

**34** is the first Neoplastic composition with two horizontal lines running very close to one another in place of the single horizontal to be seen in all the previous works. The thickness of the two horizontal lines is half that of the vertical. It is almost as though the two thin black horizontal served to mark out a white line opposing the black no longer solely at the level of form (horizontal or vertical) but also in terms of color (black or white).

Black seems ready to open up to white. The small plane on the right is gray, which is an intermediate value between black and white. The yellow plane on the left counterbalances the gray.

Yellow was to become the intermediate value between black and white the following year (**33**).

**34** presents an area of square form closed on four sides in the lower right section.

The square field expresses a moment of equilibrium between the opposing directions, which elsewhere give birth to variable proportions and then expand in a univocal and absolute way (in exclusively horizontal or vertical terms) beyond the canvas toward infinite space. The large yellow field in the upper left section and the gray one lower down to the right help to keep the square in a state of unstable equilibrium.

**35**: The double horizontal line running through the central area of **34** expands here into two distinct horizontal lines crossed by two vertical lines. The interaction between verticals and horizontals generates a small square in the center (Diagram C). The place of the closed square form seen in **34** is taken here by a more complex structure made up of two juxtaposed rectangles (Diagrams A and B) whose interaction generate a square form (diagram C).

A relationship is established between a small square of sharply defined and definite size appearing in the center and a larger indefinite square placed in the lower section, which could almost be seen as the smaller one an instant after the lines have passed. By adopting a dynamic vision different parts of the composition become successive moments of one and the same element undergoing transformation. The dynamic movement of the lines drags along the small central square, which opens up while remaining in unstable equilibrium between vertical (A) and horizontal (B) predominance. Another way to open unity to multiplicity, certainty of the square form to the uncertain.

Only by adopting a dynamic vision of reality we shall be able to interpret the temporary imbalances and asymmetries of our daily life as necessary fragments of a much wider picture where a universal balance is to be found. A picture, however, daily life does not show us at once. Every situation in life which appears as an obstacle today may become part of a unitary, more balanced process tomorrow. Every opposition may turn to our advantage in the course of time. This is one of the fundamental messages of the Neoplastic geometry.

**36**: The two horizontal lines running through the central area of **35** become four in this composition.

The field inside the square form is no longer white here but yellow and presents a vertical segment echoed by an external horizontal segment in the lower section. The square form appears in a state of unstable equilibrium between an internal vertical and an external horizontal.

In this respect, one should recall that Mondrian saw the vertical as a symbol of the spiritual (inner world) and the horizontal as a sign of the natural (outer world). The linear segments seems designed to indicate the beginning of a process of interpenetration between square and lines.

**37**: Thirteen black lines intersect in the central field of the canvas and form a large number of white planes.

Areas of greater or lesser horizontal and vertical extension can be seen (Diagram A).

Vertical and horizontal attain equivalence in some points to form smaller or larger squares.

Space expands and contracts under the pressure of the two contending directions, which attain equivalence and a more stable equilibrium for an instant before opening up again to the more or less marked predominance of one or the other. Equivalences of opposite values are born and dissolve, are lost and found again in forms that are always new, without ever being fully attained.

The idea of the square, i.e. an equivalence of opposites, seems to be expressed here too more as a process than a state. The solid and definite square of the 1920s now appears to undergo dilution on contact with the lines.

The latter interact to expand and contract the space, above all in the central area, outside which they become entities in their own right; all horizontals or all verticals, one thing excluding the other. The space becomes absolute and eliminates any possible relationship between the parts.

In the lower right section, the central field flows toward an area of greater synthesis where we can pause to observe a smaller number of planes (Diagram B). One of a bright blue color appears as the fourth part of a larger form that recalls the closed square of **31** and **34** by virtue of the position it occupies.

We move from an area of extremely variable space (the central field), where equivalence appears in a state of becoming, to one in which the space is more constant (the smaller field of diagram B) and then to a more stable synthesis of opposite values high-lighted by color. The accent of color seems designed to draw attention to a square, which appears as a sort of model of which the planes observed in the central area constitute a variation (Diagram A).

**37** appears to offer a summary of all the compositions that Mondrian produced between 1929 and 1932 involving variations on the theme of the square, such as for instance **30** with a large blue square, a smaller yellow square, a white square left open at left and a white similar square which is however left open at left and on top or with six different square proportions (Fig. 35 - PAGE 10) or with Fig. 36 with a closed square, an area of greater horizontal development (lower left), a shape of greater vertical development (upper right), one of less greater development (upper left) and a yellow rectangle. We seem to see all these different proportions brought together in **37**.

In 1937 Mondrian published an important essay in a book of the English Constructivist group *Circle*, entitled "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art". Interest in his work increased steadily in England, but especially in the United States, among both collectors and fellow-artists.

The artist leaved Paris which had been occupied by the Nazis and moved to London in September 1938 bringing all his work (some paintings begun in Paris will be later completed in London and New York).

In January 1938 he wrote to Harry Holtzman that he had in mind the project for a modern school of aesthetics that, as an alternative to the New Bauhaus in Chicago, would promote a new teaching of art, architecture and industry.

Settled in London, in the month of October of the 1938 Mondrian arranged the shipment of the paintings of greater dimensions, the gramophone, twelve discs and one case of manuscripts. Hoping to overcome his recurring sense of weakness and frequent respiratory infections, Mondrian adopted a vegetarian and salt-free diet.

It appears to be a short step from **37** to **38**. In actual fact, however, the process of spatial multiplication was a quite laborious undertaking that took seven years of patient effort and a far larger number of works.

Mondrian produced no fewer than sixty-five canvases between 1932 and 1942, some of which were reworked in New York after 1942 while about a dozen were left unfinished.

**38** : We see no fewer than 23 lines in this work, 15 of which are yellow, 4 red, and 4 blue.

The visual weight of the colors seems to influence their distribution. Blue and red have greater visual weight and are therefore present in smaller quantities than yellow, which is visually the lightest color (the closest to white). A larger quantity of yellow is needed to compensate for the greater visibility of red and blue. The painter seeks to redress the qualitative balance of the colors through quantitative distribution, providing an example of the dynamic and asymmetric conception of equilibrium.

Yellow, red, and blue lines expand and contract the white surface of the canvas, which is maintained in a state of unstable equilibrium between the two opposing directions. There is an alternating predominance of horizontal and vertical together with different combinations of colors. Horizontal and vertical sometimes attain equivalence and assume proportions of comparatively greater stability.

Diagram A presents a series of square forms numbered from 1 to 7, some of which interpenetrate. Each square differs from the others also in relation to the position assumed within it by lines of the same color. Squares 1 and 2 are similar in terms of form but differ as regards their respective distribution of colors. The same holds for 3 and 4.

Squares 1, 2, and 7 are formed by six or eight lines of different colors and therefore appear to be less sharply defined. The painter seems to have been intent above all in square 2 on combining the three colors so as to express a synthesis of yellow, red, and blue.

The yellow lines expand square 2 toward the right transforming it into an horizontal rectangle where the former equivalence of opposites and unity of colors is lost. Other squares are formed of only two colors (5 and 6). In 6 a yellow horizontal rectangle attains equivalence with a red line; the same thing happens in 5 with blue.

In 1 a field formed by four yellow lines presents slightly horizontal proportions. The rectangle attains an equivalence of vertical and horizontal if seen in relation to the blue line above or without this but in relation to the red line below. If the yellow rectangle is instead observed in relation to both the blue line and the red, the slightly horizontal initial proportions become slightly vertical. We thus see a dynamic square that oscillates between a horizontal predominance (all yellow) and vertical predominance (yellow, red, and blue).

Diagram B shows red and blue which tend to concentrate a yellow rectangle into a square form made of the three primary colors (8). It seems as if each color needs the other one to reach a square proportion, that is to say balance and unity of opposites.

With 9 we glimpse at a yellow horizontal rectangle which becomes for a moment a square if seen in relation to an horizontal red line on top. The space inside the square form presents blue as well. The square is then pulled away toward the left by an imposing red vertical line. The horizontal red plays an opposite role as the vertical red. The same color may play here a constructive and there a destructive role.

The different visual weight of the colors has an influence on the immediacy with which the relationships are perceived. The eye travels along the lines, stops, singles out a certain configuration, and lingers on it, but all around the space is set in motion again with the alternating predominance of the different colors and directions. Square forms generate and dissolve in a variety of combinations between yellow, red and blue lines. The permanent black and white square unit of the 1920's has now become dynamic and multiple; not only in terms of form as we have seen in **37** but also in terms of color.

**38** Diagram B: It strikes me as important that in the lower right section (10) it is yellow and yellow alone that expresses rectangles with a predominance of one direction or the other. In this case, the variable relations between the opposite directions are wholly homogeneous in chromatic terms and it is form alone that expresses mutation. The rectangles that remain entirely yellow are smaller than those that are formed by lines of different colors. They can be seen as small basic units that can only grow if they open up to diversity by mixing with the other colors. Which is what happens with the fourth shape to the right which attains balance (square proportion) by combining with red (Diagram B - 10).

As mentioned, the single black and white unity of 1920 (**28**) has undergone interpenetration with manifold space and is now (**38**) wholly imbued with color and dynamism. As a result, the colored planes, which had been almost always present in former Neoplastic compositions (from **22** to **37**), disappear.

In Neoplastic space planes expressed finite space and lines virtually infinite continuity. When planes disappeared and color was applied to lines in 1942 (**38**), Mondrian found himself grappling with compositions in never-ending development. In **38** the dynamic aspect seems to overwhelm the more measured and constant aspect previously expressed with planes; infinite space prevails over finite and multiplicity over unity. The eye scarcely has time to identify a more stable relationship before finding itself immersed in the dynamic and continuous flux of lines. Even the segments that had always been present in the previous Neoplastic compositions disappear in **38**, which lacks a finite and more durable component to counterbalance the dynamic movement of the lines and thus suggest a certain degree of spatial permanence.

While the need felt as from 1934 had been to open up the unitary synthesis to multiplicity (from **34** to **37**), it was now necessary to re-establish a greater degree of synthesis and constancy in a space that had undergone considerable multiplication in the meantime and continued uninterruptedly with the lines alone.

**38** : The superimposition of lines of different colors creates an unsatisfactory three-dimensional effect which will be brought onto a single plane when sections of yellow, red, and blue begin to interpenetrate within every line in the shape of small squares (New York City - Diagram C) and this will be the genesis of Broadway Boogie Woogie (**39**).

Stimulated by the current world situation, in February 1940 Mondrian begun to write an article to make it clear that art makes evident the evil inherent in Nazi and Communist conceptions. The German invasion of the Netherlands on May 10, 1940 and the Dutch surrender five days later deeply upset Mondrian, who was increasingly worried that London would be bombed.The surrender of France on June 22 of that year caused Mondrian to stop working for as long as he remained in London.The American artist Harry Holtzman, who had visited Mondrian in 1934 in Paris to hear about his theories in person, persuaded Mondrian to move to New York. Following intense nazi bombing raids Mondrian decided to leave London for the USA. Many European artists and intellectuals had preceded him. The artist arrived in New York City on 3 October 1940.