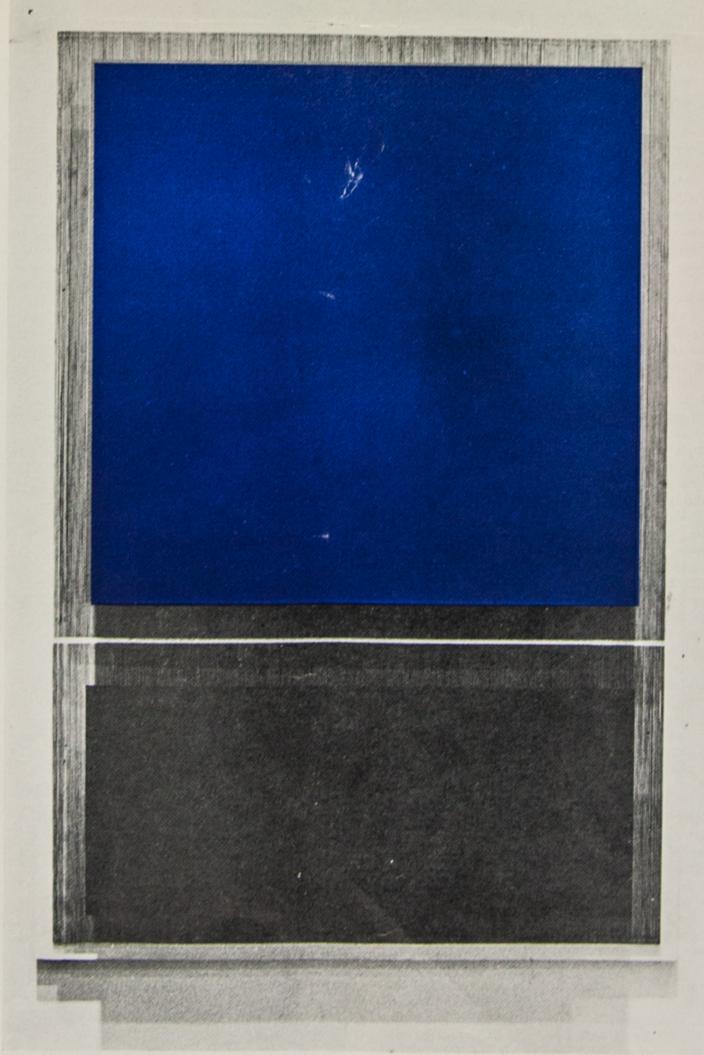
medio mago, medio geómetro, ha logrado, con elementos de plexiglas, hacer vibrar la tela tradicional y camina encantado, a la conquista de dimensiones innumerables y desconocidas. Siempre he imaginado en la plástica arquitectónica, la posibilidad de una nueva actitud, que, como en la época barroca, libere 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 manofenómeno 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 simplicida de un paso, despliega la suma infinita de espacios y de instantes.

## Clara Diament 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.

The last of the T'angs ' - that dynasty which saw the flowering of Chinese classical poetry — Ssu-K'ung Tu was a secretary in the Board of Rites, but, attracted to the doctrines of Taoism, he resigned his post and became a hermit, He returned to Court in AD 905, but was

#### Poem by

'retired' once more to the hills after accidentally dropping his official insignia at a royal audience, an unpardonable breach of Court etiquette, Grieved by the murder of the youthful emperor, Ssu-K'ung Tu starved himself to death, The poem that follows, in twenty-four

#### Ssu-K'ung

self-contained stanzas, is suffused with Taoist thought. The resemblance of no xiv, 'Close Woven', to the atomist ideas of Lucretius is intriguing. The concluding stanza is a profound reflection on the continuous flux and the dynamism of our universe. - David Medalla

XVII In Tortuous Ways

A sound escaped my lips, Which seemed to be back ere 'twas gone,

As though hidden but not concealed.\*

TAO does not limit itself to a shape,

But is round and square by turns.

Reserving to an echo.

Overhead the great rukh roars and sails;

The eddying waters rush to and fro,

I climbed the T'ai-hsing mountain

Flower-scent borne far and wide.

Struggling with effort to advance,

By the green winding path,

Vegetation like a sea of jade,

T'u (AD 834-908)

#### I Energy - Absolute

Expenditure of force leads to outward decay, Spiritual existence means inward fulnes Let us revert to Nothing and enter the Absolute, Hoarding up strength for Energy. Freighted with eternal principles, Athwart the mighty void, Where cloud-masses darken, And the wind blows ceaseless around, Beyond the range of conceptions, Let us gain the Centre, And there hold fast without violence, Fed from an inexhaustible supply.

#### II Tranquil Repose

It dwells in quietude, speechless, Imperceptible in the cosmos, Watered by the eternal harmonies, Soaring with the lonely crane. It is like a gentle breeze in spring, Softly bellying the flowing robe; It is like the note of the bamboo flute, Whose sweetness we would fain make our own. Meeting by chance, it seems easy of access, Seeking, we find it hard to secure. Ever shifting in semblance, It shifts from the grasp and is gone.

#### III Slim - Stout

Gathering the water-plants From the wild luxuriance of spring, Away in the depth of a wild valley Anon I see a lovely girl. With green leaves the peach-trees are loaded, The breeze blows gently along the stream, Willows shade the winding path, Darting orioles collect in groups. Eagerly I press forward As the reality grows upon me . 'Tis the eternal theme, Which, though old, is ever new.

#### IV Concentration

Green pines and a rustic hut, The sun sinking through pure air, I take off my cap and stroll alone, Listening to the song of birds. No wild geese fly hither, And she is far away; But my thoughts make her present As in the days gone by. Across the water dark clouds are whirled, Beneath the moonbeams the eyots stand revealed, And sweet words are exchanged Though the great River rolls between.

#### V Height - Antiquity

Lo the Immortal, borne by spirituality, His hand grasping a lotus flower, Away to Time everlasting, Trackless through the regions of Space! With the moon he issues from the Ladle,\* Speeding upon a favourable gale; Below, Mount Hua looms dark, And from it sounds a clear-toned bell. Vacantly I gaze after his vanished image, Now passed beyond the bounds of mortality . . . Ah, the Yellow Emperor and Yao, They, peerless, are his models.

\* The constellation of the Great Bear.

#### VI Refinement

A jade kettle with a purchase of spring,\* A shower on the thatched hut Wherein sits a gentle scholar, With tall bamboos growing right and left, And white clouds in the newly clear sky, And birds flitting in the depths of trees. Then pillowed on his lute in the green shade, A waterfall tumbling overhead, Leaves dropping, not a word spoken, The man placid, like a chrysanthemum, Noting down the flower-glory of the season, -A book well worthy to be read.

\* Wine which makes man see spring at all seasons.

#### VII Wash - Smelt

As iron from the mines, As silver from lead, So purify thy heart, Loving the limpid and clean Like a clear pool in spring, With its wondrous mirrored shapes, So make for the spotless and true, And, riding the moonbeam, revert to the Spiritual. Let your gaze be upon the stars of heaven,\* Let your song be of the hiding hermit\*; Like flowing water is our today, Our yesterday, the bright moon.

\* Chinese emblems of purity. † Our previous state of existence at the eternal Centre to which the moon belongs.

#### VIII Strength

The mind as though in the void, The vitality as though of the rainbow, Among the thousand-ell peaks of Wu, Flying with the clouds, racing with the wind; Drink of the spiritual, feed on force, Store them for daily use, guard them in your heart; Be like Him in His might, For this is to preserve your energy; Be a peer of Heaven and Earth, A co-worker in Divine transformation . . . Seek to be full of these, And hold fast to them always.

#### IX Embroideries

If the mind has wealth and rank, One may make light of yellow gold. Rich pleasures pall ere long. Simple joys deepen ever. A mist-cloud hanging on the river bank, Pink almond-flowers along the bough, A flower-girt cottage beneath the moon, A painted bridge half-seen in shadow, A golden goblet brimming with wine, A friend with his hand on the lute . Take these and be content; They will swell thy heart beneath thy robe.

#### X The Natural

Stoop, and there it is; Seek it not right and left. All roads lead thither, -One touch and you have spring!\*
As though coming upon opening flowers,
As though gazing upon the new year,
Verily I will not snatch it; Forced, it will dwindle away I will be like the hermit on the hill, Like duckweed gathered on the stream,† And when emotions crowd upon me, I will leave them to the harmonies of heaven,

\* An allusion to the art of the (Chinese) painter. † A creature of chance, following the doctrine of Inaction.

#### XI Set Free

Joying in flowers without let, Breathing the empyrean, Through TAO reverting to ether, And there to be wildly free, Wide-spreading as the wind of heaven, Lofty as the peaks of ocean, Filled with a spiritual strength, All creation by my side, Before me the sun, moon and stars, The phoenix following behind. In the morning I whip up my leviathans And wash my feet in Fusang.

\* Variously identified with Sakhalin Island, Mexico, and

#### XII Conservation

Without a word writ down, All wit may be attained. If words do not affect the speaker, They seem inadequate to sorrow. Herein is the First Cause, With which we sink or rise, As wine in the strainer mounts high, As cold turns back the season of flowers. The wide-spreading dust-motes in the air, The sudden spray-bubbles of ocean, Shallow, deep collected wattered, -You grasp ten thousand, and secure none

#### XIII Animal Spirits

That they might come back unceasingly, That they might be ever with us! -The bright river, unfathomable, The rare flower just opening, The parrot of the verdant spring, The willow-trees, the terrace, The stranger from the dark hills, The cup overflowing with clear wine Oh, for life to be extended, With no dead ashes of writing, Amid the charms of the Natural, -Ah, who can compass it?

#### XIV Close Woven

In all things there are veritable atoms, Though the senses cannot perceive them, Struggling to emerge into shape From the wondrous workmanship of God. Water flower, flowers budding, The limpid dew evaporating, An important road, stretching far, A dark path where progress is slow . . . So words should not shock, Nor thought be inept. But be like the green of spring, Like snow beneath the moon.

\* Each invisible atom of which combines to produce a perfect whole.

#### XV Seclusion

Following our own bent, Enjoying the Natural, free from curb, Rich with what comes to hand, Hoping some day to be with God. To build a hut beneath the pines, With uncovered head to pore over poetry, Knowing only morning and eve, But not what season it may be . Then, if happiness is ours, Why must there be action? If of our own selves we can reach this point, Can we not be said to have attained?

#### XVI Fascination

Lovely is the pine-grove, With the stream eddying below, A clear sky and a snow-clad bank, Fishing-boats in the reach beyond. And she, like unto jade, Slowly sauntering, as I follow through the dark wood, Now moving on, now stopping short, Far away to the deep valley My mind quits its tenement, and is in the past, Vague, and not to be recalled, As though before the glow of the rising moon, As though before the glory of autumn.

#### XVIII Actualities

Choosing plain words To express simple thoughts, Suddenly I happened upon a recluse And seemed to see the heart of TAO. Beside the winding brook, Beneath dark pine-trees' shade, There was one stranger bearing a faggot, Another listening to the lute. And so, where my fancy led me, Better than if I had sought it, I heard the music of heaven, Astounded by its rare strains

#### XIX Despondent

A gale ruffles the stream And trees in the forest crack; My thoughts are bitter as death, For she whom I asked will not come. A hundred years slip by like water, Riches and rank are but cold ashes, TAO is daily passing away, To whom shall we turn for salvation? The brave soldier draws his sword, And tears flow with endless lamentation; The wind whistles, leaves fall, And rain trickles through the old thatch.

#### XX Form and Feature

After gazing fixedly upon expression and substance The mind returns with a spiritual image, As when seeking the outlines of waves, As when painting the glory of spring. The changing shapes of wind-swept clouds, The energies of flowers and plants, The rolling breakers of ocean, The crags and cliffs of mountains, ese are like mighty TAO, Skilfully woven into earthly surroundings, To obtain likeness without form, Is not that to possess the man?

#### XXI The Transcendental

Not of the spirituality of the mind, Nor yet of the atoms of the cosmos But as though reached upon white clouds, Borne thither by pelucid brezes. Afar, it seems at hand, Approach, 'tis no longer there; Sharing the nature of TAO, It shuns the limits of mortality. It is in the piled-up hills, in tall trees, In dark mosses, in sunlight rays . . Croon over it, think upon it; Its faint sound eludes the ear.

#### XXII Abstraction

Without friends, longing to be there, Alone, away from the common herd, Like the crane on Mount Hou, Like the cloud at the peak of Mount Hua. In the portrait of the hero The old fire still lingers; The leaf carried by the wind Floats on the boundless sea. It would seem as though not to be grasped, But always on the point of being disclosed. Those who recognise this have already attained; Those who hope, drift daily farther away.

#### XXIII Illumined

Life stretches to one hundred years, And yet how brief a span; Its joys so fleeting, Its griefs so many! What has it like a goblet a wine, And daily visits to the wistaria arbour, Where flowers cluster around the eaves, And light showers pass overhead? Then when the wine-cup is drained, To stroll about with staff of thorn; For who of us but will someday be an ancient? . Ah, there is the South Mountain in its grandeur!

#### XXIV Motion

Like a whirling water-wheel, Like rolling pearls, -Yet how are these worthy to be named? They are but illustrations for fools. There is the mighty axis of Earth, The never-resting pole of Heaven; Let us grasp their clue, And with them be blended in One, Beyond the bounds of thought, Circling for ever in the great Void, An orbit of a thousand years, — Yes, this is the key to my theme.

Translated from the Chinese by Herbert A. Giles

Editor's Note: The following study forms the basis of a monograph on SOTO by the French art critic Jean Clay. The final monograph will be published next year (1966) by SIGNALS LONDON in a tri-lingual (French, English and Spanish) edition with numerous illustrations.

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IN THE BEGINNING [of the abstract movement in art] there was MONDRIAN. When Mondrian died modern art found itself back in a great desert of possibilities. That is the story of SOTO.

The new prophets (many were born in South America) are advancing forward, constructing the plastic language of our times. With his mane and sad lion's face, Soto is on this voyage of exploration.

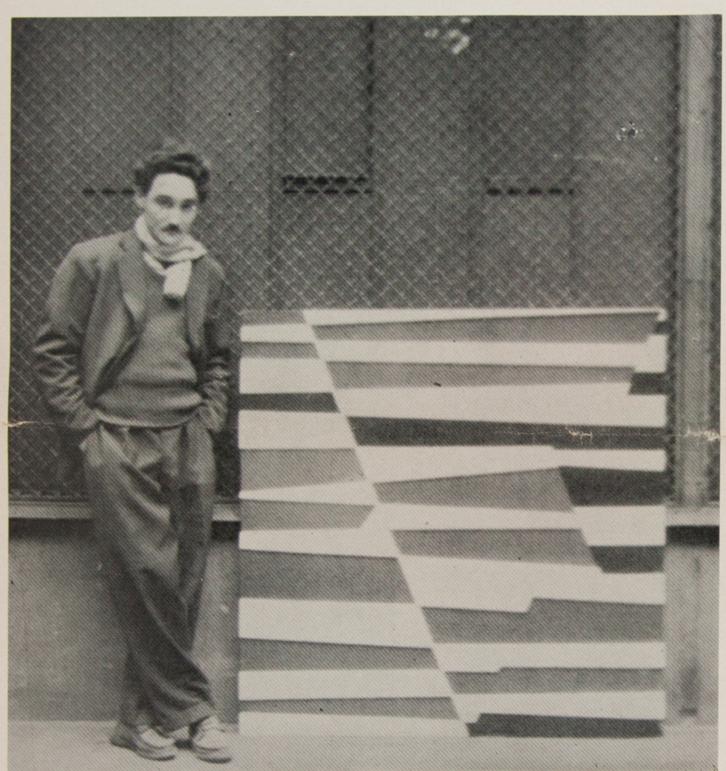
He claims to have no history, though he comes from afar. From Ciudad Bolivar. 'Of all the towns of Venezuela,' says Soto, 'Ciudad Bolivar is closest to fantasy, lying nearest to the virgin forest. . . . It has kept its colonial architecture. The population has a large Spanish element. Also, lots of Corsicans . . . but no racialism. Segregation would have an economic basis only. As for me, I'm neither typically Spanish nor typically Indian.'

There he spent his childhood, half-way between town and country. At Ciudad Bolivar the vast Orinoco river contracts and pushes its way through the edges of the great forest, 360 feet deep. 'Every fifty years, the Orinoco breaks in gigantic spate and floods the whole country. It's catastrophic . . . but so beautiful, so monumental. A kind of peace, a great silence spreads over hundreds of kilometres. An enormous lake with forests rising out of it—the power of this element! The whole country is transformed. I was

It was hung up on the ceiling of the classroom. I was a little sad. It was a kind of deposit until the fees were paid. . . .'

He left school. In the family, which had come together again in the country, at his grandmother's, everyone was working. 'My mother did the cooking, two of my brothers were shepherds. I looked after the cows. But my main job was to go three times a week to the nearest village: to sell the products of our flocks and to buy provisions. The journey took from eight to ten hours by donkey, the same coming back. I liked it. I used to dream a lot, I liked the solitude on my donkey. When the sun beat down strongly, I watched the reverberations of the light, while the crickets sang, with amazing force. It was like being drowned in enormous power, in the sun and the noise. . . . Then there were the great storms. I saw water pour down the roads, carrying everything in its path. Arriving at the village, the first contact with civilisation always overwhelmed me. I knew how to write and do sums. But once I was robbed in the market, when I was only eleven. I felt miserable. In the South of Spain today, whenever I see an old woman being cheated, when her bottle of oil is filled only three-quarters full, I feel the same

'From Christmas until New Year's Day in the country, we spent a whole week singing. My grandmother was the doyenne of this milieu, for she was the link between the family, friends and employees. During the festivals we drank el Carato, alcohol made from maize. At this time I learnt to sing. The people were good. They protected one another and shared everything. At Easter, the men made wooden tops, and the women calabash ones. The wooden top had to



J. R. SOTO in Paris 1952. On his left is a relief-construction, 1952

twenty when I last saw such an event. The houses crumble to the ground. But the people come back and start building again. They want to live there, by the river. Usually they have two houses, one for the little river, and one for the big. . . . My house looked out over the riverbank. We used to bathe in the river. It was full of alligators and electric eels, the *trembladors*—one sting and you're at the bottom. Many children were eaten alive by alligators. But one can spot alligators by their smell. I can't any longer, the instinct has gone. The last time I bathed in the Orinoco was in 1962. But I had lost the ability to "smell" out alligators: uprooted, I had lost contact. . . . I often regret that.

'At Easter we would go down to the turtle-beach. Easter's the season when turtles come out of the water to lay their eggs in the sand. When turtles bite, they can take a lump out of a man, often cutting one's hand. But at Easter they are harmless, one can turn them over and put them alive in the bottom of a boat. The object is to get them before they have laid, because the eggs are good to eat. The people can tell at glance how many dozen eggs the turtles have got inside them.

. . . As kids we used to roam along the riverbank

SOTO is the eldest of five children. When he was eight years old, his father abandoned them. His mother Emma Soto wore herself out at work, sewing, washing, trading, doing a bit of everything. The family had to tighten its belt, and people helped them along. In Venezuela 80% of the peasant families live on less than 800 bolivars a year. A quarter of the population must make do on eleven bolivars a month.

'I was a victim of the social problem,' says Soto. When he was three he was taken to an old schoolteacher whose fees were less expensive than others. 'One day I had to give him my little chair.

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break the calabash one without stopping turning. Everyone had his own top, his zaranda. It was a typical Indian game....

'We were close to Indian traditions. Like them, we lived in the country. We slept in hammocks. Often the Indians looked after us when we were ill. They would take the patient's urine and project it in a transparency against a white sheet. The Indians saw movements in the urine. Its consistency changed according to the type of illness. This kind of diagnosis was our only form of medicine. No other kind had been heard of in those parts. Another thing I admired about the Indians was the way they fished with a bow and arrow. They don't shoot straight at the target, but towards the sky - in a flash you saw the fish pierced by the arrow, and they'd be in the water looking for it. I noticed that the Indians could speak my language but I did not know theirs. I said to myself that they were cleverer than me. They dressed their own way and spurned western society. I have great respect for Indian civilisation, so superior to ours when one considers the selfishness, deceit and bickering that goes on everywhere here. Here it is every man for himself. The Indians did not know of prisons or death penalties. I miss their friendship.'

One of the jobs which Soto took on enthusiastically, when he was still a kid in the country, was painting. 'That's the one for this job,' the adults would exclaim as soon as he had put his hand on the brush. From the age of three, his mother relates, he started daubing on all the walls of their home. 'I used to beat him, but he went on regardless, and I had to clean up after him. Each time I looked up, there were more little donkeys, little houses and little sheep on the walls. . . .'

'Today you beat me,' the young Soto would say to her, 'but when you see the name of the

## SOTO

## by Jean Clay

art critic of the magazine Réalités

Translated from the French by Sebastian Brett

painter Jésus Soto, you will remember what you are doing to me now.'

'Be quiet, you mad boy.' . . . 'I was so ignorant that I had no idea that no one would be able to rid my son of this painting mania. I can say that he has grown up unaided. All that he has discovered is his own. I have given him nothing. . . .'

At fifteen Soto got his first job: painting signs and posters for the cinemas of Ciudad Bolivar. He was making six bolivars a day. 'At that age,' he says, 'the only artists I knew were sign painters. My family was pleased—as far as they were concerned I was going to be able to make my living, sign-painting, to the end of my days. That was as far as anyone could see then. . . .'

He turned sixteen. Life went on for him as though muted in acquiescence. There was nothing to show that his life would not flow on forever without events at Ciudad Bolivar, in the land of his childhood, in the city he loved. And how could he have seen it otherwise? He had no money, But, believe it or not, in 1938 the last ripples of the great movement which shook Paris fifteen years earlier reached the banks of the Orinoco. A student surrealist group was formed at Ciudad Bolivar, and poems appeared in the local paper which created a scandal, 'I met one of them. He explained to me as well as he could, the dreams, the automatic writing. . . . I was excited. I wanted to escape from the family routine. I had in me a very strong preoccupation with ideas — a desire to know and to understand. At home I was called "the barrister" because I argued so much, Every solution seemed to me too simple. I have the kind of mind which loves the unknown in art. . . . '

The unknown. . . . Soto befriended a young Lebanese, the brother of one of the members of the surrealist group, who did charcoal drawings. The told me of the countries he had visited, of the great museums, and of France where he learnt to draw. He showed me how to draw, and very quickly I got the hang of it. I drew so much that it got around town. My friends said, "You must go to Caracas. . . ." I did heads and portraits. My technique was very good. Finally the people drew up a petition. The bishop sent for me and signed the petition. I got a scholarship, the equivalent of ninety new francs a month. . . ."

Caracas. Soto was nineteen, 'I did not leave home to start a career, to make money, or out of ambition. I was happy at home. My family thought I was only going for a season. For them, painting was not a trade: it was a kind of special sport, I think of Ciudad Bolivar with affection. It is a town full of sensibility and delicacy, and by rights it should have many more artists. But because of the lack of financial means for most young people, I alone was able to leave it. In Ciudad Bolivar I managed to get along — I think I had a greater sense of compulsion and vitality than the others. I had a friend there who, if he had been born in France, would have been an artist rather than a teacher — and wouldn't have had to make a great effort to tear himself away he had eleven children. It is because I love Ciudad Bolivar that I have decided to build a museum there. At present I am buying works, exchanging them, and painter-friends are donating works to my museum. Everything I think is new in modern art is going into the collection. It will be a help for the young. . . . '

Caracas. . . . It was Soto's second piece of luck: when he arrived in 1942, a breath of freedom was in the air in the capital of Venezuela which for so long had been under the iron heel of a dictatorship. Isaias Medina Angarita, whose achievement was to set up a liberal government after twenty years of fascism, permitted a left-wing opposition party: the 'Democratic Action Party' led by Romulo Betancourt. The great architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva was put in charge of townplanning: whole quarters were demolished and the town remodelled on modern principles. In 1945 the Democratic Action Party took power, and there followed three years of euphoria. Then in 1948 the coup d'état of Perez Jimenez put things back in their place: fascism on the platform, and the great societies in the bottom drawer.

Soto arrived in Caracas in 1942, settling in a shanty-town and eating one meal a day. But soon he found some cousins who helped him out. 'Until the day I left Venezuela I had lived among the poor. I saw only my family. I had never been inside a rich man's house, though I knew rich people existed. I wasn't interested. I preferred dancing in my own poor part of the town. . . .

'The first thing I saw when I walked inside the School of Fine Arts of Caracas was a reproduction of a Braque still-life. I had arrived. But it was not easy for me. I went straight away to see Otero, who was the most brilliant and best-known pupil of the school, "Comrade! Tell me why it

is important . . ." He gave me summary explanations. I did not understand most of them. . . I was absorbed by Cézanne, Van Gogh, . . . What astonished me was that I was asked at school to copy Nature: a landscape or a fruit-dish. . . . I was shocked and disillusioned: "But where does the invention come in?" Even then I disliked reproduction. I believed in pure creation, Michelangelo, the Mona Lisa — the technique was marvellous, but I missed the invention. In Ciudad Bolivar my librarian friend told me an absurd and illogical story: Michelangelo, while putting the last touches to his Moses, was supposed to have thrown his knife at the statue, shouting "Speak!" That's ridiculous: a sculpture isn't a human being. Why at all costs make it resemble one? It took me quite a number of months to understand that it was necessary to by-pass those reproductions to be able to do something directly created, and that in their own way the artists of the past were creating at the same time that they departed from Nature. . .

Perhaps this is the place for a little history and redefinition. What kind of problems were they, which faced a student of twenty, who had risen without possessions or prejudices in a neglected corner of the world, in the patient elaboration of a new art? In requiring him to reproduce a fruitdish or a landscape in his studies, the authorities were not only, as he naïvely believed, asking him to submit himself to the 'real' world and to 'abstract' his creative faculties. They were asking for something far worse. As in every academy, they were asking him to translate this fruit-dish and this landscape according to established rules, to a fixed way of seeing things, inherited from the Renaissance. Whatever masterpieces this way of painting had produced in the past, it no longer bore any relation to the sensibility of a young artist attuned to the modern world, conscious all around himself of the bustle, vibration and light of the great city which he would have had great difficulty in discovering in Chardin or Vélasquez, and yet which he was somehow expected to render according to the laws which they had made for themselves. 'The real world cannot be shown, it can only be revealed,' Bachelard remarked. Every age expresses what it knows of the worldnothing more. There is no realism, no privileged system for depicting the real world, but a succession of plastic systems in perpetual evolution, which expresses - in the very way they change — the artist's attempt to translate, and also to influence in turn, a certain moment in human sensibility, as it is informed by the changing realities of science and technology, of social life and art. This fruit-dish which Soto was asked to copy — could he see it without malaise through the eyes of a Courbet or a Cézanne, when he felt obscurely within himself that the relation between the man and the object had changed since those great masters revealed their truths, their relations to the real world? Truths and relations so different from ours, so foreign to the man of 1950 of whom Francastel confirms that 'he does not see the external world in the same rhythm and in the same forms as the man of 1900. So the fact must be admitted, that his systems of representation, which depend on a mechanism of liaison of images in his mind, are transformed accordingly. The changes of this century are not only in the world of objects which surround us, they are in us, they are us.'2

For the world has changed. At a time when, according to Oppenheimer, four-fifths of the scientists that humanity has produced are alive, when the acceleration of scientific research is pushing back the limits of the known and the unknown, the Cartesian certainties, which had been enthroned in our way of thinking for so long, have had their day. Our approach to the real world has changed, our way of apprehending our surroundings and art bears witness to this, translating in its own way the atmosphere of our times. We no longer see an apple in the same way that Cézanne - or Newton - saw an apple. . . . The object, for the moderns, can no longer have the reassuring compactness that our grandparents professed to find in it. Ours is an age in which, according to Francastel, 'we renounce the representation of objects as possessing relationships of stable values through their attributes, we renounce the limited universe of the human eye, and we substitute for it, an original interpretation of optical sensations....

But Mondrian? How is one to interpret, in this perspective, the part played by the great Dutchman, surely one of the 'lighthouses' of modern art, whose intransigent, rigorous, severe work, a lesson of dignity and honour, forms a kind of

boundary between the past and the future? Meditating on the work of this genius, and then reacting against it, many artists, of whom Soto is one, have embarked on the optical adventure. Mondrian sought the absolute. In his miraculous geometry Mondrian wanted to capture the quintessence of reality, his ultimate equilibrium, after which any other painting would be a waste of effort. To strip the real world of all 'tragic' content, of all anecdote, until only its unchangeable essence was left to be revcaled, which was inevitable; to arrive at a 'rest', a 'clarity', describing of the outside world only its most fundamental, true and secret lines - such was the demiurgic ambition of this stubborn alchemist, as if, in his obsession for purity and balance, he had wanted to deny the existence of time, and oppose the perfection of his compositions to the inexorable déliquescence, the perpetual mutation of things. Seuphor, speaking of Mondrian's 1925-32 period, admired 'the great purity of the vocabulary in his canvases. They are the work of a man who could translate with the brush the aphorism of some new Parmenides writing The Being as Being. The lozenge-shaped canvas of 1931, which consists only of two black lines of unequal width on a white uniform background, is, so to speak, the Vedanta of contemporary painting.'

The Vedanta: here we are a long way from the modern world, which is enlarged considerably since Mondrian was formulating in 1918 the intangible principles which were to govern his painting and his life. 'Let us stick to external appearances,' he wrote, 'at least until as long as we have no deeper senses or new senses.' He believed that there was, in the history of art, some immutable element, and that his role would be to reduce to the minimum of essential signs the immense experience of the artists of the past. As far as modern science was concerned, Mondrian believed in the ability of man in modern times at last to dominate Nature, and eliminate anxiety and the sense of tragedy from his life and his work. ('Man, as he grows, over-reaches and outpaces Nature,' he wrote in the last lines of his Natural Reality and Abstract Reality.) In short, his ambition was to create a stable painting in a static world. Now, since 1918, relativity, micro- and macro-physics, and the conquest of space, have mercilessly bombarded the social and psychological structures on which, for a short while, we were able to base our confidence and certitude. And we know now that the fantastic growth of possibilities in humanity does not in any way justify its self-canonisation. We are forced relentlessly to re-adapt our mental framework to new scientific upheavals and to redefine our position in an expanding and ceaselessly changing environment.

What we are experiencing today is not the serenity of space, proud of having finally dominated the reality of the physical world, but the sense of excitement and apprehension of the limitless adventure into the infinite field of the possible.

Seen in this perspective, Mondrian appears to us as the final witness of genius to a pre-scientific, stabilised, purified conception of the real world. His successors will tackle what he himself had never known, and, benefiting from the ground which he so radically cleansed of its anecdotal and sentimental slag-heaps, will absorb the new universe we now inhabit. In their own intuitive ways, they will proclaim the ceaseless transformation of physical reality, the relations between energy, matter, space and time.

'His successors', I have written; but this is not quite true. The ultimate achievement of a twodimensional art in which the problem of time was never posed, in which the static over-rules the dynamic, and the stable over-rules the potential in one miraculous jump Mondrian's work denies its own achievement: as if the master on the threshold of death had realised the limitations of his art and himself decided to be its most radical critic. It is well known that Mondrian, arriving in America during the war, and struck it seems by the bustle and light of New York, the magic of its architecture, the visual movement of its avenues, and its skyscrapers, produced three last masterpieces in a style which was absolutely new. Not content merely with having brought constructivist art to its logical conclusion, to the point of devaluing the efforts of his disciples, he undertook the formation of a new aesthetic, in which for the first time the problem of optical art was posed. No longer conceived as impeccably balanced formal compositions, as immutable static structures, but as spaceless scintillations of colours designed to act continually on the eye of the spectator, these three works: New York City, Broadway Boogie-Woogie, and The Victory of Boogie-Woogie, herald majestically the movement later to be called optical art, at the same time underlining the limitations of what had up till then been the fundamental quest of Mondrian's art. Three paintings: the prophet of modern painting thus took a step or two into the promised land. After him the new art begins: an art which integrates the concept of time into its language.

TIME. This is the great discovery, the cornerstone of the new experiments. As Giedion wrote in Time, Space and Architecture, quoted here by Francastel: 'The introduction of the fourth dimension, time, while opening up possibilities of exploration, of representing multiple points of view as well as simultaneity, has broken through the barrier of our sensations and obsessed humanity in every plane with the reconquest of a new universe. The fundamental opposition of reason and instinct is resolved in favour of a new system, a new way of experiencing the environment which permits ways of exploration and representation which are parallel both for technology and for art, both submitted in equal degree to the new laws of bio-physics.'

In integrating, by different procedures, the element of time into their work, the new artists — of whom Soto is one — have simultaneously trans-

formed the relationship between art and science. Formerly a refuge, a protest, even a regression,4 or rather an attempt to escape reality by dominating it in the quality of a spiritual meditation (as in Mondrian), art, until today, drew strength from its hostility to the technical and scientific world which was expanding around it. Paintings bore witness to man as an abstract being, denying his contingent nature: they were precious and metaphysical as if through a desire to escape the march of reality. Of course, this was in vain. Whether one likes it or not, every work in its smallest characteristics, in the least of the choices it makes, betrays the Weltanschauung of the age which conceived it. Yet, hearing the critic Geoffroy compare Impressionism to the 'last atomistic hypotheses, to the trickle of biological thought', Cézanne scoffed in his face: as far as he was concerned, he believed only in the 'motif', 'the study of beautiful nature'. He wanted only 'to give the image of what we actually see while forgetting all that has been before us'. Refuge-value, art was like the revenge of the spirit on matter. With the integration of time into the work of art, this prejudice is broken down. The old-fashioned metaphysical object, aspiring to absolute value in self-defence against usury and death - indeed in Elie Fauré and Malraux it is this metaphysical will to escape time which constitutes the unity of the history of art —, this old object of protest is now superseded by works which integrate the element of Time into their structures, which spatialise time, and temporalise space, and in which the aesthetic experience cannot exist except limited by a certain duration — as in a Soto, or an Agam — since art is now conceived in terms of a ceaseless metamorphosis and no longer as a fixed plane of two dimensions, which the eye could apprehend in one

Simultaneously the introduction of time in the work of art changes its relations with science. A strange symmetry has been established between, on the one hand, scientific exploration, the notion of space-time, relativity, molecular physics, and on the other hand, the disinclination of artists to create a halted, stable, definitive work which remains insensible to the metamorphoses of duration. Equally, the artists and scientists find themselves linked in a common discipline of relentless reconsideration of the established certitudes since Euclid, Newton and Poincaré: linked in the desire to question constantly imposed laws; linked, finally, in their attitude to environment, since art from today, no longer refusing admission to one of the constituent dimensions of reality - Time -, claims to describe, by a realism far more complete than any preached by the pundits of 'figurative' art — the totality of experience.

Doing this, art discovers itself to be in sympathy with its century, in direct contact with the science of its period; it begins to translate 'the recollection of the conscience of man confronted with the world, and that he expresses the natural modes of his action throughout the universe' [Giedion]. It is perhaps from the date of this marriage, this new unity which embraces the artist and the destiny of humanity in general, that historians will trace the beginnings of modern art.

'Why should art be condemned to observe the laws of ancient physics?' Francastel demanded. 'Why should not the true greatness of modern art be to express this rapid conquest of the new, these unknown relations which arise ceaselessly between the spirit and the outside world? . . In today's world, in which the quality of speed is positively changed, in which movement has become a new and intimate experience of man, in which technology carries out everyday phenomena of dissociation as well as the synthesis of matter, an art attached to the old conception of movement is a devalued activity.'

This is what men like Soto came to understand. To the 'firm support' by which Mondrian referred to the right-angle, they preferred the fertile uncertainties brought by the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge. They found themselves in a position of insecurity and excitement. Unstable, open in mind, they were a far cry from the 'rest' for which the father of neo-plastic art was searching, the 'equivalence between the individual and the universal' of which he wrote that it was 'happiness'. On the contrary, confronted by an uncertain, changing material world which appeared to them as if eaten away and attacked on all sides, vanishing before their eyes - they felt no longer certain of anything, and the paradox is that they rejoiced in this uncertainty. They are groping their way forward still, their ears pricked for every sound, while wrapped in their cosy blanket of certitudes, ensconced in a constructivist-defrocking-ceremony which has already served its term, the occupants of the right-angle continue to advertise their little pocket 'mondrians'. You can take it from me, apostles of 'hard-edge', in your static ecstasy: the world has turned once more, and you'll have to rewrite your laws. You believed you could put painting in the strait-jacket of the old carton rules of neo-plasticism, but it's escaping you already. Take it from me that Mondrian is really dead: the future once more must be re-invented.

These obscure truths were slowly won. It took a quarter of a century for the student Soto to take stock of these problems and ascend the ladder of maturity. Meanwhile, in Caracas, he was twenty, and knew nothing. But he learnt fast: artistic training during the day, seminar in the evening. 'The course was well organised. In our second year a lot of us dived into cubism. I spent five years there, and I was happy because for the first time I could devote all my working hours to art, . . .' He was lucky to meet a professor at the school, an intelligent and liberal-minded man who said to him, 'You want to go further than my ideas . . . well, go ahead then.' 'He was called Monsanto,' recalls Cruz-Diez, another Venezuelan painter of Soto's generation, who was also involved in kinetic research and who worked along-

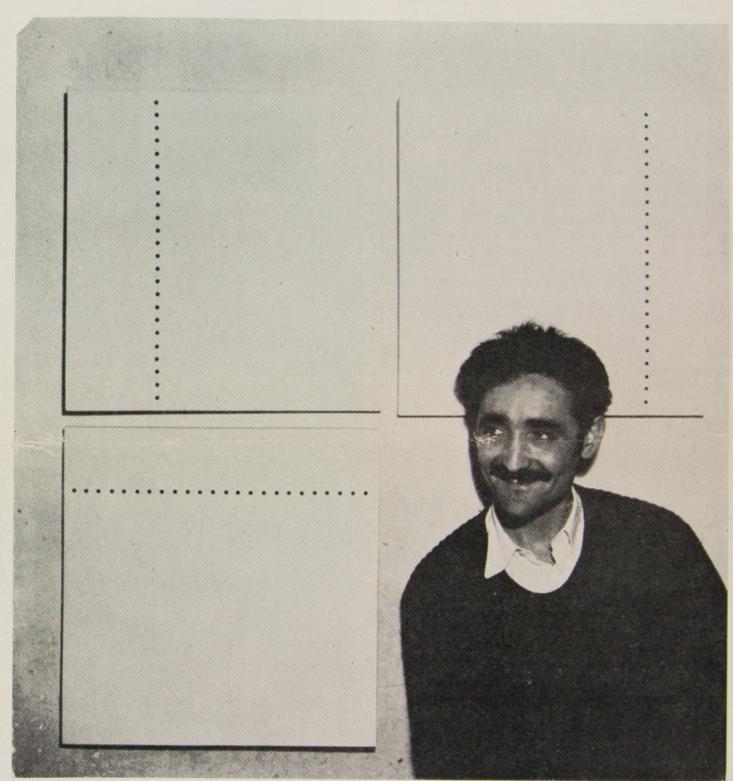
side his friend during these formative years. 'Monsanto was broad-minded, and drunk most evenings. He used to spend nights in discussion with his favourite pupils, incredible conversations which lasted till four in the morning. He had an inquiring spirit, and aroused in us tremendous enthusiasm for the school. In the mornings we used to wait impatiently for the doors of the school to open. In the evenings we didn't want to go home, and our parents had to keep the dishes hot for us. For us the school was like walking in a dream. We were in love with painting, passionately. We formed musical groups, and that's how Soto learned to play the guitar. Soto was quiet. No one knew his true importance. He wasn't taken seriously. We had our idols: Otero, Navarro, the gods, who talked about painting in such a complicated, intellectual language. We ourselves were trying out to do likewise . . .' [Cruz-Diez], 'It is true,' Soto confirms, 'we were surrounded by geniuses. They were obscure and tortured men; they used to get lost in the forest and threaten to commit suicide. The police had to be called out, with dogs to bring them in. There were crises, months in which they stopped painting altogether. I didn't see much of them; they were too great.

They saw me as a talented kid, perhaps a bit too simple. . . . There are people who think one paints because one has complexes. The only thing which would give me complexes would be to stop painting. Painting isn't romantic. No point in cutting off your ear. . . At Ciudad Bolivar, people spoke very little, there were hours of silence. After a long speech, one would say "Hum . . . hum. . . ." In Caracas, it gave me a shock when I realised that you had to construct fine phrases, and answer the fine talkers, to be a social success.

Cézanne, his Gauguin, his Picasso; we spent our time plagiarising the revolution-before-the-last. Nothing was invented.'

In short, it was time to go, and Soto, after five years of study, chose a professorship. He was made director of the School of Fine Arts of Maracaibo, the largest oil centre of Venezuela. 'I was twenty-four. I believed in the idea that I was going to find some interesting pupils, and win them over. . . . But after three years, not a single one! I talked about Picasso, I looked like a fanatic. We had to follow a programme, invented by God knows who. . . . I had enough! I kicked the lot of them out, slammed the doors, and left. The professorship? Never again. I far prefer to search around with my guitar. . . .'

Soto left for Paris, 'When I was young and people spoke to me of France, I saw a "country of art", Paris I imagined as a Monct-type city of light, sunlit, luminous, with painters everywhere, on every bridge and in all the streets. I considered New York to be the centre of technology, but I thought of Paris as the city of the arts. I thought also of Madrid - I suppose because of the Prado. But Paris was the real thing. It wasn't surprising that I wanted to be there, since it was modern art I wanted to do. In New York then surrealism was in its final stage, but surrealism interested me only in poetry. I have never believed in surrealism as painting. A cyclops in poetry is beautiful and mysterious; in painting, when it is done by Redon, a cyclops is a little academic bourgeois with a big eye. . . . Paris was research, it was that still mysterious name: Mondrian. I knew from Otero's letters that a small group - Pillet, Dewasne, etc - was resolutely defending Mondrian and Kandinsky. . . . I arrived in Cannes in 1950 without



J. R. SOTO in Paris 1953 with three of his works using the principle of progression as in serial music

Cruz-Diez always used to say to me, "For you, Soto, painting is something very uncomplicated." My own sense of clarity astonished me. "If those who are intelligent find painting complicated, then perhaps they are right," I would reply to him. I could only see evidence. I spent two years searching for mystery where there was none. . . . Cubism, for example: the fact that Picasso and Braque showed on the canvas several sides of the same subject simultaneously, well, why not? In 1942 I saw a woman shown at the same time head on, in profile, from an oblique angle, etc. It was a postcubist work, but the principle was clear enough for me. It didn't shock me at all; it seemed entirely natural. In actual fact I rather misinterpreted the sense of the cubist experience. What I saw above all was a superimposition of viewpoints, when it was, in reality, for the most part a lateral development, a juxtaposition on the canvas of several aspects of an object. That is the reason why later on my research went in the direction of superimposition.'

'At the school,' explains Cruz-Diez, 'we had to get our own information as best as we could. We knew cubism, but nothing beyond it. We felt a bit out of touch with modern evolution . . . that's why we inspected avidly everything which arrived from abroad. Our great star, our bible, was Cézanne. His method of construction, his volumes. . . . Each month brought more reproductions from Braun and the latest books. We studied the Impressionists, the Fauvés, Derain, Marquet, Lhote. . . . Some — the avant garde! - took it upon themselves to defend Picasso . . . but no one at the school wanted us to revolutionise painting; it's the same today. They wanted some "good" work, of "quality", executed as well as the "beautiful" painting of vestervear. What we found in books and magazines was accepted, integrated art. Each of us recopied his

a sou, on a little Italian boat. I had just enough to pay for the voyage. In the train, looking at the birches chiselled by the light of the dawn, I suddenly understood the Impressionists. In Venezuela the light is strong, full of contrast, and makes great patches of colour. Cruz-Diez used to show me reproductions of Monet and Pissarro which we studied with a magnifying glass. "Look how fascinated they were by the vibration of a little light, like a drop of water. . . ." I did not understand then, before I came to France. I couldn't see any connection with the light as I knew it in Venezuela. That was what I understood in the train from Cannes to Paris; that dawn, those yellowish, nibbled birches, I was transported. . ."

Soto arrived in Paris practically penniless, with his guitar, a moustache and side-whiskers. 'Venezuela gave me a six-month scholarship. The government asked me to inscribe into the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. I refused; "I am now a professional, I have come as an investigator, to do research. I am no longer a student. . . . " - They didn't even answer. All I had now was to earn a living. . . .' He started painting the moment he arrived. He discovered to his amazement the old geniuses of Caracas sitting in serried ranks in the 'studio for abstract art' opened by Dewasne and Pillet. 'You don't mean you're still students here?' he gasped. 'I was a professor in Venezuela. Why should I want to return to school?' Half the students, convinced by this evidence, left the school. There were many Venezuelans in Paris in 1950. But no one was painting, everyone was philosophising. Discussions went on for hours into the night. Someone would get up and put three red and green lines on a vast white square. Then everyone would sit and think. For Months, 'And

continue next page

## 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 fceling 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'

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 scemed '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

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



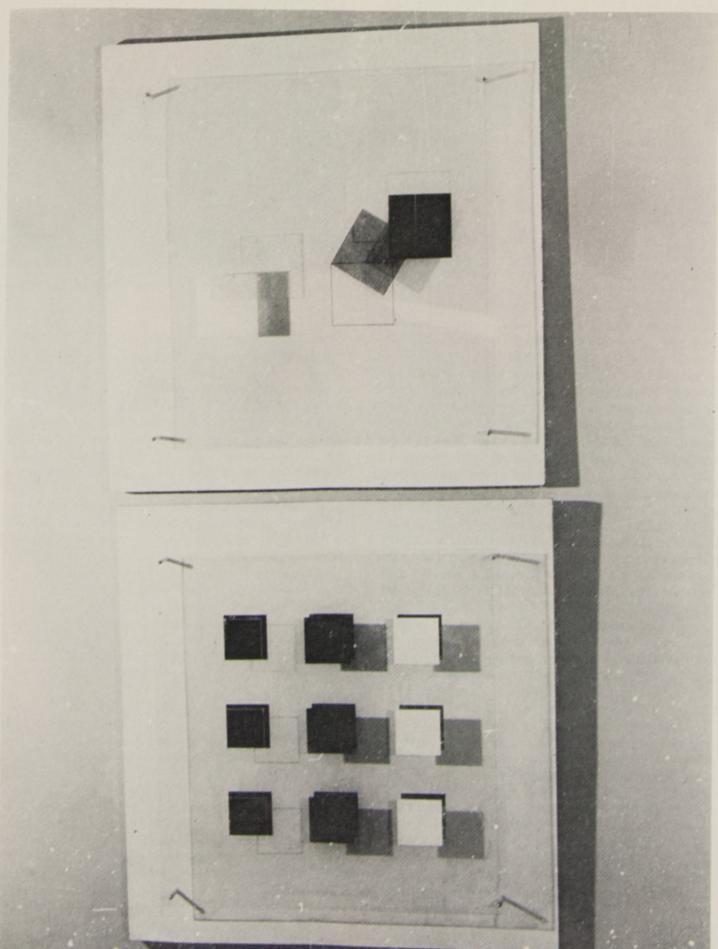
J. R. SOTO: Painting 1950

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 Denisc 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.5 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

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 certaintics — 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.

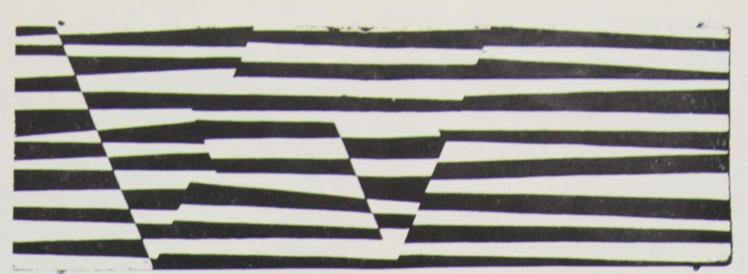
It now remained for Soto simply to pursue his discovery to the end. With an amazing virtuosity, for years he has been constantly creating new plastic ideas founded on the same principle, constantly refining his sensibility, carrying out works of increasing perfection and beauty. Immediately discordant 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. . . . '



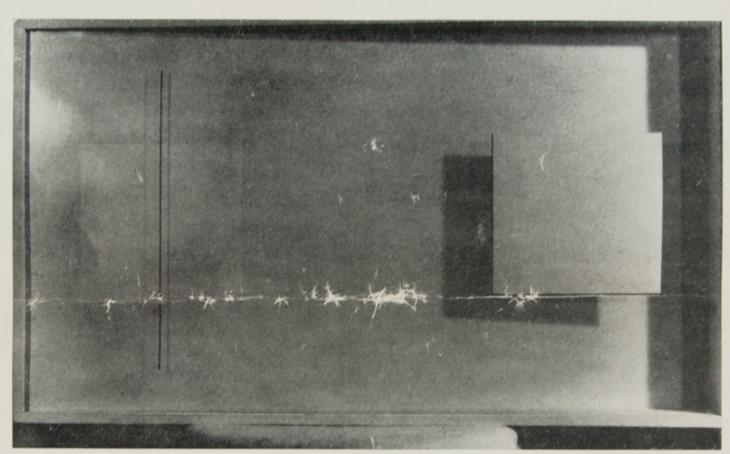
J. R. SOTO: Maquette for an Optical Wall 1952

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

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



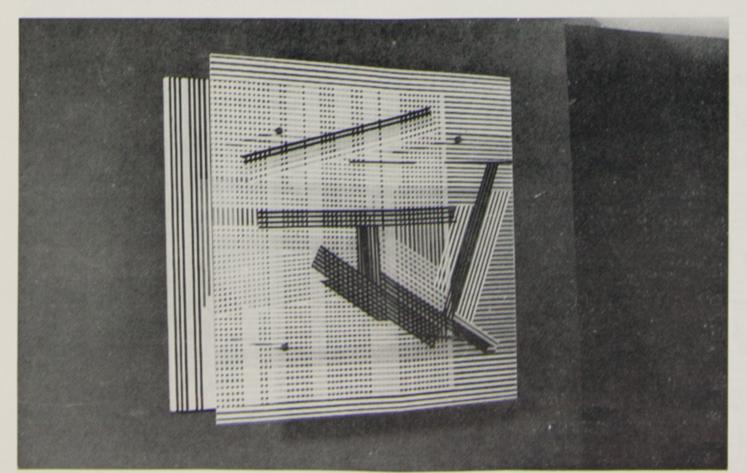
J. R. SOTO: The Distance Between Two Squares 1953

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?<sup>7</sup>

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

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 eightyfive. . . . 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 transcience, , . . 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

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 cscape 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.

something new, to widen the field of the possible,

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 LONDON

NOTES TO JEAN CLAY'S MONOGRAPH ON SOTO

One bolivar is equivalent to one shilling and six-

<sup>2</sup> Art et Technique. Editions de Minuit, Paris.

3 Mondrian. Flammarion, Paris.

4 Andre Breton could still write in 1952: 'Insofar as they 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 'superimpositions' 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."

<sup>1</sup> Cf Francastel 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.'

· Series

## 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!

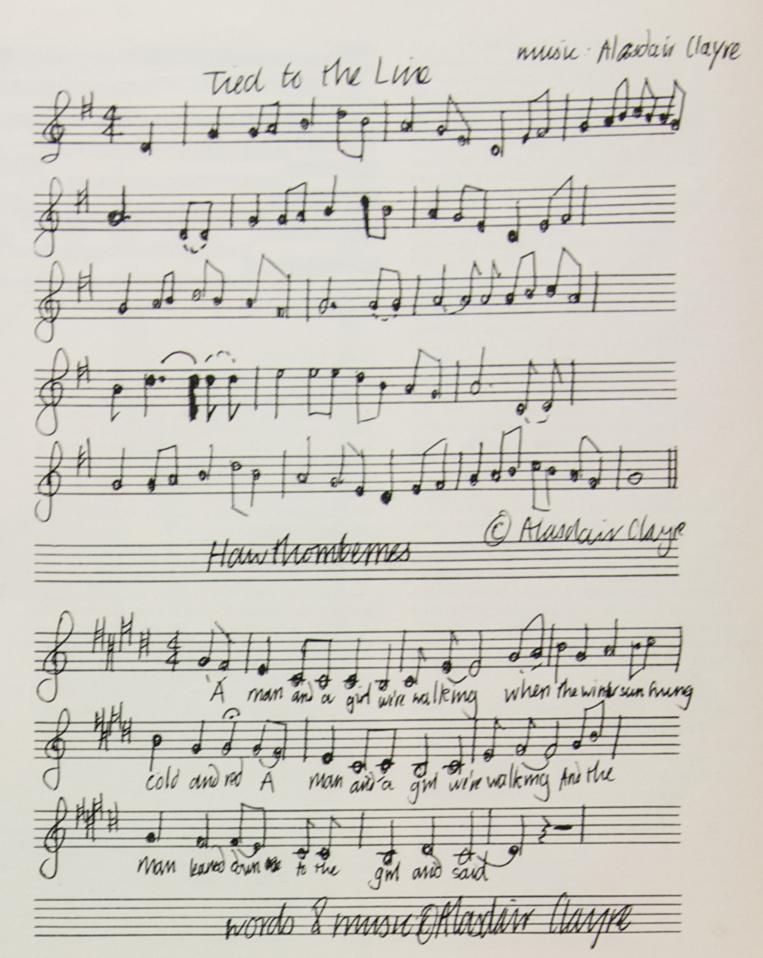
Pues la por quien helar y arder me siento, mientras en ti se mira, Amor retrata de su rostro la nieve y la escarlata en tu tranquilo y blando movimiento,

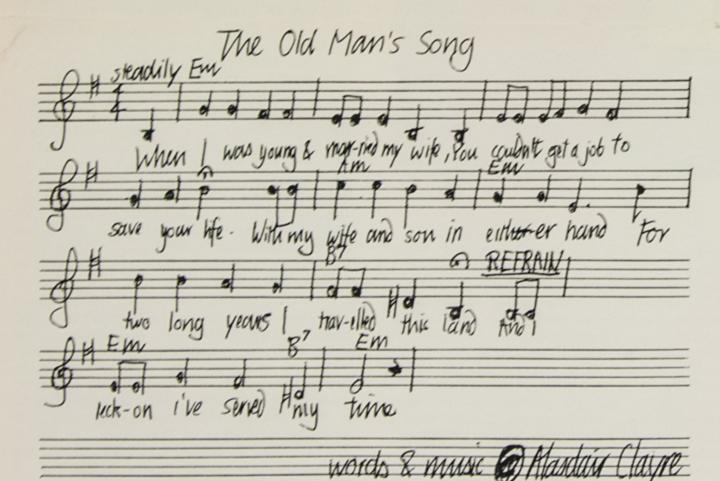
véte como te vas; no dejes floja la undosa rienda al cristalino freno con que gobiernas tu veloz corriente;

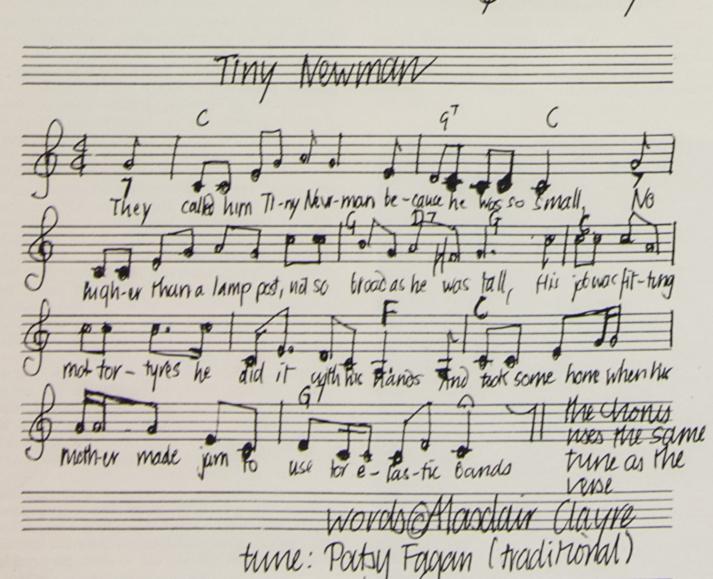
que no es bien que confusamente acoja tanta belleza en su profondo seno el gran señor del húmido tridente.



Hands at a harp







## SONGS

by Alasdair Clayre

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

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

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

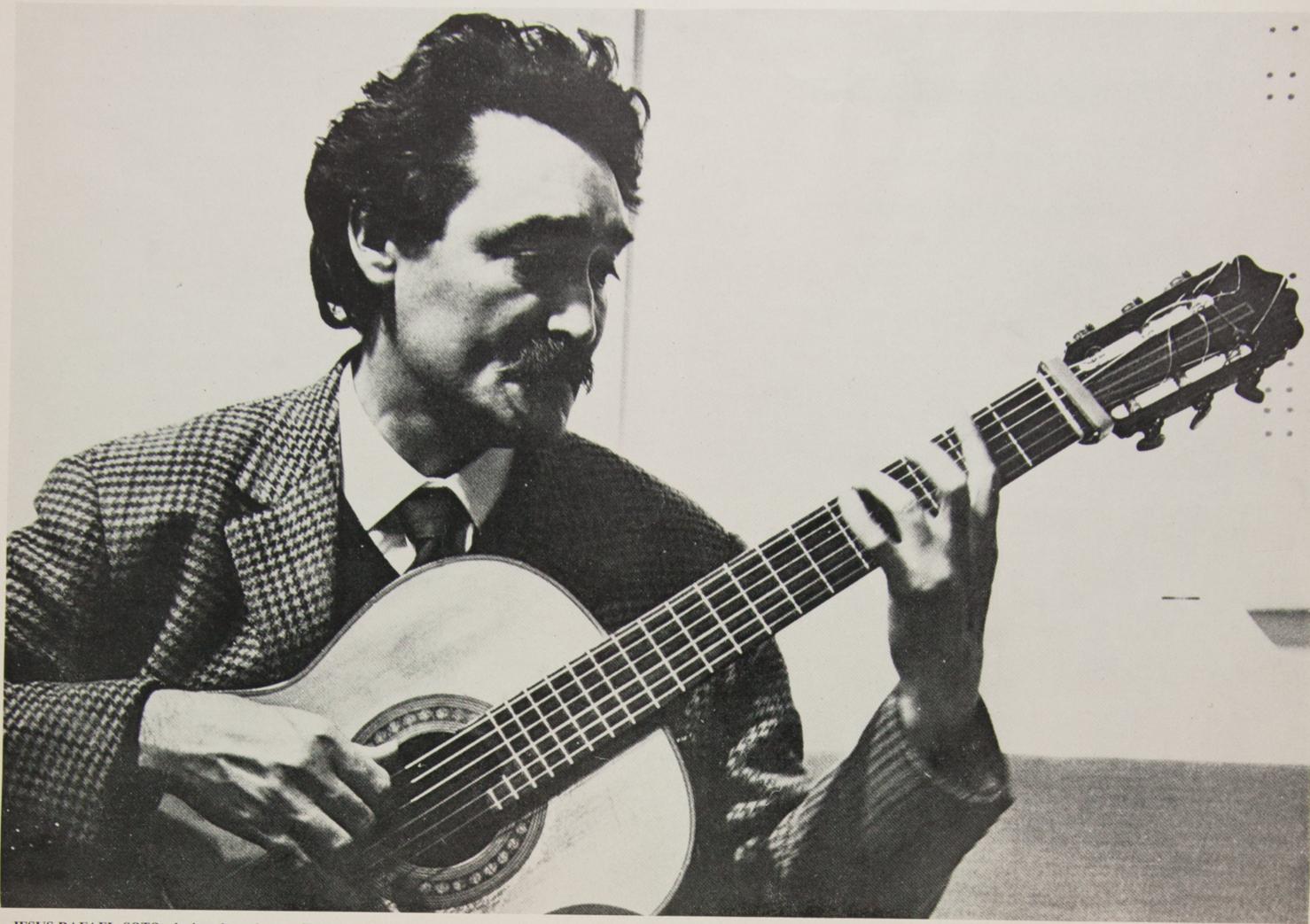
You hear these people talking about the good old days but I think that's a lot of hooey. There was no such thing as the good old days. In the good old days you had to graft like hell, didn't you? They'd just come along and say 'Get your cards and get out!' And the people who had to work and wander round 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.

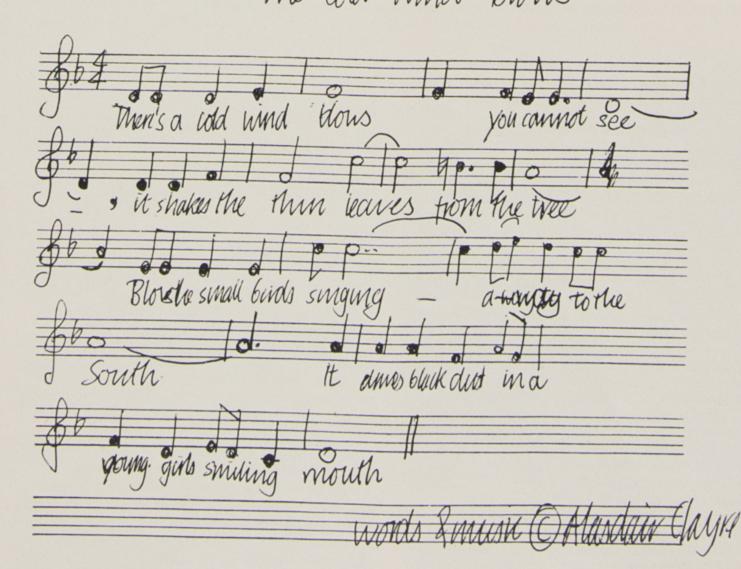
Oh yes. Old Tiny Newman. He had hands like legs of mutton. And he could put tyres on blooming near as quick as they could put them on with machinery today. And people came from all over the world to see him put them on.

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. Unfaltering, because he knows true passion. Unerring, because he has true direction. Inspiring, because he has wisdom.'

## The Gold Wind Blows



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

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.

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

Well astronomers from all the world are gathering in their

crowds,
To ask why flying saucers now come whistling through the

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.

#### 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 unfailingly from those factors of a perfectly controllable energetic quality, rending 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

On the contemporary cultural scene, SOTO is a creative figure who doesn't make use of secondhand 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 antispeculative, 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 vibratile 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

医黑色医疗性结合 医电子性 医电子性 医克里氏征 医克里氏征 医克里氏征 医多种 ............................. ............................. 

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 removai

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 unpremeditated and efficient titles of stylistic merit and inedited characterisation.

Venice 1965

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

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, DE-LAUNAY, 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 sctting 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

'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

SOTO remarks how, departing from the pure composition advocated by KANDINSKY, using black and white and a few luminous light shades, he set out in search of pure plastic space, with its quality of perpetual motion. By giving up all elements alien to painting - 'traditional representation and all such nonsense '-, SOTO took the dangerous jump from inertia to vibration. He speaks of kinetic art and its exponents.

SOTO: Our position is at the same time a consequence of and a breaking away from. . . . Let me explain. The pioneers of modern painting all brought something new to art. The problem of motion, for example, is very old: it worried MICHELANGELO. In the history of art one finds certain essential problems that have been common to all true artists, KANDINSKY opened the way to what has been called the most grandiose plastic adventure. The abstract processes of MONDRIAN opened paths for modern architecture. The aims of DELAUNAY are disturbing. But those who tackled the problem of motion in the work of art early on in our century stopped at the mere representation of motion and did not continue onwards to resolve this problem unto its logical conclusions.

ANTILLANO: In your case, however, you actually realise motion and not just represent it. In other words, you are a kinetic artist, not merely an abstract artist.

SOTO: Exactly. The kinetic movement which is presently affecting contemporary art counts many personalities among its 'members': their only bond is a common purpose: to incorporate time to the work of art. Each artist has his means of expression, and out of these different means, out of the sum of 'languages', this total of individualities, there will emerge the universal expression of a new art.

ANTILLANO: Who are the heads and chiefs of this kinetic movement?

**SOTO:** None. There are no chiefs or heads. In kinetic art each artist does what he wants and takes whatever risks he wants to take. The contribution of each significant kinetic artist is marvellous. That is what is good.

ANTILLANO: What sort of risk must an artist

SOTO: He must take the leap into the void . . . to attain the higher stages. There are no blind alleys. Whoever falls breaks his neck.

ANTILLANO: Could the wires you use profusely to create your vibrations be a sort of

**SOTO**: Of course! You might even say that the wires are just like the tightrope in a circus. . . . I accept all the risks that they entail.

ANTILLANO: What is the difference between the work you are doing now [1961] and the work you did immediately before?

SOTO: I think I have reached a stage of accomplishment: my work now is more expressive; at the same time, I still have an active interest in incorporating new elements. I am now fully preoccupied with vibrations. . . . Naturally the spectator continues to be the motor. When he moves about with his eyes focused on the work, he then naturally integrates himself with it.

ANTILLANO: MONDRIAN was also concerned with similar problems, was he not?

SOTO: Yes, he was. MONDRIAN'S last works - The Victory of Boogie-Woogie - those lights! There one sees the beginnings of vibration in painting. [Later, pointing to one of his own works, SOTO says: In this work colour has no role of itself, it does not act as a harmoniser as in the old type of paintings; I would say that it is only a modulator; finally, colour serves vibration.

ANTILLANO: You prefer white and black -SOTO: They are more rigorous. I do not want

my aims to be confused.

ANTILLANO: What do you think of architecture? Would it be of any use to you?

SOTO: When I work I don't think of architecture. I am a painter. I don't have architecture in mind. But my works could easily be integrated into architectural space. The architectonic work of a few creative architects - CARLOS RAUL VILLANUEVA, for example - reveals itself, is discovered, as the spectator moves about, advances, inhabits its space. Thus it is kinetic. And yes, why not? When I did sculpture I was not motivated by a desire to define masses, volumes; what prompted me was this same impulse of

ANTILLANO: Your ideal, then, continues to be plastic, concerned primarily with painting.

SOTO: Yes, yes. Look at this work. See how graphic it is. . . . [SOTO moves his arms about in eloquent gestures, and his white, almost transparent face flushes with excitement.] . . . You can follow the line in its entire projection, in its uninterrupted trajectory. . . . What's more, the line is not static, it is truly dynamic. . . .

ANTILLANO: Do you construct your pictures? SOTO: I have no preconceived ideas when I start a work, but I am always conscious of the fact that I am directing the process of creation.

ANTILLANO: Do you believe in chance? SOTO: My work is fully conscious. I set the aims and the rhythm, I work until I am surprised. I work until I find something that shocks me, In that sense I may say that I believe in chance. ANTILLANO: The piece of rope which we see here in one of your works, what does it signify?

SOTO: It has a rhythmic purpose. See for yourself... from an interview conducted by

#### SOTO IN CARACAS (1961)

EL NACIONAL of Caracas, 1961

Sergio Antillano: originally published in

Translated from the Spanish by ANA TERESA SERNA

B: Soto, whenever I've heard you speak or read things you've written, I've always heard you maintain that you are a painter. Technically speaking, your works are constructions of moving pieces which make use of devices of optical illusion. In what sense are these paintings?

S: Well, painting at all times has been in some way or other concerned with illusion, to suggest movement or space of a certain kind within the limitations of the canvas. The kind of illusions I use are completely inseparable from the kind of movement and space I wish to reveal, which in turn I believe to be the kind of movement and space which may characterise our experience of the world. In my painting, I've searched for movement by the device of superimposition; and these superimposed elements act on each other in a way which negates the distance between them, For example, if you take a photograph of a work of mine, so that it appears purely two-dimensional, a sensation of movement in space is created purely optically, though technically the elements are superimposed. It's the same with Cézanne; though he was seeking a different sort of structure, he superimposed with what he had - the layers, the screens of paint.

**B**: In order to create space?

S: Yes; space is the preoccupation of the painter. B: But no longer in the Renaissance sense of perspective.

S: Absolutely not; perspective implies a single point of view, to give the illusion of depth, as in a landscape. It's surprising how difficult people find it to shake off the idea of space in painting as the illusion of recession. My aim is, by still using two-dimensional means, to give the illusion of mobility, rather than recession. Sculpture recently liberated itself so that its elements might move in space; but in my works it's the surface which is moving, that's why it's a manifestation of painting.

B: Can you describe to me the stages by which you arrived at this point?

S: Well, I really started out with the desire to

**DIALOGUE:** 

#### J-R Soto & Guy Brett

Paris, rue de Turenne, April 1965

you see, are problems of pure dynamism; the simplified-organic shapes of an artist like Arp belong essentially to figuration.

For two years I worked on the idea of superimposition, using sheets of plexiglass. It was in the last of these, using three planes and the form of the spiral, that the movement was freest, most realised. The whole process had been one of trying gradually to detach the elements. After I'd worked with plexiglass for a little while I got tired of it, and there followed a rather baroque period. I became more interested in the material of the

B: Yes, the informality of these paintings is surprising after the strict, step-by-step progress of the early works. It is as if you suddenly became conscious of what your actual contemporaries were doing. L'art informel was at its height in Paris then, wasn't it?

S: Yes, it's true; I wanted to test the relationships between my researches and the researches of painters around me, to be associated with them. It was certainly an experience. At that time I also made very free and complex 'sculptures' from wire. Wanting to liberate the elements still further, I began looking for a way to combine illusionary optical movement with real movement,

J. R. SOTO: White Dots on Black Dots. Superimposed plexiglass on board. Exhibited in the Salon de Mai, Paris 1954, this work was reproduced in 'Cimaise' magazine, no. 7, June 1954

make the work of Mondrian move. Mondrian's last three works, the boogie-woogie paintings made in New York, affected me deeply; it seemed to me that he had made a sudden leap in the direction of a purely dynamic painting, realised through optical means. It seemed to me that he was about to make the image move optically, and it was this process that filled my mind when I started making works in 1951. I began with repetition - identical forms repeated across the canvas - and always the simplest possible forms, such as rectangles and squares. I have always worked with the smallest number of elements, to get as far away as possible from description. French painters have tended always to use 'beautiful' forms, forms with a decorative function. I decided to use more anonymous and impersonal forms — the line, the square, the circle.

B: The fundamental elements of painting. . . . S: No, it's better to say they're the least descriptive. I didn't invent the square, but it is an invention, it doesn't exist in Nature. By means of the endless repetition of the square, the square itself disappears and produces pure movement. Before I began to use superimposition in 1952, I was touched by the idea of serialism in music. I worked with small dots of familiar colours, again the least descriptive, so that one's attention is directed on the relationships between them. I organised the intervals precisely. Separating colours, calculating the distance between them, produces a vibration as in the work of the Impressionists, Seurat, the Fauvés. The problems of abstract painting,

**B**: And this, of course, brings us to your recent work. I think that here the superimposition ceases completely to look like a device; it becomes sensually inseparable from the visible change that appears to take place in the elements.

S: Yes, what has always interested me has been the transformation of elements, the dematerialisation of solid matter. To some extent this has always interested artists, but I wanted to incorporate the process of transformation in the work itself. Thus, as you watch, the pure line is transformed by optical illusion into the pure vibration, the material into energy. Of course it all depends on the elements one uses and the way one uses them, but the transformations can always be different, and really I leave it alone to behave as it likes. But I do use elements which seem to be the purest and most unadorned, because I want this transformation to take place in perfect equilibrium.

B: It's interesting that you should use the word ' equilibrium', for the quality of the movement in your works has always struck me as being confident, lucid, ordered - like the waves of the sea rising and falling evenly. Do you see it like that? S: Not exactly. In my case, at bottom, it's a repetition. I no longer see waves but the pure repetition behind the waves - blue, grey, green. 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. The artist discovers possibilities. But although it's a question of discovering,

of demonstrating, it's also a question of doing it at the right moment. It's no good setting out with the intention of inventing something, some 'new reality'. One is placed at a certain point in an historical evolution. I am very conscious of this 'historical process' in which I am placed, and my ambition is to develop this process from the stage at which I found it. The artist does not look forward, as many people suppose, but looks deeper. The artist 'foresees' new visions entirely by discovering new values in what already exists. For example, Arp and Brancusi 'discovered' value in forms as simple as pebbles, and after that people began to notice and even treasure pebbles. a thing they would have found inconceivable before. But one must not forget that for Arp and Brancusi to do this it was necessary that art should have evolved to a certain stage. The difference between the artist and the non-artist is that the artist is able to provoke the next stage in the evolution. The very strangeness of some of these provocations' illustrates what I mean. When Kandinsky came home and found his landscape painting upside down on his easel — in one stroke he thought of abstract art. His discovery was in the form of a sudden revelation — but one must understand all his foregoing preparations for that moment, both spiritual and intellectual, which make it unique, but at the same time logical.

**B**: I think people still find it difficult to believe that abstract art has its basis in life, that it is as much a personal necessity as any other form. A lot of people seem to think it's a sort of set of rules you can distribute like a book. For this reason, most optical painting seems to me to have a great deal of surface drama, but no real density. S: Yes. . . . For the bad optical artists it is a system, artificial and stylised, which they just take up one day and exploit. Maybe tomorrow they will be exploiting something else. Stylisation is the great enemy of creation — it's a sign that the traveller has turned his back on the unknown and settled down. For me, optical painting is not a system, but a record of day-to-day plastic discoveries, and a means of expressing what I feel nothing more complicated than that. As you say, it is also a need.

B: I'd like just to come back to what you said earlier about your first desire being to make the works of Mondrian move. It reminds me of a story about a visit Calder made to Mondrian's studio when he first came to Paris - a decisive visit, which gave him what he called 'the necessary shock '. He found Mondrian's studio like a spatial version of one of his mobiles, with rectangles of primary colour carefully placed on the white walls. Calder suggested to Mondrian that all these coloured elements might be made to move. . . .

S (laughing): I didn't know that: it's very gratifying, because it corresponds to my own work. I wanted to do the same sort of thing. Of course Calder never did anything of that kind because he is a sculptor, interested in objects moving in space, which I am not as I explained earlier. My works keep their distance - the vibration is not felt as something tangible, as something that involves the body; it's purely optical, without physical substance. The elements I use, I use solely to realise an abstract world of pure relations, which has a different existence from the world of things. My aim is to free the material until it becomes as free as music — although here I mean music not in the sense of melody, but in the sense of pure relations. For me, the first artist who began to see things in this way was Turner. Turner made a conscious move away from figuration. You can say that there was already a feeling for abstract relations among primitive peoples, but for them a naturalistic art was not technically feasible. For Turner it was, but he rejected it. I see him as altogether more remarkable than the Impressionists and post-Impressionists, who were still attached to figuration. In fact after Turner one can move directly to pure abstraction, to Kandinsky for example.

B: Yes, I think that modern art's gradual discovery of the spiritual power of relationships, which have no material existence but are something generated by the interaction of elements, corresponds exactly with modern science's discovery of the psychical power of relationships between material elements. Both art and science have been able to reveal these new forces, which simply take no notice of the old barriers that man used to erect between one part of his world and another.

S: Yes, I use anonymous elements to emphasise the purity and sufficiency of the rhythm that may be revealed between them. In representational painting the surrealists approached the same problem in a different way. You remember that old passage from Lautréamont the surrealists liked so much - about the sewing-machine and umbrella meeting upon an operating-table. Separately these things are nothing, but together something very strange happens. This is the sense in which I understand the 'immaterial' - a whole world of new meaning and possibility revealed by the combination of simple, neutral elements. Coming from the material, it has immaterial existence, freedom, purity and precision.



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

\* 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.

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

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 divers 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'oriente 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-

Aphorism by

A, straight, line,

A,zigzag,

A, spiral:

The, mysterious, invisible, line.

But, most, important, of, all,

A, curve.

New York 1958

José Garcia Villa

Between, two, points, there, can, be,

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.

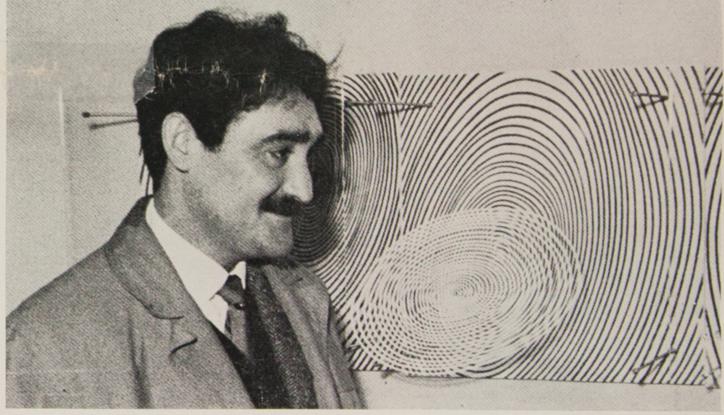
Le point de gravitation de son art est, répétonsle, 'les relations'. Ses recherches, extrêmement
importantes, ne sont au fond qu'une solution
presque réelle d'une conception picturale presque
irréelle par l'intermédiare d'un espace lumineux.
Il veut immatérialiser la matière, détruire les
éléments solides 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 colcurs, 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



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 × 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

'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!

#### **PURE RELATIONS**

by Guy Brett

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by kind permission of James Fitzsimmons, 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 OITICICA 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 handpainted 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, 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.

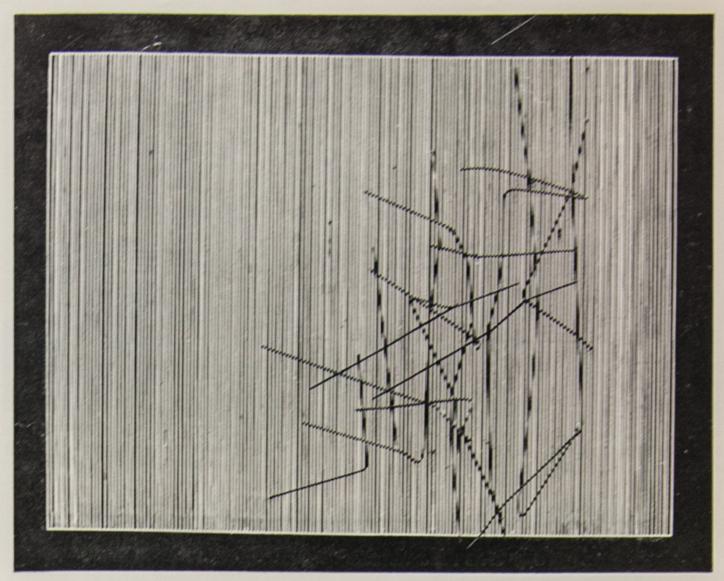
April 1965: Anthology of Kinetic Sculpture and Perceptual Art, featuring works by David MEDALLA, Antonio ASIS, Liliane LIJN, Jésus-Rafael SOTO, Carlos CRUZ-DIEZ, Sergio de CAMARGO, TAKIS, Alberto GUZMAN and others.

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 OITICICA, Alejandro OTERO, LI Yuen-Chia, and others. September-October 1965: A Decade of Physichromies 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 Newsbulletin (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 Physichromies 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).



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

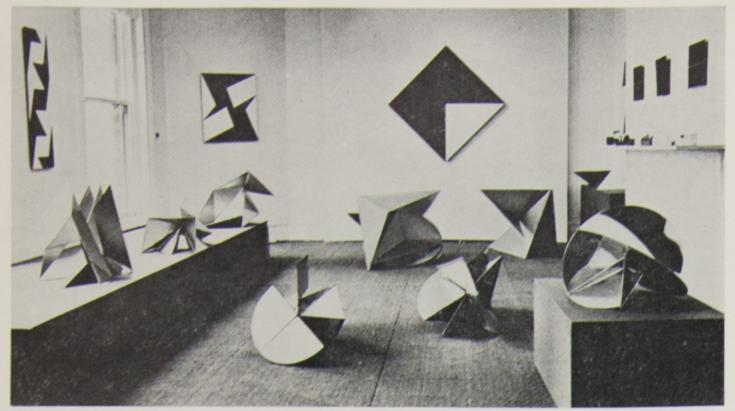
appear minute and hardly ambitious in the context of the external world can be of enormous importance to the evolution of plastic art. In the statements of many of the great painters of the last hundred years are references to this area of tiny shifts of degree by which the elements of the painted surface 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

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. HUM-PHREYS-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



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

## Continued Vitality of Abstract Art

by the Art Critic of The Times

from The Times, 25 May 1965

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 be-

come a recorded system. And by doing this,

they also felt they approached what was pro-

foundest in their own spirits, that the two were

really interconnected. This was not a process

of 'abstracting' from nature a bloodless struc-

ture, 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

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 reason-

able — he rarely uses straight lines or obvious

curves. From the red stone carving, like a

giant mollusc, he moves to the increased free-

dom 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

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 pro-

duces a volume which is virtually unbounded,

and all his works suggest further ways in which both the spectator and the surrounding ele-

ments may be involved in the life of the work.

And one feels this invitation for greater free-

dom on the part of the artist, the spectator and

the material itself, taken up by the younger

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 accord-

ing to hidden laws like the random and alarm-

ing 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

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

But J. R. Soto's room is really the revelation

means by a 'factual force'.

artists downstairs.

description.

an electric shock'

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 undertalented 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 'deadend' 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-

#### El Viejo y el Sol por Vicente Aleixandre

Había vivido mucho.

Se apoyaba alli, viejo, en un tronco, en un gruesisimo tronco, muchas tardes cuando el

Yo passaba por alli a aquellas horas y me detenia 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 mordia suavemente los pies

y alli se quedaba unos momentos como acurru-

Después ascendía e iba sumergiéndole, anegándole,

tirando suavemente de él, unificándole en su dulce

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

Toda la quemazón, la historia de la tristeza, el resto de las arrugas, la miseria de la piel roida, ! 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 veia 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 suavisimamente en su seno lo reinstalase.

Yo pasaba y lo veia, Pero a veces no veia sino un sutilisimo resto. Apenas un lévisimo encaje

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

postreros del sol. como tantas otras invisibles cosas del mundo, DAVID MEDALLA: Cloud Canyons, bubble mobiles 1964 Photo: Clay Perry

further freeing the material. Using very few elements — the square and the line austerely 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 estremecida.

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.

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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.

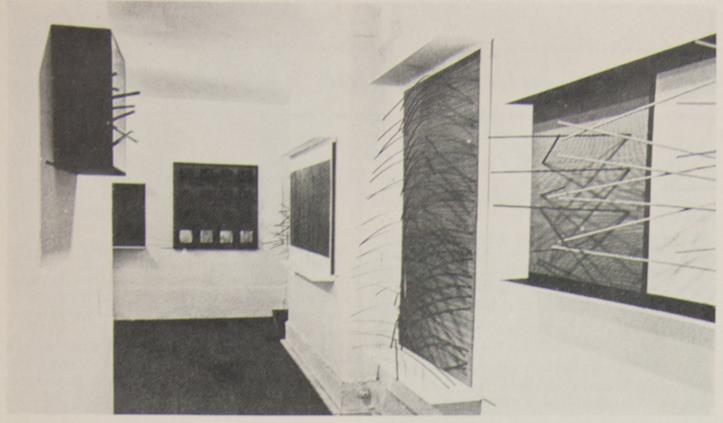
. . imagine, Paul, a work which exists visually in time, a work in which space, autonomous, contains infinite possibilities of harmony and order. .

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.

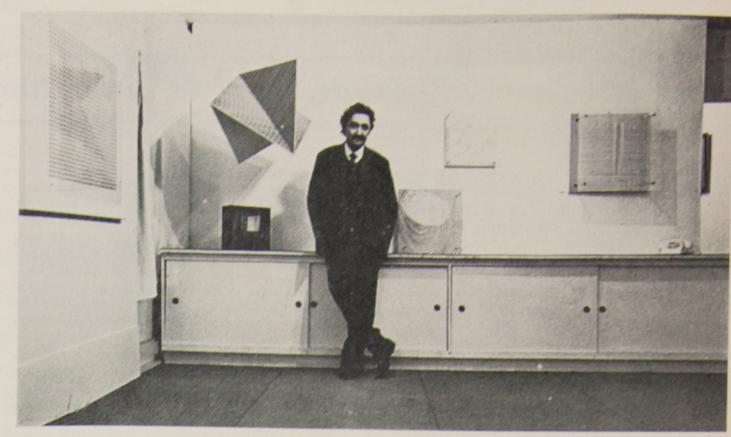
'You must come to Paris soon to see them, for only by seeing them can one experience these extraordinary vibrations. With your receptive mind, I'm sure you'll find them amazing, as I find them. . 'They're by a Venezuelan who lives in Paris: a musician, too, I hear: his name is

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, newsbulletin 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; Oswell 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

## 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: Kracjberg

## Inscriptions by Jorge Luis Borges

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English Translations Sebastian Brett

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## 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, incompetencel 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, 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.

Cemetery of Buenos-Aires.

opening in london
in the new year

I\*N\*D\*I\*C\*A\*
a new bookshop
& art gallery
directors: miles
& john dunbar

.....

#### Etude sur la ponctuation par Julien Blaine

L'astre fixe était ancré au plus profond de l'espace — oursin incrusté à la roche — au coeur des rotations — crustacé posé au milieu des algues — liancs — au centre des trajectoires — épave sous les ondulations des longues murènes — au sexe du mouvement.

Il était un point immobile — galet noir encastré dans le sable au creux de l'océan —

Tache si restreinte qu'elle était devenue un signe mythique, une cellule de chair vive, l'évocation d'une détermination absolue au ventre de la folie géométrique.

La pupille de l'oeil.

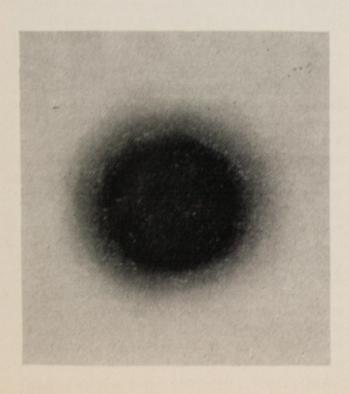
Plus petit fragment d'espace, cette négation femelle est l'émanation d'une vision abstraite, le centre ou le passage: le carrefour des mille rivières, la source au pied de l'arbre loin du sillage des pluies.

Le point crache ses externes rayons, linéaires jets de salive flamboyante: refus ou tentation d'explication? Les flammes derrière le mica translucide.

L'astre n'était pas l'une de ces comètes errantes, l'une de ces planètes tournoyantes, mais cette étoile immobile.

Elle éclata, ce fut le dédoublement,

L'océan coule en une longue cascade sur toute la longueur de la brisure.



La tEnTaTiOn. . . . D'où l'explication — mica incandescent peut-être? — mais le développement fut un rEfUs.

Par cet éclatement l'immobilité avait été rompue et la première moitié de l'astre tournoyait tandis que la seconde errait.

Vagues aux frontières terriennes de la mer, débris de forêt flottant sur les lames.

(Le voyage s'achevait: le Sund ou l'Oresund.

... Loin!

Maintenant que la vie est si longue: le Sund.

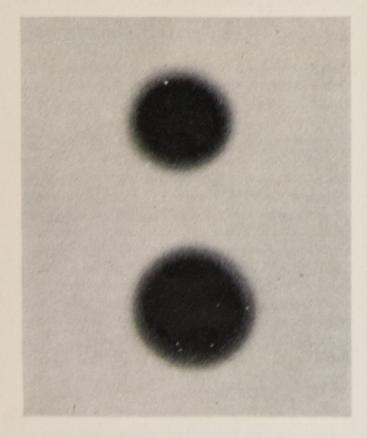
. . . Et le Bosphore. . . .)

L'attente pouvait être alors la cause de ces éclatements successifs. Des montagnes de boue en sexes femelles entremêlés, les montagnes se répandent peu à peu selon des escaliers indescriptibles.

Les entrailles stellaires de l'oursin, les viscères blonds des patelles et la lumière giclant sur la pierre en feuille: ce moment à la clarté unique est un moment lointain glissé à l'envers des veux.

Il y eut un regard hypnotique qui lança ses rayons fragmentaires dans l'espace, les deux points à un moment de leur trajectoire avaient entamé une course parallèle: seins d'un corps émietté et mobile.

Mais l'errante, comme la suspension demeurait, éclata à son tour et ce fut un nouveau dédoublement; l'étoile devint triple.



Les astronomes-magiciens qui n'avaient encore aucun soupçon au sujet de ces fantastiques transformations devinrent astronomes-mathématiciens.

La chaîne et son trio de maillons, la trinité des anneaux, les trois flaques d'eau sombre qu'il faut boire une à une pour connaître chaque secret l'un après l'autre, devinnent le triangle aux angles éclatés, la grande molécule triatomique aux noyaux tribadiques, les trois parallèles qui traçaient deux couloirs évidemment interminables et qu'il fallait obligatoirement emprunter.

Le mouvement, la rotation, la trajectoire de ces nouveaux astres étaient irréguliers: La surface plane de l'étang et le jeu des rencontres, le crépitement des couleurs de l'aube at la surface plane de l'étang.

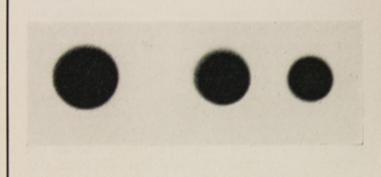
Si leur éllipse avait un même foyer, leur course semblait s'arrêter et attendre toutes les apparitions de la lumière vive, l'élan était brisé, une suspension se produisait dans cette continuité: trois points de suspension.

(Toutes ces années depuis le Sund ou l'Oresund

Et le Bosphore . . .)

Ce vide loin des vibrations: l'index et l'annulaire agrandissent vainement la prunelle des yeux, si lointaines sont les vibrations: ce vide est trop spatial.

L'espace explosait devant les trois points et refusionnait longtemps après leur passage.



Mais en éclatant, chaque particule avait emporté avec elle un morceau du motif de l'éclatement et les points se multiplièrent, formèrent une nouvelle galaxie, peuplèrent un novel espace.

Pour atteindre cette solitude, de l'équinoxe au solstice, partir de l'hiver au printemps. Le dos couvert de neige et le ventre appuyé sur la nouvelle prairie, partir aussi quand le dos flambe et que la poitrine pourrit. Cette solitude nomade

Au point du jour l'espace réapparait vierge, mais le regard des astronomes-quelconques se souvient du foisonnement nocturne, de ces scintillants boulevards en fête mis en étage.

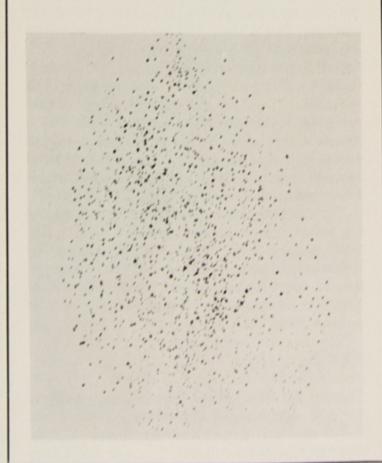
'— Quel âge? — Le nouvel âge!'

Au fur et à mesure du trajet découvrir les nouvelles couleurs du calcaire . . . Les nouvelles formes: l'humaine pierre à visage de femme du sud, la pierre animale du nord, la végétale de l'est, la géométrique de l'ouest.

Multidude des points sous

au dessus aux côtés d'un point à

pulsations.



Le sillage de l'un de ces points était une spirale, les astronomes-magiciens, les astronomes-mathématiciens, les astronomes-quelconques s'interrogèrent. Il y eut un congrès.

Multitude savante face à cette précaire solitude, solitude mi-danoise mi-suèdoise, solitude tout à fait turque . . . Délacer ses chaussures de bronze, retirer ses gants de plomb et ne pas jeter un seul regard en arrière sur le socle abandonné.

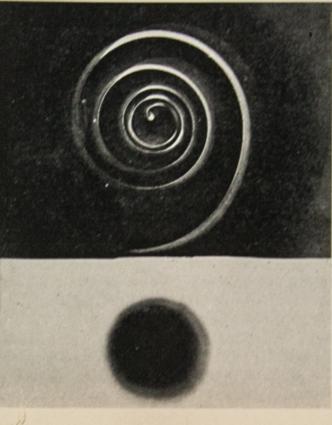
Alors la peau pousse l'ongle et la chair presse sur la peau. La migration . . .

Au moment où tous ces astronomes-quelquechose allaient mettre un terme à leur effort et tracer la chute finale de la formulation de leur interrogation: le point d'interrogation, ce point qui était une comète vint se placer sous la spirale qui était son sillage.

Le 'Z' est à la foudre, le 'I' et le 'S' aux météorites, le 'O' aux planètes mais la spirale était à cette comète.

Acier et bois pour atteindre les zones vibrationnelles. Vertical pour atteindre les espaces stellaires.

De la pierre dont la chair est aujour d'hui lacérée par les lychens, un crescendo interminable émane encore. Crescendo jusqu'à l'essouflement, l'asphyxie de l'interrogateur, longues ascensions mortelles.



Mais à la chute de son sillage le point explosa encore et l'une des particules fut projetée selon une trajectoire verticale qui se dirigeait voluptueusement vers les astronomes-magiciens.

L'eau des ruisseaux devenait si boucuse que

l'on craignait la morsure venimeuse de ces reptiles.

Les astronomes magiciens n'eurent que le temps d'être éblouis par la beauté de cette étoile filante. Ils périrent sous ce météorite.

La ligne brisée appartient au feu dont le geste est la foudre, la ligne courbe appartient à la terre cette sphère tournoyante en révolution, le cercle appartient à l'eau et surtout à la rencontre de l'eau devenue extra-terrestre et de l'eau demeurée terrienne, la spirale est à l'air et aux comètes qui se meuvent dans ces espaces.

La sève éclate et dévore l'écorce, elle apparait nue et vierge sous la lumière immobile, elle explose,

Le point d'exclamation demeura du côté interne des lèvres.



Ce météorite n'était qu'éphémère, une force ascensionnelle le réattira vers l'espace.

Parfois le solide devient gaz, des bombes accompagnent ces mutations, ces bombes sont des femmes empoisonnées offertes à l'espace.

Le météorite s'éleva premièrement selon une trajectoire simple, deuxièmement il reprit ses sens de comète, troisièmement il les exacerba, quatrièmement il devint fou, cinquièmement il se mit à tournoyer selon une éllipse aux axes faibles.

(Des milliards de navires ont coulé dans le Sund et dans le Bosphore, ils ont emmené avec eux des multitudes de voyageurs à la conquête des merveilles sous-marines. Au-dessus sur l'immense plaine frémissante: seul!

Mais que cette solitude, aussi dense que les merveilles sous-marines, est lointaine . . .)

La dernière partie de son sillage, sur le point d'être concrétisée par la luminosité, représentait un fragment de courbe d'où semblait éclore cet ancien météorite.

Les cicatrices comme autant de lèvres incompréhensibles, la cicatrice du

> sur le sein?

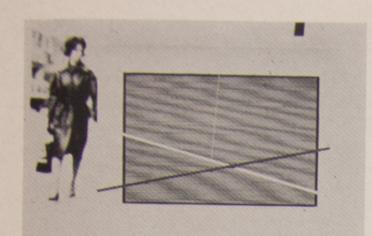
Le commencement terminé, l'achèvement demeure. La main se crispe et recueille une fois encore entre l'ongle et la chair le sang de la plaie; (point et virgule) mais il reste le long, l'interminable frémissement des lèvres.



Alors s'établit un étrange dialogue :

"-! -!,!\* -... -!;!:!(!!)

[!]



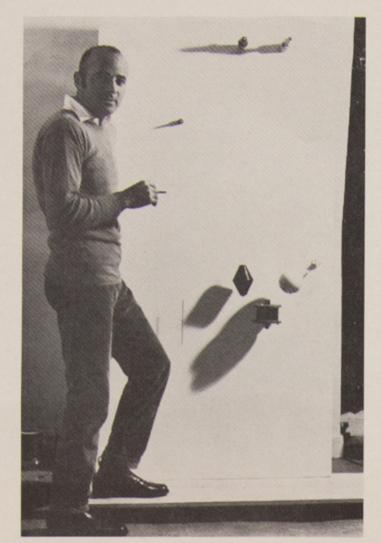
J. R. SOTO: Vibrations 1965. Coll: David Medalla, London Photo: Clay Perry

#### Parade Before Our Love

by Steven Osterlund

We might
Better face the
City from the
Hill
The stacks and rubble
Gone a mile
From sight
You know how rough
Our love is
Now it seems a
Blast and honk each
Time we try
Our flesh

Recent visitors to SIGNALS LONDON:
Caresse Crosby, who dropped in on her way from Rome to New York;
Charlotte Wiedler of the Carnegie
Institute of Fine Arts, Pittsburgh,
USA; Mr & Mrs P. K. Hoenich, of Technion,
Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa;
and Professor & Mrs J. D. Bernal. Professor
Bernal told us that he was
profoundly impressed by the Soundings
Two exhibition; he greatly admired the work of Soto, Camargo, Lygia
Clark and Takis.



TAKIS with his first musical telemagnetic reliefsculpture 1965

Just published: 'How To Make Your Own Confetti', celebration poems by Oswell Blakeston with 'illusions' by Max Chapman. The Trigram Press, London. 10/6 soft cover; 18 shillings cloth-bound: from Mandarin Books, 22 Notting Hill Gate, W.11.

LISN No. 1, a postermagazine edited by John Sharkey. 4 shillings a copy from SIGNALS LONDON.

from The Eton College Chronicle 8th October, 1965. No 3414

## Selections from Soundings Two

#### by Hardress Waller

This exhibition, on show at the Drawing Schools at the moment, shows some aspects of the movement in art labelled kinetic which is having increasing effect on the present-day international scene. Kinetic art is simply the use of various kinds of motion in visual forms. Some of the motions are created by permanent outside forces such as sunlight moving across the picture surface, some by the fact that the picture surface changes its intrinsic aspect as the spectator moves past it, some by the fact that the spectator actually uses his hands to motivate the object himself. Yet others move of themselves, motivated by electrical power or elemental forces, such as Takis's Ballet magnetique. These artists explore the world of visual forces which are scientific in fact but have strong emotional connections in the mind of the observer.

Visually the exhibition is easy to appreciate: the drawings of **Mira Schendel** have great beauty and sensitivity; **Takis's** signals have an immediate presence — something between the eeriness of science fiction and the awe of a primitive idol; the latter is most evident in his pair of standing figures.

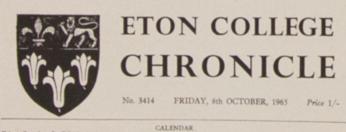
But it is perhaps difficult for the average visitor to understand where these works fit into the realm of art as he or she understands it. Last Thursday David Medalla explained that the vibrations of Soto were the result of the impact on the artist of the discovery that the two opposites placed side by side — black and white — foiled the efforts of the passing spectator to focus stereoscopically. This discovery has its roots in the work of Seurat, who atomised the previously 'solid' areas of a picture surface, and in the work of Cezanne, who, inheriting the revolution in conception of colour which started with Delacroix and the great English landscape-artists Constable and Turner, incorporated opposing tonal rhythms across his pictures. Thus the importance of any one nodal or focal point in the picture began to decrease; the picture becomes a succession of rhythms of light.

This rhythm of light is seen at its purest in Camargo's wood reliefs, upon whose surfaces moving sunlight produces infinite variations. Intriguingly, the rhythm of these works is physical in origin and results directly from the rhythm of the artist's hand movements whilst constructing the picture (he works with amazing speed). The same is true of the works of Lygia Clark, whose subtly articulated sculptures are cut spontaneously, each from a single sheet of metal — the spectator is free to form his own succession of shapes for these sculptures, thus participating to a certain

extent in the creative process.

More directly linked with the creation of

rhythms by the original devices of colour and tone, are the **physichromies** of **Cruz-Diez**. These wonderful works are built up of thin plastic slats in contrasting colours set at right-angles to each other on the picture surface . . . so that a fascinating progression of changing shape, depth and colour is set in motion for the spectator as he moves in relation to the picture surface. This is



Fri. Oct. 8 St. Pelagia the Previlent.

Sat. Oct. 9 Film Society Meeting.
Foot-off: The School v. Mr. D. M. R. C.
Allen's Scrutch; 2nd XI v. Mr. A. C.
Grisham's Scrutch; 2nd XI v. Mr. A. C.
Med. Oct. 11

Toes, Oct. 12

Adms, Oct. 14

Toes, Oct. 15

Admicsis: Screptchase (School and Juni
Wed. Oct. 11

HOLIDAY X.
Confirmation Address, 8-43 p.m.
899th Anniversary of the Bratio of Haude
Rackets: The School v. Mediagnos (s
Squash: The School v. Surve (h) (Sci
sand Juniors).

We might have known it. For years, Eton has aroused a curriculum. Large numbers of petty restrictions, such as the curriculty that is almost fazacical in the bosons of the Press.
What happens, they have demanded, within these "hallowed" and "medianearal" with. If they have failed to find an appear it is for no wont of tryit. At last, og. Thompson when the compulsory Chapel has been moderated. The essenties of the analysis of had: oge "try At last, og. Thompson when the computer of the comp

an art of participation; the work is activated by the spectator (swing **Takis's** signals, manipulate **Lygia Clark's** constructions) — the spectator is involved very directly in the artist's excitement as he reacts to motion, colour, shape, light.

It is impossible to explain simply and shortly enough the philosophical elements implicit in this art. Suffice it to say that where you have movement, you have space and time, and that we are becoming increasingly aware of the search for the true nature of these as a key to the actuality of existence. The artists, working in an age of technology, are fascinated by science and involved in the fact that things are not at their most real just as we see them, neither are they stable.

The Alexander Cozens Society feels deeply honoured to have been lent this exhibition by Paul Keeler of SIGNALS LONDON, who is a pioneer in the showing of these artists. It is honoured that Carlos Cruz-Diez came to the opening and entertained by accompanying his wife's beautiful singing on the guitar. Also that David Medalla gave such an illuminating talk. He is obviously a very wonderful person: a poet as well as an artist; he helps Paul Keeler run SIGNALS, editing their impressive newsbulletin. All who visit the exhibition must feel that Eton has been enriched by this generous loan.

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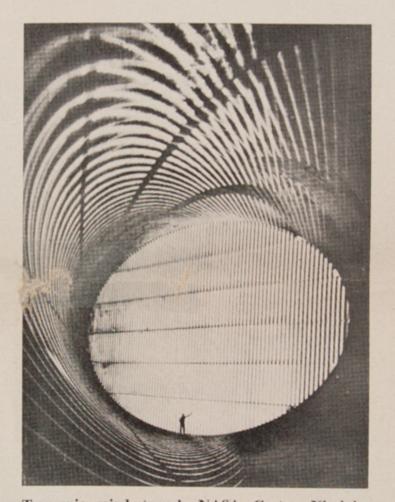
## TAKIS AT SIGNALS LONDON

by Guy Burn

from the Arts Review, London, November 28-December 12, 1964

Takis the Greek sculptor has inspired the choice of name for this new gallery, and appropriately he opens it with a show of his latest electric 'sculpture'; flashing signals on tall stalks synchronised in syncopation, impassive totems with a relentless message, electro-magnets holding their prey, spanners and metal rods, helplessly hypnotised and quivering in mid-air, white spheres which sway and dart ecstatically in an endless ballet where no movement is ever repeated, and glaring cathode ray tubes sending out a sizzling violet glow.

Described by Marcel Duchamp as a 'gai laboureur des champs magnetiques et indicateur des chemins de fer doux', electricity seems to spark from his fingers as he recklessly tackles involved circuits and alarmingly high voltages with the wary devotion of a snake charmer taming a particularly deadly specimen. 'Electricity works like water along pipes,' he says, 'I never work by the book but just guess by intuition which way it will flow.' In one instance he wanted to get a particular effect by reversing the circuit in a large cathode ray tube. Against the advice of the experimental laboratory of a big electrical combine, which forecast an explosion, he went ahead, hiding behind cover with his Greek assistant. 'It has been working all



Transonic wind tunnel. NASA Center, Virginia, USA, 1962

#### Danny

by Seymour Gresser

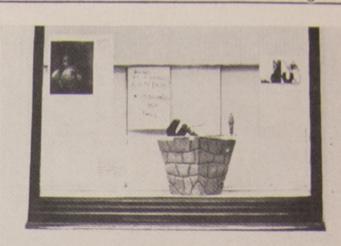
A mumbling all over the house boy-boy under chairs and pillows in deep-hand dug holes in the hollow of sheets and popsicle sticks his world by a string word by beatific word.

Gladiators rush TV wise in the room angelic voices cry thumbs down on every wounded thing; they only play at dreaming while this reality they live is ice in hot dusty pockets.

Another crucifixion, another and again as if we could forget the human race is guinea pig for the future deathless man; bait for the soft shell of desire stirs from indifference the future small-pocked with illusion, a kinship lending acceptance to the filth of death.

O the desperate kings of a man's kingdom cries of daughters and sons how they attack and massacre with the same hands wipe compassionate faces.

Chariots fail at the hilltops; arrows die as they pierce and the man who looks like Pop raises his hands to cease the slaughter as he falls . . . Yay!



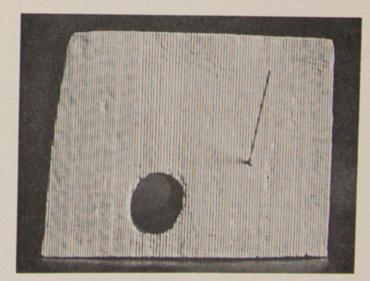
Window of SIGNALS LONDON during the TAKIS exhibition, November 1964 Photo: Clay Perry

right for three months now,' he said, pointing to the machine immediately behind me, and laughing gaily as I moved smartly away. This artist-physicist has a touch of that ham figure the Victorian absent-minded professor, at the same time as the vision of a **Leonardo**, or more aptly of **Archimedes**.

His development from sculptor to 'magnetist' has been a logical one. His early Cycladic figures seen some time ago at the Hanover Gallery had already that sense of a powerful presence so noticeable in the Charioteer of Delphi, and this was carried over to his totemic figure, with long wavering stalks, seen at the Redfern last year. The build-up of circuits, tubes and moving parts still retains the allusion to some idol; he obviously has some hieratic figure in mind. But this is only a point of departure. Surrounded as the spectator is by a bewildering variety of silent and uncanny movements, of glaring and blinking lights, the room itself becomes galvanised by an overall presence which gradually becomes independent of any particular source. This exteriorisation of Energy itself, fragile yet none the less menacing, has the quality of a phenomenon such as an eclipse of the sun, which is an alarming and sobering experience inducing a certain elation as well.

'If art has any relation with science or vice versa,' says Takis, 'it is that they both study either optic phenomena or organic ones. The scientist, in my opinion, must be considered a creator. What preoccupies the contemporary artist is no longer the human body, except for preliminary study, but what becomes of humanity after these discoveries. For him, human space has been changed by science, and this change has as its consequence a radical change in optics. Telemagnetic sculpture, in which elements are kept in suspension in the air by the force of attraction exerted on them by magnets or electro-magnets, coincides perfectly with this change in space.' This artist is wholly committed to space age Romanticism, obsessed with the magic of the other world, hooked on an electric Utopia. For those who care for escapism, and that means most people, I suggest that they sidestep their own problems in this world and renew their sense of the marvellous by visiting this show and experiencing the presence of pure Energy.

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J. R. Soto: Vibrations 1959

### Propos

The technique I have used since 1956 is very simple - grilles fixed over boards of painted wood. This gives me a great variety of forms, infinitely variable, which are produced by the permanent vibrations of tones and colours, the approach and retreat of the spectator being naturally the basis on which these changes occur. Thus the object becomes dynamic at one's wish, assuming an essentially kinetic and vibrational character. A metamorphosis of space obtained by an interpenetration between the full plasticity of the support, and the empty spaces of the active element of the composition represented by the superimposed grille.

Antonio Asis

Paris 1965 Translated from the French by Sebastian Brett 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 MON-DRIAN: '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 scries 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 MON-DRIAN, 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

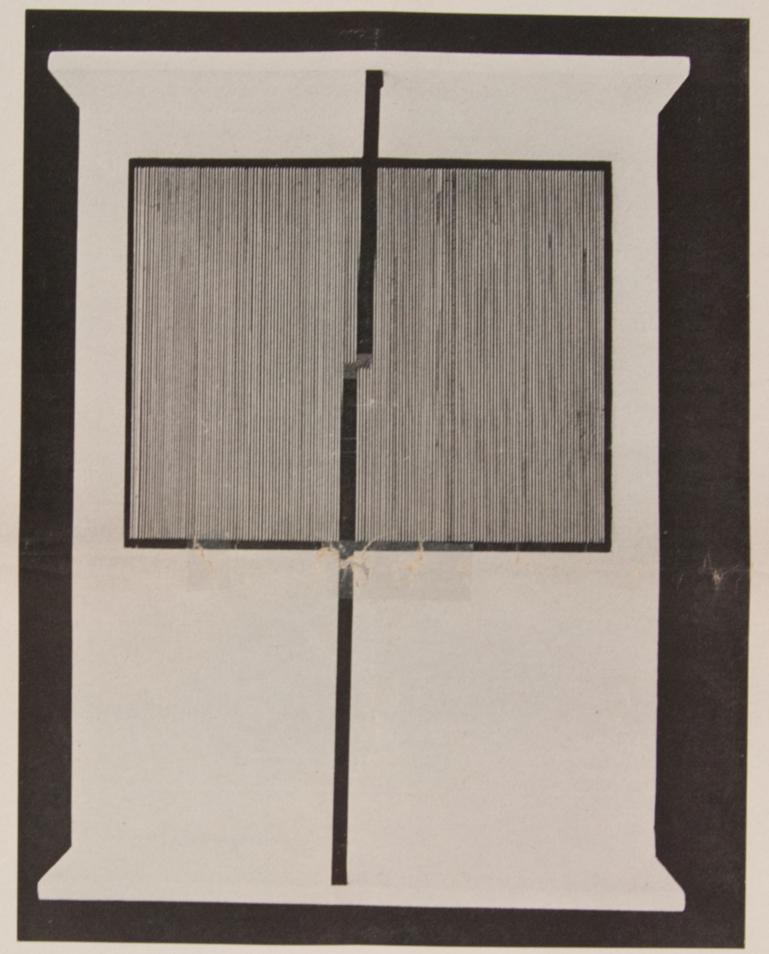
float in space. He quickly saw the possibilities of the *moiré* effect, for it was this apparent 'detachment of the elements' that he had been searching for. It not only opened up a field rich in possibility, but also served as a rclease for his innate lyricism.

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 l'art 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.

## 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 spyes,
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 firie-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 celestiall flowes Will follow after On that water, Which thy spirit blowes!

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 unmistakeable. It makes one convinced that the experience of the 'baroque' period is still there, in purified and sublimated form.

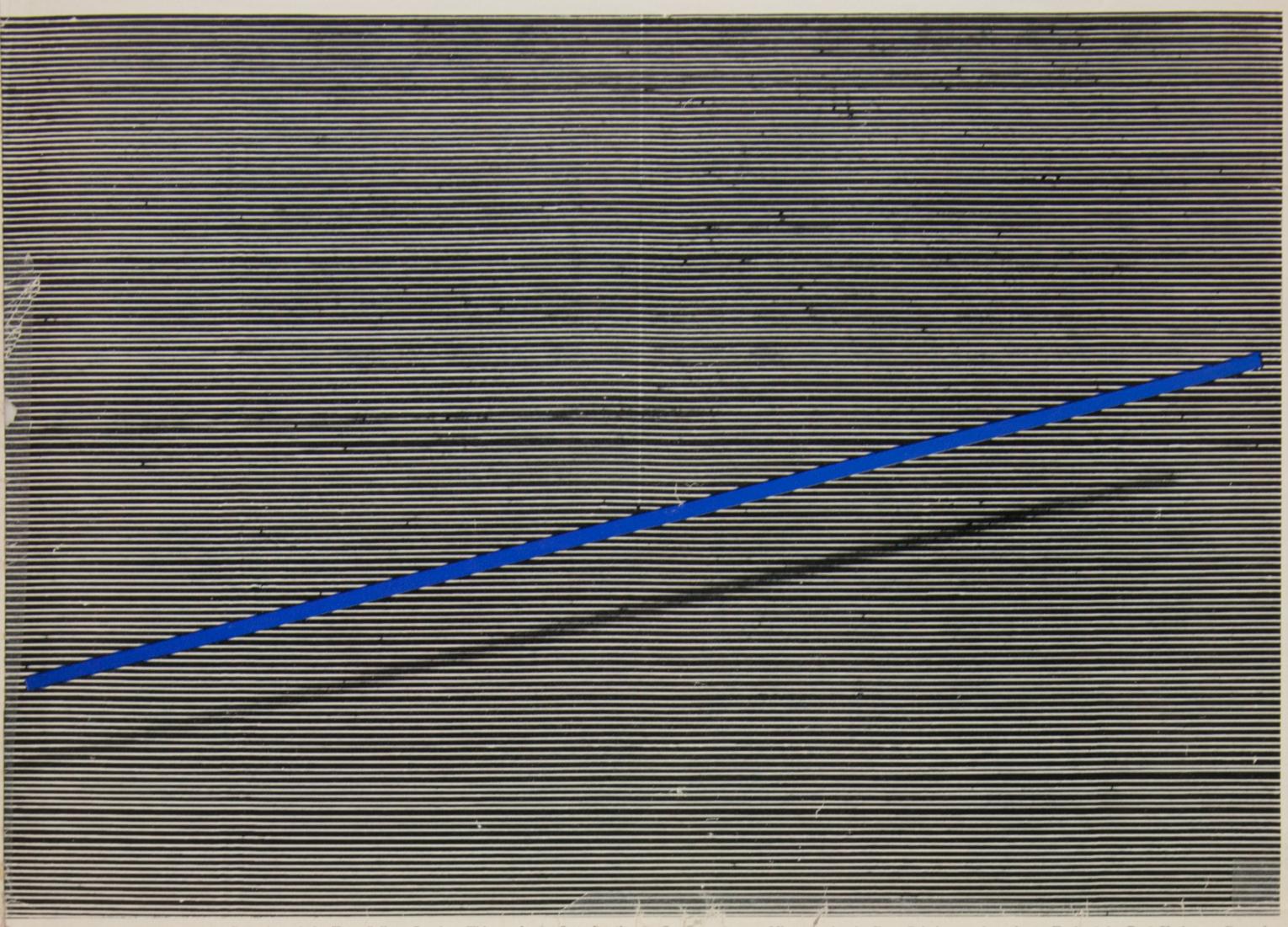
1962-1965: The large number of works he has produced in the last few years testify to the variety, grace and fecundity of SOTO's vision. Each piece brings to realisation a separate sensation of movement; each is a natural flowering of that particular movement in material terms. Nothing disturbs the equilibrium 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 silcnt 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



J. R. SOTO: Vibration 1963. Collection of the Tate Gallery, London. This work, the first vibration by Socio o 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.

Han Wu Ti

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

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 Clarin 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 vibration. That, despite the fact that my research is only visual and not musical."

#### 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 copio 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 Paris (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 caligrafias; lo que hace en sus primeros tiempos de Paris, 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 efimeras, 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 Reveron, Caracas, Venezuela, 1963

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

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

declarations made by Jésus 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. Essen, Germany, Galerie Rudolph Zwirner.

Caracas, Museum of Fine Arts of Caracas.

Antwerp, Belgium, Galerie Ad Libitum.

Paris, Galerie Edouard Loeb.

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 Jésus-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.

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#### 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, Cordóba, Argentina.

1964 Prize for Painting of the City of Cordóba, 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.

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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 Diament 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. Worldwide 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, Fortuguese, 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 vibrationstructure 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.

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#### 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.

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: Stadistiches 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.

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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:

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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. Paris: Galerie du Cercle, Anthology of Invented Forms.

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 Tendance'. 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: fover 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 Vasst, '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. Cordóba, 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 Cordóba, 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, 'Lumiere 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 from 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



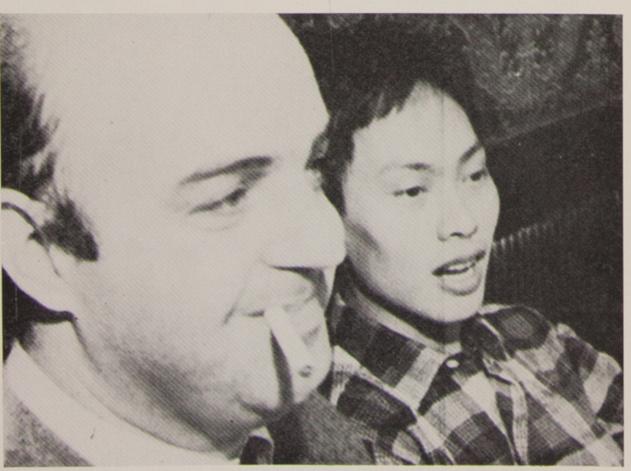
au Keeier, Taki assilakis, Guy Brett



Pensive moments : Carlos Cruz-Diez, Sonia Sanoja



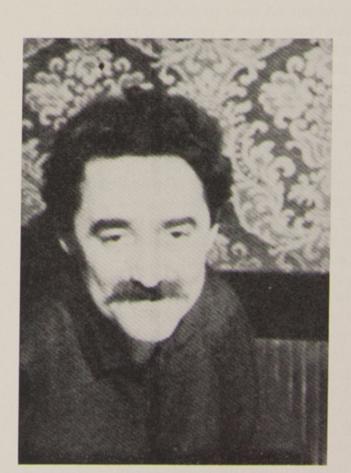
Narciso Debourg, Francesca Fischer



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!

# R. Soto: of vibratctive exhibition raul Keeler at

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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.

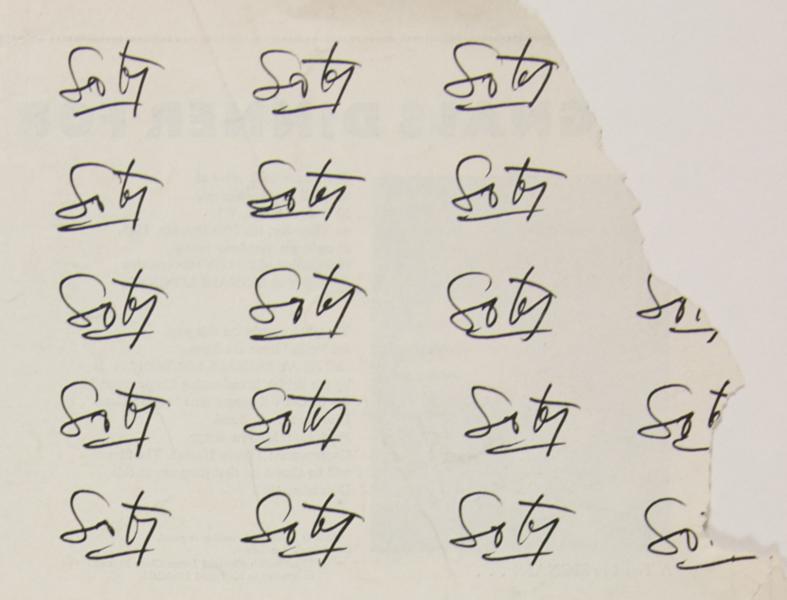
### WINTER

James Thomson (English poet 1700-1748)

(an extract)

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 spi s, through the new-strung nerves In swifter sallies carring to it. 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 deeps, 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 plumy 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.



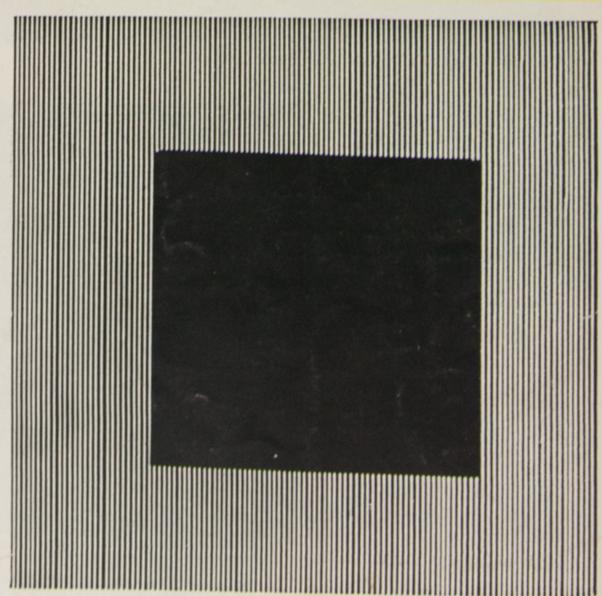
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'The Soto exhibition at SIGNALS LONDON is nothing less than sensational. On three floors more than 50 paintings, reliefs and constructions are displayed in a retrospective show covering his output since 1951.

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