

18. *Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar*, by Bertel Thorvaldsen. 1824. Marble, height 81.9 cm. (Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen).

bust in the contemporary museum. Thorvaldsen's oeuvre is in this way deployed as a case study to explore a range of issues that only recently has coalesced in considerations of sculptural portraiture.

Many of the contributors make reference to the Thorvaldsens Museum Archives, which house thousands of documents including contracts and love letters that have been digitised and made free and openly accessible, largely over the past fifteen years. At the time of writing, face-to-face social encounters are halted across Europe due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is important, therefore, that the museum – a centre of learning and a repository of the many faces of post-Restoration Europe – has managed to remain open in every possible capacity, so as to encourage and share the type of innovative research on display here.



1 *Face to Face: Thorvaldsen and Portraiture*, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (8th March–30th December 2020).

2 E. Kai Sass: *Thorvaldsen's Portraetbuster*, 3 vols, Copenhagen 1963–65. It was reviewed by Meir Stein in this Magazine, 109 (1967), pp.426–29. Sass's meticulous research identified the sitters of many of the Thorvaldsen portrait busts in the Thorvaldsens Museum; her catalogue raisonné is neither challenged nor superseded by the volume under review.

3 See, for example, P. Curtis, P. Funnell and N. Kalinsky, eds: exh. cat. *Return to Life: A New Look at the Portrait Bust*, London (National Portrait Gallery) 2001; and M. Baker: *The Marble Index. Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, New Haven and London 2014. Baker is a contributor to the volume under review.

Mondrian and De Stijl

By Hans Janssen, Michael White and Marek Wieczorek. 218 pp. incl. 149 col. + 18 b. & w. ills. (*Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid*, 2020), €35. ISBN 978-84-8026-616-1.

by LIEKE WIJNIA

Abstract art invites slow looking. Piet Mondrian's painting *Broadway boogie woogie* (Fig.19), for example, comes alive in the eye of the beholder, with every glance revealing a new dynamic between line and colour. Although the relationship established between painting and viewer in the work of Mondrian (1872–1944) is crucial, it is seldom discussed in art-historical studies. The exhibition *Mondrian and De Stijl* at Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, explored relationships between compositional elements and colours in works of art, between individual works of art, between artistic disciplines, between artists, and between works of art and viewers.

The exhibition, which was organised in collaboration with the Kunstmuseum Den Haag, keeper of the largest Mondrian collection in the world, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This had an impact on the agreed international loans, particularly those from the United Kingdom and the United States. As a result, one of the original ideas for the exhibition, the reconstruction of displays of Mondrian's works conceived by the artist during his lifetime, could not be realised as extensively as planned.

Fortunately, these reconstructions are described and analysed in the book published to accompany the exhibition, which is here under review. In his introduction, Hans Janssen, the curator of the exhibition, argues that the displays of Mondrian's work were driven by a desire to demonstrate artistic evolution. Where possible, Mondrian used the model of a triptych, in which the central work was the furthest developed. The most elaborate example of this method of displaying his work can be found in an exhibition that Mondrian organised with two friends, the painters Jan Sluyters and Cees Spoor, in 1909, for which they rented halls at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. The book includes a helpful visual reconstruction of Mondrian's exhibition spaces. His section opened with sketches in one side gallery and landscape paintings in another. The central halls were occupied by his most colourful, luminous work – the height of his artistic achievement at the time (Fig.20). Although contemporary critical reception (p.44) shows that the viewing order was not necessarily clear to everyone, it remained a model that Mondrian continued to use.

Given the organisation of the book, the fact that there are no catalogue numbers, and Mondrian's habit of changing the titles of his paintings over time, readers may find it challenging to follow the analyses of different modes of viewing his work. In chapter 13, for example, Janssen describes *Painting no.1* (1925; private collection) and *Painting no.2* (1923; Museo Berardo, Porto), which Mondrian sent to an Amsterdam exhibition in 1925. As Janssen says, 'the one – large, expansive, diamond-shaped – beside the other, a small, imploding, almost square painting, would demonstrate [. . .] how the spatial effect of the paintings was driven by their compositions' (p.126). This is an exciting, elaborately described comparison, but it may require a second or even third reading to grasp it. This chapter also shows how artistic intentions can be hampered in practice. At the museum, one of the two paintings was damaged

Exhibition catalogues

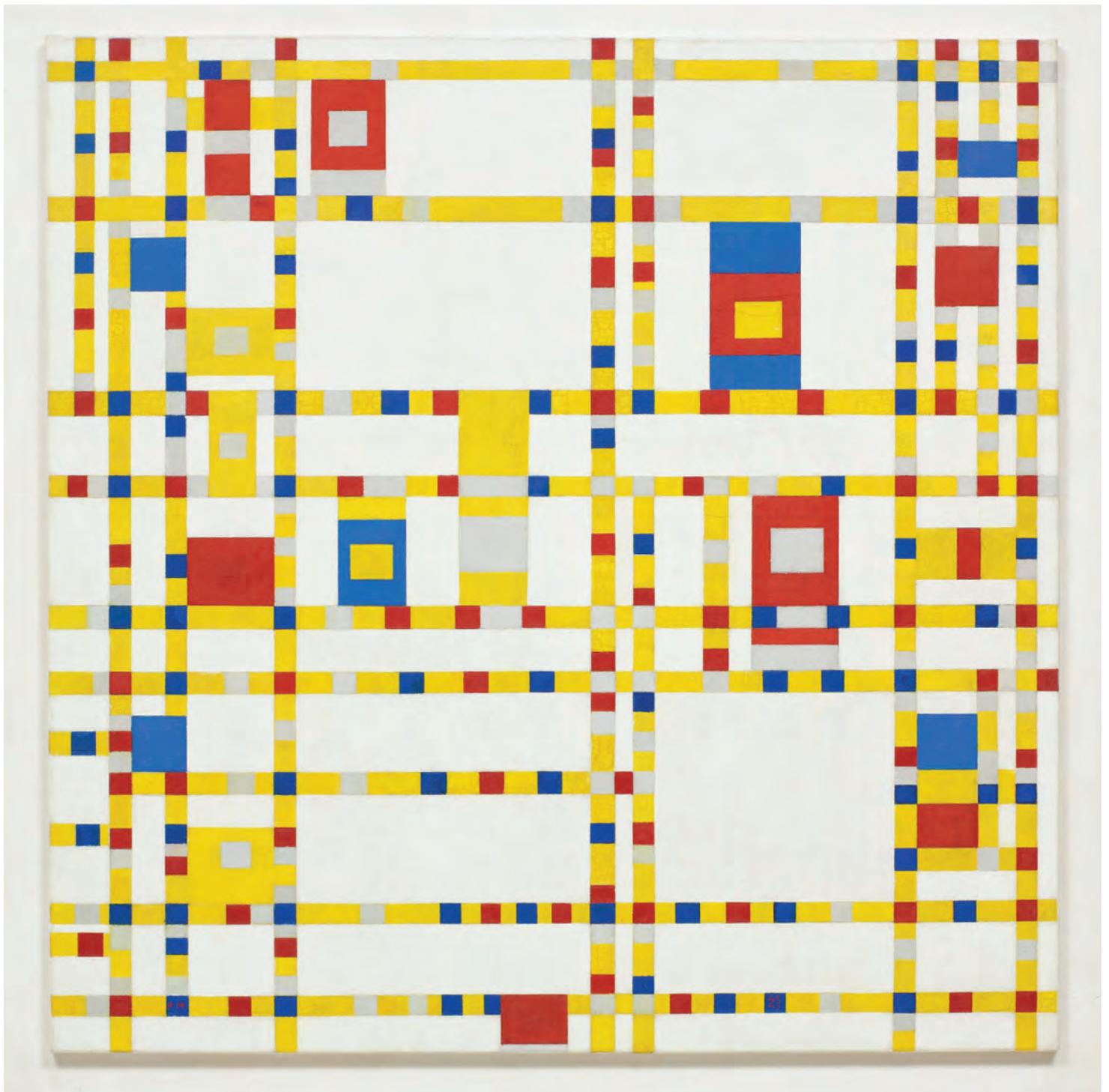
during installation and had to be replaced with a painting that offered a similar viewing experience.

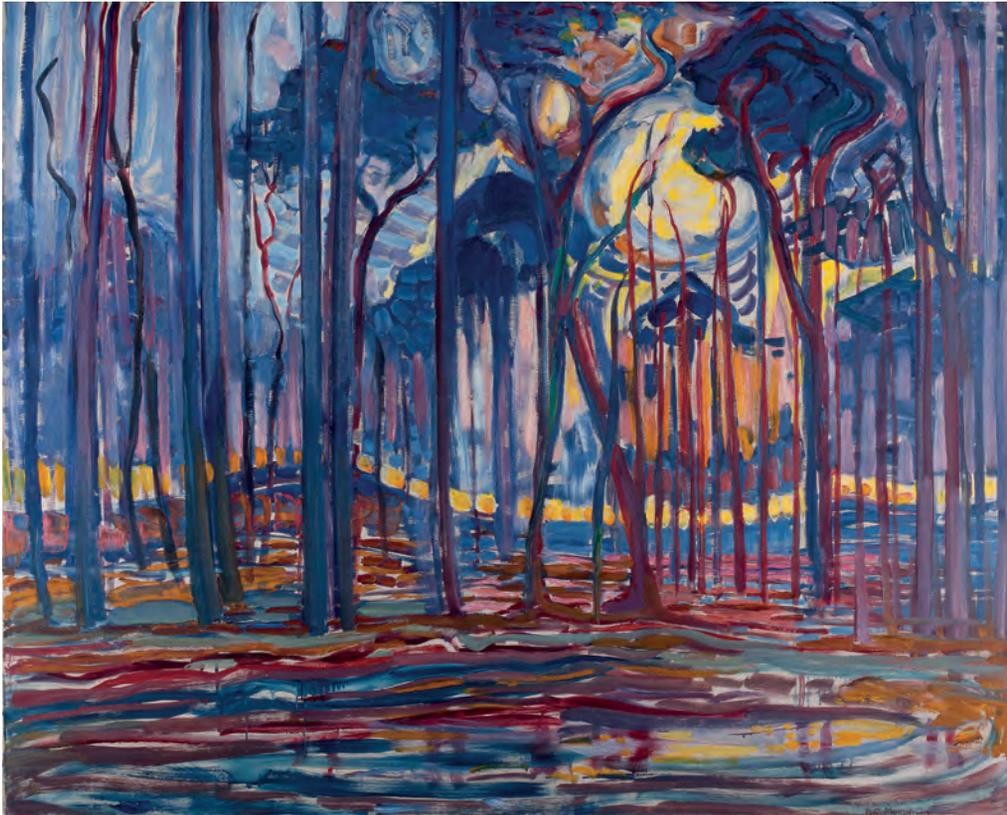
Although Janssen is the author of the majority of the twenty-two short chapters, Michael White and Marek Wiczorek have contributed nine chapters that contextualise Mondrian's work through the De Stijl movement and its reception history.

19. *Broadway boogie woogie*, by Piet Mondrian. 1942–43. Oil on canvas, 127 by 127 cm. (Museum of Modern Art, New York).

Despite the claim in the director's foreword, such contextualisation is not new: the essays in this book build on Janssen's and White's 2011 publication *The Story of De Stijl*, in which they demonstrate that De Stijl was not a homogenous art movement, but was mostly characterised by artistic disagreements and fluctuating affiliations of artists. The chapters

by White and Wiczorek give insight into the practical side of the twentieth-century artworld with discussions of the collaborations that artists formed in order to oppose the establishment, the enthusiastic response of curators or gallery owners to radically new art to which the public did not always respond well, and how works of art were sent





for the realm of imagination they represent and not as ‘real’ political or social acts. However, as all three authors aptly demonstrate, the works of art are meant to function as physical interventions in people’s living spaces. Despite their many disagreements, the artists of De Stijl agreed on their aim to create a new art for a newly structured world, integrating all artistic disciplines into a coherent visual vocabulary. If anything, Mondrian’s art brings together the imaginary and the real, not only in people’s living spaces as he and other artists of De Stijl envisioned it but also in the museums and galleries where many of the works of art can be experienced today.

Elijah Pierce’s America

Edited by Nancy Ireson and Zoé Whitley. 208 pp. incl. 120 col. ill. (Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, and Paul Holberton, London, 2020), £40. ISBN 978-1-911300-87-8.

by COLIN RHODES

Elijah Pierce’s carvings speak to the middle-class African American experience in the mid-twentieth century. The son of a liberated slave father in Mississippi, Pierce (1892–1984) was part of the diaspora that moved north to escape Jim Crow’s America in search of a better life. After various travels, Pierce became a barber in Columbus, Ohio, where he eventually opened his own shop. This remained his main profession for six decades. Pierce was also ordained as a Baptist minister in 1920, although he seems to have begun preaching, together with his second wife, Cornelia, only in 1934. He may have started his first carvings around the same time, almost certainly as a visual aid to preaching. Artmaking remained a core activity throughout the rest of his life. Pierce’s work was always intended for public consumption – for the most part it served the purpose of religious and secular instruction. It was only in his last years that he began to sell pieces to collectors from outside his community.

Published to accompany an exhibition of the same title at the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia,

from one exhibition to the next and could, owing to Mondrian’s habit of reworking his canvases, for example, look different from one exhibition to the next.

One of the defining features of De Stijl is its interdisciplinary approach to art, with a reach that included architecture and the extension of

painting and sculpture into everyday life. This is especially evident in works by Mondrian and the furniture designer and architect Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964). In chapter 9, for example, Wiczorek describes how Mondrian’s compositions optically expand and retract (p.83), whereas in chapter 11 White analyses furniture by Rietveld as sculptural objects that extend outward into space (p.102). Rietveld described how in his iconic Rietveld-Schröder House he expanded the principles of the *Red and blue chair* (1917–23) into architecture. During the 1920s, Mondrian began to experiment with pieces of coloured paper and cardboard on the walls of his Paris studio – a habit he would continue into his last studio in New York. He would see the compositional effects of his paintings in three dimensions around him. Mondrian both lived and lived in his art.

The notion of relationships that is central to this book is primarily examined in terms of the relationship of elements within the pictorial space, as Janssen emphasises in the introductory chapter. He maintains that paintings are to be appreciated

20. *Woods near Oele*, by Piet Mondrian. 1908. Oil on canvas, 128 by 158 cm. (Kunstmuseum Den Haag; exh. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

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