

39: The painting is referred to as BBW from now on. My explanation of it will be based on the diagrams shown in PLATE 5, in which I have broken down and analyzed the composition. Viewed as a sequence, the diagrams help us to visualize a dynamic process. The diagrams should not be intended as an indication of how Mondrian did progressively paint the canvas, rather as a visual aid to understand its meanings.

The uniform lines of **38** come into direct communication in BBW, with fragments of the horizontal entering the vertical and vice versa. The interpenetration of colored lines generates a multitude of small gray, yellow, red, and blue small squares (BBW Diagram A). To be more precise, there are no yellow squares but only larger intervals of space between the gray, red, and blue squares. Yellow appears rarely in the form of a small square and more frequently as a linear segment. The lines of BBW are therefore mostly yellow.

The univocal, absolute space of every single line (entirely horizontal or vertical) becomes a relative space within the small squares where both directions simultaneously coexist. The dual and finite character of the small square thus contrasts with the univocal and infinite nature of every line. The small squares are therefore entities in a state of unstable equilibrium continuously moving along the lines trying to balance the momentary opposition between their horizontal "soul" with the vertical line they become part of and vice versa.

The concomitance of horizontal and vertical, which constitutes the very nature of every small square, is "inevitably" called into question by every single line in which the small square is located. Careful observation of the small squares shows in fact that they continuously undergo slight expansion and contraction inside the lines.

Human beings too are part of an infinite space (the lines) as the natural universe and live a condition of inner duality, always contended between instincts and thought. This generates imbalances that lead individuals to act in order to re-establish a better balance with themselves.

Everything seems to change incessantly in diagram A, where every point and every moment appear unique and unrepeatable, changing slightly in form when repeated in color and vice versa. Every point lasts for just an instant before changing into the next point-instant.

A space of this sort is well capable of representing both the changing variety of shapes that follow one another in the space of physical reality and a succession of drives lasting only a few seconds in the inner space.

Observation of the frenzied succession of small squares reveals some that join up with others to generate some symmetrical configurations along the lines (BBW Diagram B).

The changing space of the lines - i.e. the ephemeral progression of different small squares - is endowed with greater constancy through symmetries which present an orderly rhythm generated by a constant alternation of same colors. The symmetries highlighted in diagram B can be seen as portions of ordered and hence measurable space generated inside a virtually infinite space like that of the lines, as though the space of the lines contracted for a moment into a finite segment (the symmetrical sequence) before reverting to infinite expansion. Recall Fig. 18 - PAGE 4.

The symmetrical configurations generate a dialectic between the tendency of the small squares to concentrate the infinite space of the opposite lines toward a finite dimension (i.e. toward their own nature) and a contrary tendency of the lines to expand boundlessly toward an absolute space (only one direction or the other). These are two opposing tendencies of one and the same space.

Careful observation of the symmetries formed on the lines shows that these are not wholly regular and precise geometric structures. While the alternation of colors is symmetrical, both the size of every small square and the space between them vary. We are thus faced with flexible symmetries under constant pressure from the dynamism of the lines. The symmetries should be seen in an elastic way as they seek to restrain and articulate the infinite space of the lines, which instead subject the concentration triggered by the symmetries to an expansive momentum.

A certain vertical correspondence between two horizontal symmetries can be seen in the section of diagram B labeled 1. The correspondence appears to be slightly staggered by the movement of the lines. An analogous situation can be seen between two vertical symmetries at point 2, where the correspondence is now fully attained. Two vertical symmetries with a red center establish a horizontal symmetry between them. Through the act of contemplating a horizontal relationship between two vertical symmetries, we actually generate a field of greater extension, i.e. a plane, which covers the space between the two vertical lines. In that very point, we see the birth of a small blue plane and then of other planes which are being shown in diagram C.

In the planes the relationship between horizontals and verticals is consolidated, that is, the intimate nature of the small squares. In the planes the relationship between opposites appears more stable and durable even if it is always subject to temporary prevalence of one or the other direction. Some undergo greater horizontal influence, some vertical predominance, and some appear to attain a relative condition of equilibrium between the two opposite directions. The relationship between horizontal and vertical lasts for a longer period of time in the more extended space of a plane than in the small squares inside the lines.

Some planes are still partially combined with the space of the lines (3), some are partially isolated (4, 5, 7) and some appear to be totally self-contained (6). The two planes 5 and 7 appear to be equal on first sight but closer observation shows that 5 has slightly greater vertical development. As a whole, the planes indicated in diagram C represent a space of change but tending toward greater synthesis than its counterpart in diagram A.

Plane 8 extends downward and drags with it a fragment of horizontal gray line, which is transposed into the vertical and becomes a rectangular field inside plane 9. Planes 8 and 9 should be seen as two successive moments in a dynamic sequence transforming a yellow plane into one made up of two colors (yellow and gray). If the painting is observed in a static way, the two planes are seen as a single vertical band. When viewed in dynamic terms, which is what Neoplastic painting demands, this band is nothing other than the transformation of plane 8 into 9.

New planes are thus born, as shown by diagram D, that differ from those observed in diagram C by presenting an inner space marked with a different color. Due to the vertical predominance in plane 9, the internal gray band displays slightly greater horizontal development. Analogously, but in the opposite sense, plane 10 is counterbalanced by a red vertical segment just as the red vertical predominance of 11 is offset by a gray horizontal segment.

The space of BBW is made up of constant contrast opposition. Observation of the sequence 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 shows that the process of spatial internalization (beginning with 9) continues in other planes where the gray field, which is still open on the sides in 9, is concentrated and stabilized in the form of a small square (12, 13, 14).

A sign of linearity opposing the layout of the plane (9, 10, 11) gives way to a more balanced configuration that reduces the opposition to the interior of the plane (12, 13, 14).

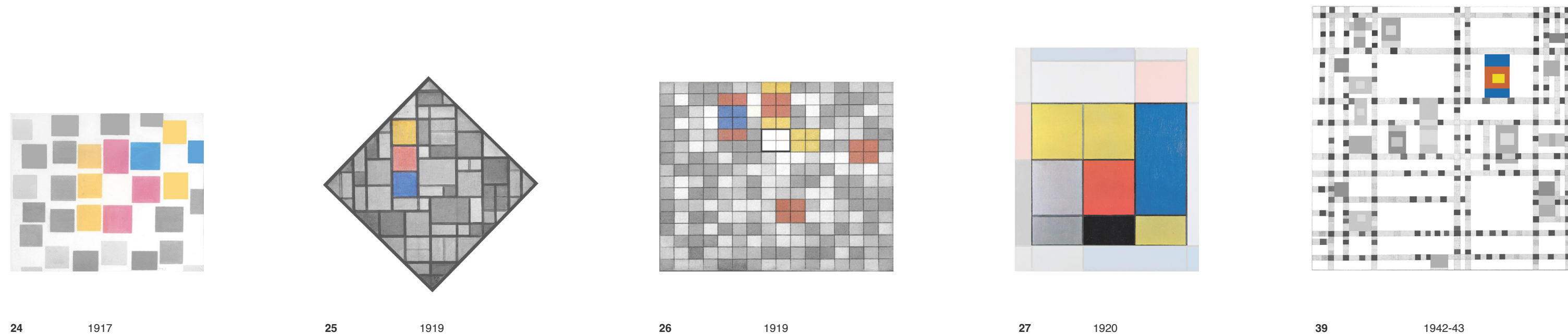
Let us consider plane 12 in relation to plane 13. The former undergoes greater horizontal influence while the latter develops a marked vertical predominance. The two internal quadrangles seem to reduce the imbalance manifested so obviously with the respective yellow parts of the planes. The internal quadrangles are the first timid sign (gray is the most tenuous chromatic value) of a shared inner nature that is more constant and detached from the frenzied and contradictory movement produced on the external lines.

We shall now summarize the various phases of spatial transformation observed so far as visualized in a single sequence: The intersecting of individual lines that continue uninterrupted (New York City - Diagram A) generates a multitude of small squares (BBW - Diagram A) that cluster to produce symmetrical configurations (BBW - Diagram B). The symmetries extend beyond the thickness of the individual lines to become planes (BBW - Diagram C). The space undergoes gradual transformation from the condition of lines (an infinite and absolute space) to the condition of planes (a finite and relative space). The lines can be regarded from now on as an external situation and the planes as the genesis and development of an internal condition (Diagram D) of the same space that proceeds uninterrupted from an outer to an inner space.

Going on with our examination of BBW, we see at points 15 and 16 of diagram E how the self-internalization of space continues and there are now four colors concentrated in the area of just two planes: blue and yellow in 15, red and gray in 16. The two planes are equivalent in their degree of formal development but prove opposite and complementary in terms of color, each being in fact characterized by the colors lacking in the other.

A single plane expressing a synthesis of the three primary colors is finally reached at point 17.

The opposite directions colored yellow, red, and blue, which disrupted our visual field at the beginning of the process by keeping the eye in constant motion (New York City - Diagram A), attain unitary synthesis (BBW - Diagram F).



Manifold and fragmentary external space (BBW - Diagram A) is united in inner space. Color yellow, which define the lines is the one which most interiorize within the unitary plane 17.

Though partaking of the interaction between the opposite directions, this "vertical-horizontal" unity seems to resolve the opposition and contrast in felicitous equilibrium. The space of plane 17 expresses a comparative state of calm, albeit in a dynamic way, by comparison with the surrounding space.

I am reminded of the scattered rectangles lacking unity (**24**), of three superimposed squares (one yellow, one red and one blue) trying to suggest unity in terms of color (**25**) and those three larger rectangles of primary colors surrounding a white rectangle in the center of **26**. The unsuccessful attempt to attain unitary interpenetration of the white rectangle and the colored rectangles in one large square form (**27**) is now finally achieved in **39**, where a synthesis of horizontal, vertical, yellow, red, and blue is attained with great visibility.

Again recapitulating the geometry analyzed so far in its individual parts, we see that the lines in BBW generate a multitude of small squares, which give rise to symmetries that then generate monochromatic planes. These are transformed into a certain number of two-colored planes that then become a single plane constituting a synthesis of the three primary colors. Space undergoes uninterrupted transformation from a condition of multiplicity to one of unity, from the many to the one.

It is necessary to observe BBW in a state of dynamic equilibrium between one stage and another of the process highlighted in these diagrams; we need to see the geometry in a state of becoming; to see the planes an instant before, as they develop out of symmetries, and to see the symmetries while they are generated by the small squares, which are generated in turn out of the interaction of opposing lines, each of which, taken in itself, expresses an absolute and infinite space that eliminates any possible relationship.