

**[typoscript]**

[George Wittenborn, Inc. Papers, Series I: Correspondence, Subseries A: The Documents of Modern Art, Folder: I.A.2  
The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. ]

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May 28, 1937.

Dear Mr. Motherwell :

Thank you for your letter of last week. I am sorry that you couldn't come in to see the Mondrian manuscripts and letters. But here are the main facts, which you may use as you see fit.

I first met Mondrian in April 1941, when I interviewed him for a magazine. He was then living at 353 East 56th St. Although the magazine had commissioned the interview, they did not publish it, as they thought Mondrian "too esoteric".

In connection with this interview, Mondrian had prepared some notes for me. I put these notes into correct English and sent them back to him. Out of these notes came Mondrian's essay *Toward the True Vision of Reality*, which was published as a catalogue supplement for Mondrian's first show held at Valentine Dudensing's in 1942. This essay was completed in the summer of 1941 and I have the original notes in his handwriting.

During the spring and summer of 1941, I saw Mondrian once or twice a week, and discussed with him various other essays, which he asked me to translate and edit. As a result of our conferences, many essays were translated and re-written.

Among the essays included in "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art" (Documents of Modern Art), I worked with Mondrian on :

- 1) *Toward the True Vision of Reality*.
- 2) *A New Realism*.
- 3) *Abstract Art* (for the Peggy Guggenheim catalogue)
- 4) *Pure Plastic Art*.

The latter essay was translated from an article in *Circle et Carré*, then cut and revised in English by Mondrian. "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life" was the first article written by Mondrian in English from notes made in London. I had little to do with it, except the final editing and typing.

The other essays which I translated and worked on with

Mondrian include :

- 5) Two De Stijl Dialogues (translated from a German manuscript different from the Bauhaus translation.
- 6) The Nature of Oppositions (using an English and a French manuscript)
- 7) Neo-Plasticism in Music and in the Theatre (from a French magazine)
- 8) The Manifestation of Neo-Plasticism in Music and the Italian Futurist Bruiteurs (same magazine)

- 9) Pure Abstract Art (translated from a Zürich newspaper)
- 10) Cubism and Neo-Plasticism (translated from a manuscript in French)
- 11) The Evolution of Humanity is the Evolution of Art.  
(Bull. no 9. L'effort Moderne)
- 12) Abstract Art (Cahier D'art)
- 13) The Realization of Neo-Plasticism in the Far Future and in Contemporary Architecture. (Bauhaus edition)

and several other small articles such as his last words on Van Doesburg's death etc.

Mondrian's method of working was very intense and exact. In translating, I would do a rough draft in English and we would then go over each sentence for meaning and expression. In this way, we had many lively discussions on the meaning of plastic terms, English words, and Mondrian's philosophical conceptions. As time went on, his English became more fluent, and he thought and wrote in English. During the process of writing, his manuscripts with their many corrections and additions of small papers, took on the same aspect as one of his paintings in the process of composition.

The bulk of this work was never completed. Mondrian became so occupied with painting that he put aside the idea of publishing the essays. When he moved to 15 East 59th St. in the fall of 1943, I gave him back all the clean copies of the translations and essays done in English. I kept carbons of most of them, also some with his corrections, and slips of paper with comments on art.

Mondrian wrote many letters as he did not have a telephone. I quote only a few and in each case only part of the letter.

1.

May 7, 1941.

Dear Mrs. von Wiegand :

Very kind of you to copy off my writing. I did not consider it as an article. I have written it only to explain to you my art development. But it is perhaps for the public useful for better understanding of Abstract Art.

If you would do the work to make it in good English, there where this is wrong, and introduce it with preface, then I shall be very pleased. I never wrote about my own work but it is parallel with Plastic Art culture in general, thus it could be useful.

Yours with most cordial greetings,  
(Signed) Piet Mondrian.

2.

June 2, 1941.

Dear Mrs. von Wiegand : I was very glad with your letter and work. To me the whole is pretty exact now, and I don't see that anything is lost. I like the composition of the last part also very much, and find that you composed it well. It may be the end phrase we can make stronger. We can see this if you can bring the other papers with you. It is very kind of you to will come to me : first it is a pleasure to me to talk to you, and also we can arrange the whole.

Very Sincerely,

Piet Mondrian.

(both letters refer to  
Toward the True Vision of Reality.)

3.

July 24, 1941.

Dear Charmion : After conversation yesterday night, I made today between my painting these notes. Can they be useful to your article when you retake it ? I would like you show these notes to Freeman also and talk them over with him.

Hoping to see you Sunday afternoon if you are free and being glad when Freeman could come also.

Your Mondrian, who admires your great intelligence  
and intuitive capacity.

4.

August 5, 1941

Dear Charmion : Thank you for your letter. I'm glad you agree with me about the machine. As long as "ART" exists, I think with Freeman that it is no good but will hinder to the true conception of art . . .

But I did not tear up the script and send it you back. In the whole are some good things you can use for later, and the first two pages I like very much. With the little changes I made in it, it gives a good short idea of my work that you can use later. I don't know if you like to write a short preface by the edition of my writing, but in that case it would be a good introduction; the public would get an idea of the content of the book. Or you could send it as letter to an editor in case of presenting it.

Hoping to see you before you go away,  
Your Mondrian.

June 27, 1942.

Dear Charmion : I thank you late for your letter because the work.

I agree with you that this time will bring progress to the world.

About the problem of classical balance and dynamic equilibrium (you know that causes my struggle), if you have some notes concerning this, I would like to read them. Will you bring them next time you come? . . . Might Freeman be here this week and then it would be nice come with him tomorrow or Sunday. In any event, I shall be then here between 5-6.

Best wishes from  
Mondrian.

4.

6.

May 13, 1943

Dear Charmion:

I thought out the added sentence following on Impressionism, Divisionism, and Pointillism, where I speak of texture. In this new sentence you must add somewhere "in abstract art", because in Abstract Art is brushwork, etc. -- space determination. If I remember well, the sentence is "these techniques are space determination and not establishment of texture." I think it will be right if you put before "these techniques" - In Abstract Art. You see, otherwise there is a contradiction with the preceding sentence. Thank you.

Best wishes.

Mondrian.

(refers to the article A New Realism).

These letters will give you some idea of how things went. These are only excerpts, but I shall be glad to show you the correspondence. He considered only the essays which he published here as finished products. The others remained in various degrees of completion.

Thanking you for your very kind interest in this matter, and hoping to have the pleasure of seeing you when you next come to town.

Very sincerely yours,

*[signed]* Charmion Wiegand

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*[in handwriting:]*

P.S. I spoke to Mr. Wittenborn today and he reminded me of the bibliography, most of which I gave to Mr. Sweeney. Mr. Wittenborn thought it might be advisable to look it over. I really do not have time to copy & check it at the moment. Have not looked at these thing in over two years, but if you drop in, we can go over them. My article "the meaning of Mondrian" appeared in the "Journal of Aesthetica", winter 1943.