

Observation of the eight works **62**, **65**, **66**, **67**, **68**, **69**, **70**, and **71** in sequential order reveals a gradual increase in the number of lines, which divide the space of the canvas into a growing number of parts. The tendency observed during the 1920s toward a space of ever-greater rarefaction and synthesis (from **51** to **64**) gradually gave way to the opposite tendency, whereby an increasing level of articulation and complexity was progressively reintroduced into the Neoplastic canvases as from 1933 (from **65** to **73**).

With a view to outlining the most significant developments of this period, I shall now present an initial explanation, based solely on these eight paintings for the moment, before going on to consider the other works painted by Mondrian between 1932 and 1943 in detail.

62 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 horizontals 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 in **62**.

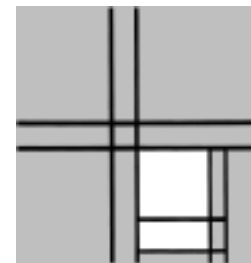
The small surface on the right is gray, which is an intermediate value between black and white. The yellow surface on the left counterbalances the gray. Yellow was to become the intermediate value between black and white the following year (**64**).

Like other compositions based on the N. III layout, **62** 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) toward an incommensurable space.

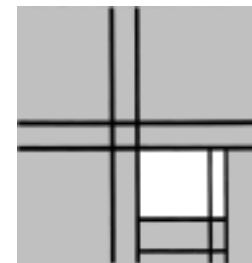
The large yellow field in the upper left section and the gray one lower down to the right are vertical rectangles. They impart tension to the path of the double horizontal and thus help to keep the square in a state of unstable equilibrium.

The place of the closed square form seen in **62** is taken in **65** by a more complex structure made up of two juxtaposed rectangles (diagrams 65 **a** and **b**) that interact to generate a square form (diagram 65 **c**). This is a pattern already seen in **56.1** of 1925.

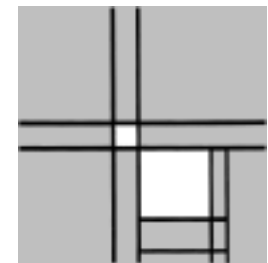
The equivalence appears to be challenged by two opposing forms of predominance, which lends greater dynamism to the square form of the typical N. III layout.



65 a



65 b



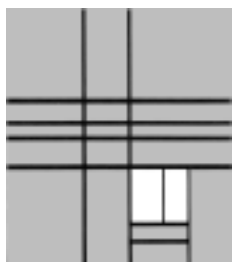
65 c

Running through the central area are two horizontal lines that seem to be those of **62** undergoing expansion. The interaction between verticals and horizontals generates a small square (diagram 65 **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. The dynamic movement of these lines drags along the small central square, which opens up while remaining in unstable equilibrium between horizontal (a) and vertical (b) predominance.

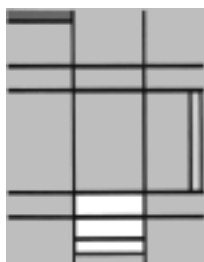
Different parts of a Neoplastic composition are to be seen as successive moments of one and the same space undergoing transformation.

The two horizontal lines running through the central area of **65** become four in **66**, which is again based on the N. III layout. In this case, however, the field inside the square form is no longer white 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.

This is the first canvas based on the N. III layout in which the white field of the square accommodates a linear segment, which is another sign of the need to open up the unitary synthesis to manifold space. This linear segment seems designed to indicate the beginning of a process of interpenetration between square and lines.



66 a



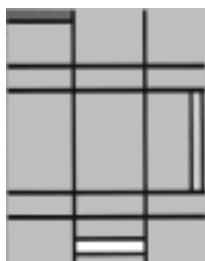
67 a

In **67** we see the confluence of a square form in the space between the two vertical lines running through the center (diagram 67 **a**). The square form seems to have originated in the yellow square of **66** (diagram 66 **a**), which enters the field generated to its left by the two vertical lines (diagram 67 **a**).

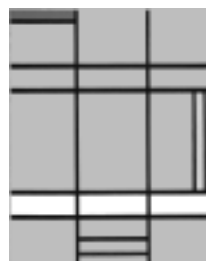
The intersecting of four horizontal and two vertical lines generates fifteen horizontal rectangles of different sizes (diagram 67 **b**). This almost completely symmetrical layout is penetrated by a red surface in the upper left section, a yellow surface in the center on the right, and two horizontal segments in the lower section of the canvas.



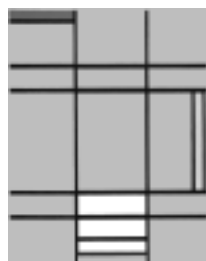
67 b



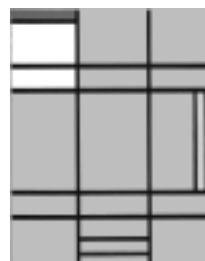
67 c



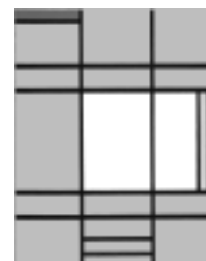
67 d



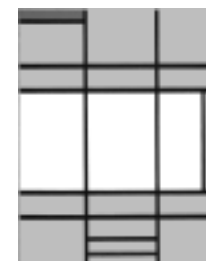
67 e



67 f



67 g



67 h

These elements disrupt the regularity of the basic layout and transform the composition into an asymmetric whole presenting the development typical of the N. II layout (**58, 61**), i.e. a circular motion proceeding upward anticlockwise from the bottom. The typical N. II layout is enriched with a larger number of lines in this phase.

The yellow plane concentrates the space on the right. Its marked vertical predominance acts as a counterpoint to the field generated by the two horizontal lines limiting the plane itself (diagram 67 **h**). The field is horizontal while the plane is vertical.

The red plane is a horizontal in the upper corner forming a counterpoint to the space that flows vertically downward, introducing us to the area in which horizontal and vertical give birth to a probable equivalence (diagram **a**)

In diagram **c** two horizontal segments, limited by two vertical lines, turn in the upper section into two horizontal lines that continue uninterruptedly (dia-

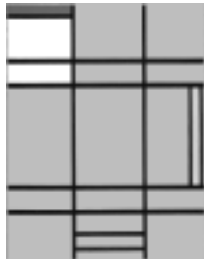
gram **d**). A section of finite space opens up to an infinite space.

When the lowest segment is considered in relation to the uppermost line, this suggests a potentially square field (diagram **e**) that draws the infinite space of the two horizontal lines back toward a finite dimension. The square field continues upward and the interaction between the opposing directions generates a horizontal area (**f**) inside which a vertical yellow plane concentrates the space toward the right, thus creating the impression of a new square form (**g**). The dialectic between the contrasting directions concentrates and disintegrates the space by transforming rectilinear thrusts undergoing infinite expansion (**d**) into more balanced situations of finite space (**e**) that are opened up (**f**) and concentrated again (**g**). The initial equivalence (**e**) thus gives way to a larger one of different appearance but similar nature (**g**).

The small square in the lower section (diagram **e**) is set in a vertical field and contains two horizontal segments; the new square (**g**) is inside a horizontal field (**h**) and contains two vertical segments (the yellow plane).

The lines again prompt a broadening of our visual horizons. Moving along the four horizontal lines toward the left, the synthesis (**g**) reopens and becomes a wider horizontal field (**h**) that is again redistributed between the four horizontal lines (**f**). The red plane highlights another area of probable equivalence between opposites (**i**) that acts as a counterweight in the upper left section to the other two equivalences (**g** and **e**). Visualize diagrams **e**, **g**, and **i** in a single sequence.

The square form now has very little of the sense of permanence and duration expressed around 1929; there is scarcely time to pause over a possible equivalence before it opens up again to the changing movement of the lines.



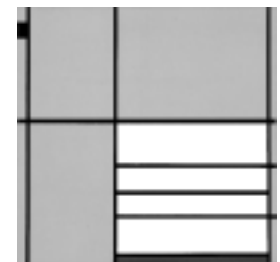
67 i

As noted above, there is marked predominance of the vertical in the yellow area and the horizontal in the red.

We are now far away from the canvases of 1929-30, in which the three primary colors and the space as a whole were handled in terms of more or less equivalent proportions tending toward the square. What Seuphor described as *Classic Neo-Plasticism*.

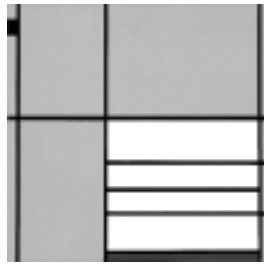
The tendency to open up, divide, and dynamize the equivalence of opposites takes shape in a new work (**68**) where a trace of the N. III layout can still be seen. The lines work in fact to divide the space of the canvas into four large areas of different proportions. Only one of these, situated in the lower right, is closed on four sides and approaches the proportions of a square (diagram 68 **a**). This square is larger than what is normally seen in the N. III layout and underscored by a red surface.

While the square opens up to a vertical segment in **66**, here it increases in size and opens up to three horizontal segments. The central segment is wholly included in the square form while the other two extend outside toward the right. A black accent in the upper left section counterbalances the weight of the segments and the red surface.



68 a

In a nutshell, we see a definite square form (**62**) that opens up to the predominance of the two directions (**65**) and then accommodates a vertical segment (**66**) and three horizontal segments (**68**) that divide its inner field and make it less stable.



68 a



70 a



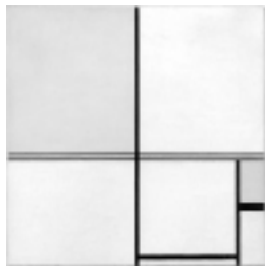
70 b



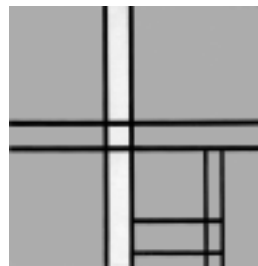
70 c

Although **68** was produced in 1936 and **70** in 1938, comparison of the two canvases reveals that the square area of **68** continues upward in **70** (diagrams **68 a** and **70 a, b, c**). Just as the square of **66** interpenetrates with the vertical field of **67**, the large square of **68** thus becomes a dynamic vertical sequence in **70**.

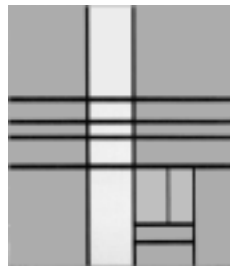
In **70** the vertical field is marked by horizontal segments that generate a series of rectangles, one of which is red. By combining these rectangles, we can glimpse square forms taking shape and dissolving (diagrams **70 a, b, c**).



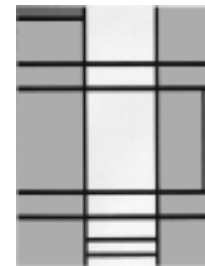
62 1932



65 1934



66 1936



67 1936



70 1938

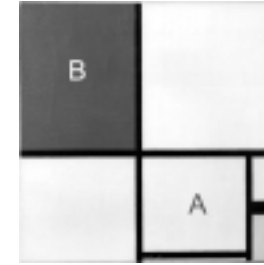
Comparison of **62, 65, 66, 67, 68,** and **70** reveals the gradual interpenetration of the square and the lines. The single vertical line running through the center of the compositions based on the N. III layout (**62**) splits into two (**65**), broadens out (**66**), and absorbs the square form (**67, 70**).

The square form representing the synthesis and equivalence of opposites interpenetrates with the dynamic and multiple space of the lines, which increase in number as from 1934.

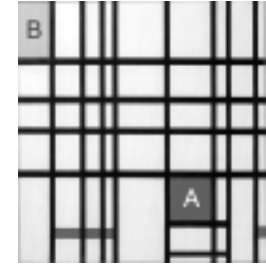
The progressive division of the inner field of the square (**65, 66, 68**) gives rise to other compositions (**68.4, 68.7, 69**) showing a further increase in the

number of lines.

Some trace of the N. III layout can still be seen in **68.4**, **68.7**, **69**. Compare **68.7** with a typical N. III composition of 1930 such as, for example, **60.6** shown alongside. There are no longer just two perpendicular lines running between the closed square in the lower right section (A) and the colored area in the upper left (B), as in diagram 60.6 **a**, but four horizontal and five vertical lines (diagram 68.7 **a**). See also **68.4**.



60.6 a



68.7 a

In **69** we see 13 straight black lines forming a large number of relations that generate white planes of various shapes and sizes. Areas of greater or lesser horizontal and vertical extension can be seen. Vertical and horizontal attain equivalence in some points for an instant to form smaller or larger squares.

Consider diagram 69 **a** and the pair of vertical lines (A) that intersect with the six horizontals to generate five planes. Examination from the bottom up reveals a small and almost square form (more horizontal) that becomes a horizontal rectangle, then two nearly equal vertical rectangles, and finally a square again, but this time with a slight vertical predominance.

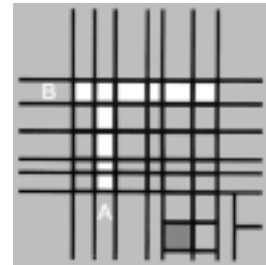
Considering the pair of horizontal lines (B) and their meeting with the seven verticals (reading from left to right), we see a square repeated in almost the same form on the right (with a slight vertical predominance) that undergoes conspicuous horizontal expansion, contracts again to assume markedly vertical proportions, then returns to the horizontal, and finally becomes a shape in which vertical and horizontal are practically equivalent but now with a slight horizontal predominance.

The 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.

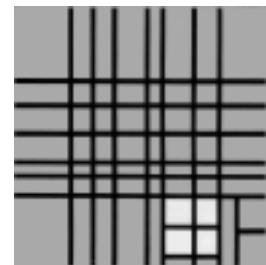
In a different way from **70**, the idea of the square seems to be expressed here too more as a process than a state. The solid and definite square of the 1920s now appears to undergo dilution on contact with the lines. The latter interact to expand and contract the space, above all in the central area, 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 69 **b**). One of a bright blue color appears as the fourth part of a larger form that recalls the square of the N. III layout by virtue of the position it occupies.

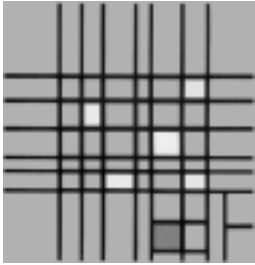
We move from an area of extremely variable space (the central field), where equivalence appears in a state of becoming, to one in which the space is more constant (the smaller field) and then to a more stable synthesis of opposite values high-



69 a



69 b



69 c

lighted by color.

A similar use of color is seen in **68.4** and **68.7**.

The accent of color seems designed to draw attention to a square, which appears as a sort of model of which the surfaces observed in the central area constitute a variation (diagram 69 c). I recall the compositions of 1918-19 in which all the measures and the proportions varied on the basis of a constant module. Now there is no longer any prior control.

This appears to offer a summary of all the compositions that Mondrian produced between 1929 and 1932 on the basis of the N. III and N. IV layouts involving variations on the theme of the square, e.g. **59** (N. III), with a closed square, an open square (lower left), a shape of slightly greater vertical development (upper right), and a yellow rectangle, or **63** (N. IV), with two colored and two white squares. A whole variety of possible equivalences. We seem to see all these different proportions brought together for a moment in **69**.

We move from a sharply defined and definite square placed in a state of dynamic equilibrium by two or three shapes and the surrounding colors (**62**) to one placed in tension by the prolongation of its sides (**65**) and finally a "square" in a state of becoming that has undergone total interpenetration with the lines and is expressed as a continuing variation on itself (**69**).

Observation of the three works in sequential order reveals how the "white line" running through the center of **62** leads (**65**) to the multiplicity of **69**. The synthesis of white opens up again to complexity.

This reopening gave birth a few years later to the multifarious space of **71**; in other words, the "white line" (1932) generated the colored lines (1942) glimpsed in 1933 (**64**).

It appears to be a short step from **69** to **71**.

In actual fact, however, the process of spatial multiplication was not completed so quickly. It was a laborious undertaking that took seven years of patient effort and a far larger number of works. Mondrian produced no fewer than **65** canvases between 1932 and 1942, some of which were reworked in New York after 1942 while about a dozen were left unfinished.

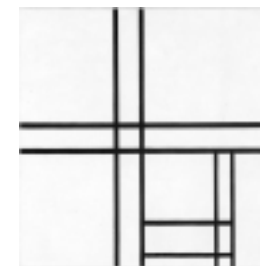
These works can be divided on the basis of three different tendencies leading ultimately to the same result.

The common denominator of all the works produced between 1932 and 1942 is in fact the opening up and multiplication of unity, but the progress achieved was very slow. There were many phases of uncertainty with works begun but never completed or taken up later and altered.

1 The first tendency is exemplified in **70**, which develops out of **67** and presents a square form opening up and interpenetrating with a vertical field that



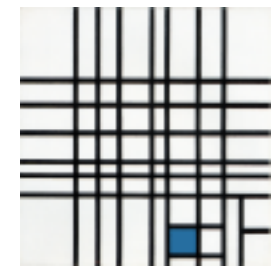
62



1932

65

1934



69

1937

runs through the center of the composition. This is also found in **70.1, 70.2, 70.3, 70.4,** and **70.5.**

2 The second reveals the need to maintain the visibility of a large square generated by the combination of various shapes that interact with one another to evoke moments of equilibrium inside a space that changes constantly in appearance. This can be observed in **68.5, 68.6, 69.1, 69.2,** and **70.8.**

3 The third is exemplified in **69,** where the composition develops a variety of shapes that are never quite square. This can also be seen in **67.1, 68.2, 68.4, 68.7** and then in **70.9, 70.10, 71.**

Then there are other works displaying attempts that produced no concrete effects, e.g. **65.1, 65.6,** and **65.8.**

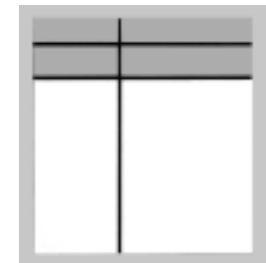
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A group of paintings produced between 1930 and 1938 present a common characteristic.

Examination of **60.4, 65.3** (and the respective diagrams **a**), **63.2, 65.4, 65.10, 67.3,** and **68.3** reveals a large square form generated by the relationship between one or more horizontal lines and the bottom edge of the canvas. Running through the square form is a vertical line (**60.4, 65.3**) that splits into two after 1935 to create a central vertical field (**65.4, 67.3**).



60.4 a



65.3 a

We can see four vertical lines in **68.3**, two of which appear to mark out a white line.

The square form in these new canvases is no longer defined by just two horizontal lines, one in the upper section and one in the lower, as in the N. II layout (**60.3**), but is instead generated between one or more horizontal lines in the upper section and the bottom edge of the canvas (**60.4, 65.4**).

While the square form was left open on one or two sides in the N. II layout, it opens up still further here at the bottom and now coincides with three of the four sides of the canvas.

There are two horizontal lines in **65.3**. The square form generated together with the bottom edge of the canvas shows slightly greater horizontal or vertical development respectively when this edge is seen in relation to the lower or the upper horizontal line. The square is in a state of instability. The same can be seen in **65.10**, where the break between the square form and its upward expansion is more sharply defined.

We see three horizontal lines in **68.3** with yellow used to pick out the one in the middle, which acts with the bottom edge of the canvas to generate a square form oscillating between a horizontal and a vertical rectangle respectively when considered in relation to the lower or the upper horizontal.

65.4 shows a variety of relations between horizontals and verticals with a red surface that is almost square in its proportions (with slightly greater horizontal development). Below this is a white area that instead displays slightly greater vertical development. Each has what the other lacks in order to attain the equivalence that is finally achieved in the surface in the lower left section, which is, however, left open. The space alongside these three surfaces shows fluid development.

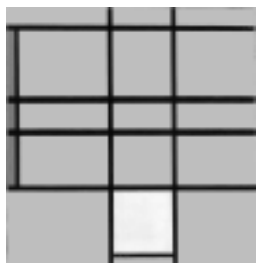
The vertical field seen in **65**, **66**, and **67** (diagrams on p. 108) gives rise to three compositions (**65.1**, **65.6**, **65.8**) that seem to mark a radical departure from everything produced by Mondrian until then.

As Jaffé points out, the height of these three canvases is twice their width. In other words, the proportions of each canvas are equivalent to two squares placed one above the other.

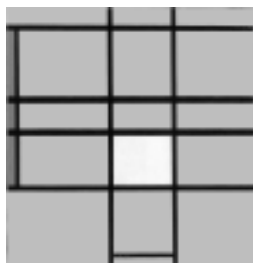
While the square form in **65.3** shares three of its sides with those of the canvas, for example, all the space in these three works is generated out of the shifting of a vertically duplicated square field, involving the four sides of the canvas. It is almost as though the proportions of the canvas itself were brought into being with the movement of this dynamic square.

While the square form opens up and interpenetrates with the lines in the compositions examined here, other works of same period (**65.5**, **65.7**, **65.9**, **67.2**) again present a wholly closed and very visible square form as a homogeneous field of white and sometimes of color. With respect to the classic N. III layout, however, there is an increase in the number of lines, above all the horizontals, and the space appears agitated.

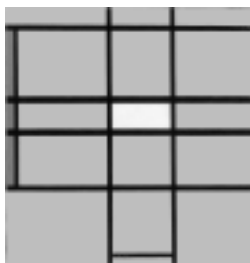
The square flows once again into the dynamic space of the lines in **67.1**, **67.3**, **68.2**, **68.4**, and **68.7**.



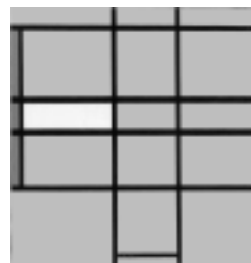
67.1 a



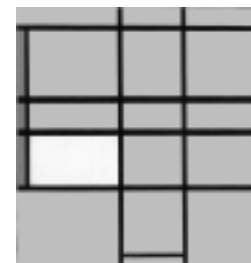
67.1 b



67.1 c



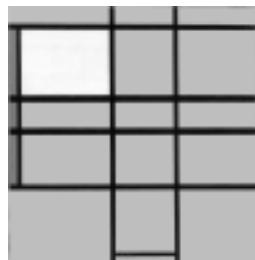
67.1 d



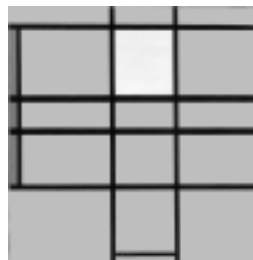
67.1 e

A development analogous to the one described in **67** can be seen in **67.1**, where the square-located on the right of a vertical line in the classic N. III layout-is in a state of interpenetration with two vertical lines (diagram 67.1 **a**).

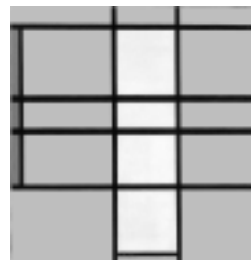
The red surface gives the vertical measurement of a field generated by four horizontal lines contending for the space with the two verticals. The more or less square field is isolated from the interaction between the lines (diagram **a**).



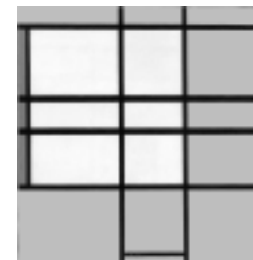
67.1 f



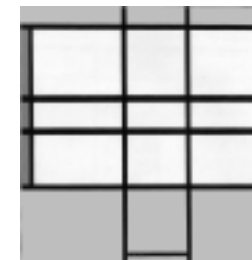
67.1 g



67.1 h



67.1 i



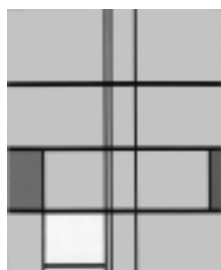
67.1 j

The clash between the opposing directions releases energy and the equivalence (diagram **a**) now assumes horizontal proportions (diagram **b**) that are accentuated (**c** and **d**) before regaining vertical development (**e**, **f**, and **g**). The initial square form (**a**) displays a variety of possible relations between the opposites (**h**): planes of different shapes and sizes where everything appears in a state of becoming. The red surface again draws attention to the left and highlights a new and larger square form (**i**).

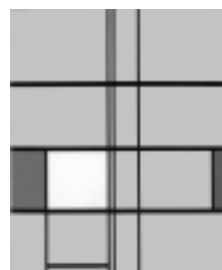
The equivalence from which we started (**a**) shows a whole series of possible relationships between the opposites before manifesting itself in a different way (**i**).

As in **67**, read upward from the bottom, the smaller square (**a**) again seems to turn into the larger one (**i**), as though the two forms were successive moments in the transition of the same entity from a state of comparative stability and certainty (**a**) to a dynamic condition of less stability (**i**).

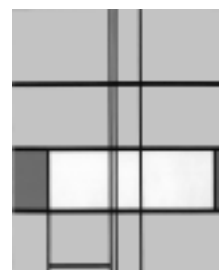
Under the pressure of color, the homogeneous field of the smaller square (**a**) opens up and divides into a variable set of parts (**i**), a composite unit marked by the alternating predominance of one direction or the other (**b**, **c**, **d**, **e**, **f**, **g**). This is resolved in a unitary synthesis (**i**) that then opens up again to an infinite space (**j**) and is lost. A dynamic composition in which everything changes and something endures. A geometry of becoming.



67.3 a



67.3 b



67.3 c



67.3 d



67.3 e

The intersecting of three horizontal and three vertical lines in **67.3** generates areas of different shapes and sizes. In addition to the six lines, there are two vertical segments that delimit a red surface and a blue surface. A horizontal segment is to be seen lower down by the bottom edge of the canvas inside a

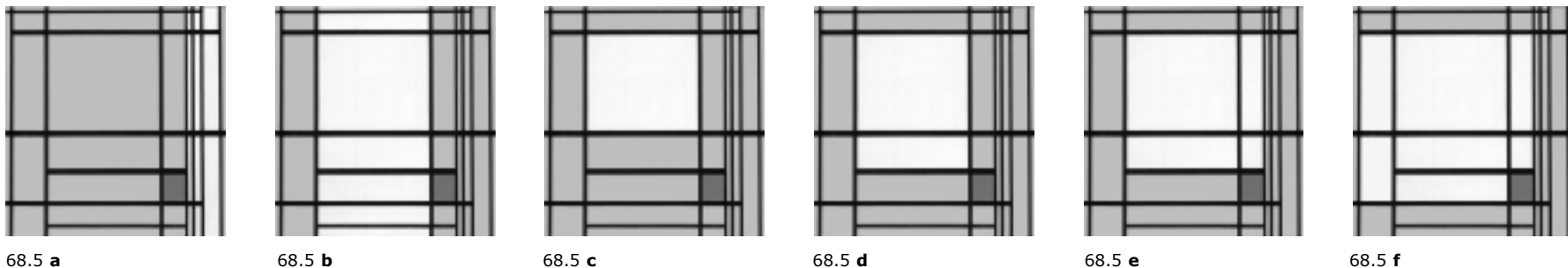
plane that is either square or rectangular depending on whether it is seen in relation to the bottom edge or the segment (diagram **a**).

As we follow the double vertical line, the more or less square area (diagram **a**) is duplicated above and attains equivalent proportions (**b**). This vertical shift is accompanied simultaneously by horizontal expansion with the two colored surfaces at either end (**c**).

The sum of the two colored areas almost corresponds to the white square form, being just slightly lower. On the one hand, we contemplate a synthesis (the white square) (**b**); on the other, we see two of its parts (the colored planes). The white synthesis appears to be divided by color, which spreads beyond the finite field of the canvas, especially to the right.

Visualize uninterruptedly the horizontal rectangle (**a**) that moves vertically but has scarcely time to become a square (**b**) before splitting in two under the effect of a dynamic horizontal field. The synthesis opens up again to multiplicity (color) while maintaining its unity at the same time (the white square field). In the upper section a third horizontal line generates a second horizontal field (**d**) that is similar to the previous one (**c**) but completely white. It is possible to see **d** as the situation of **c** a moment later, when the equivalence has dissolved and the colors have moved outside the canvas. The uppermost horizontal line and the bottom edge of the painting together generate a large square form (**e**). The horizontal section (**c**), where unity opens up to multiplicity, is generated in the middle of the large square.

A development similar to the one observed in **67.1** and **67.3** can be seen in **68.2**, where a variable ensemble of white surfaces can be read as drawing toward and away from equivalence. The surfaces are apparently born out of the double white vertical line formed between the two black lines running close together. The horizontal lines exert pressure on the white line, which expands to assume the proportions of a surface.



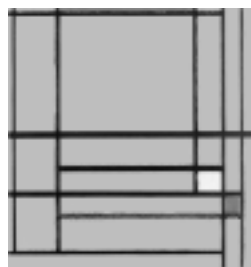
In **68.5** seven vertical lines meet one horizontal line and five segments. Once again, there is a single horizontal line running through the central area of the composition. Three vertical lines run very close to one another on the right and the white areas formed between them are rectilinear surfaces (diagram 68.5 **a**). Some surfaces seem intent on turning into lines.

This canvas again displays a vertical field that proceeds from the bottom through the central area of the composition (diagram **b**) to the top, inside which we can see an area where equivalence is almost attained between the opposing directions (**c**).

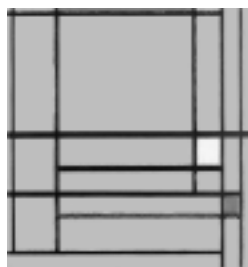
A small blue plane concentrates the space in the lower right section. On the one hand, it attracts the horizontal rectangle (**c**), which thus becomes a vertical rectangle (**d**) of analogous proportions to the blue plane. On the other, it draws attention to a larger form that again approaches equivalence (**e**), which

is attained for an instant in **f**.

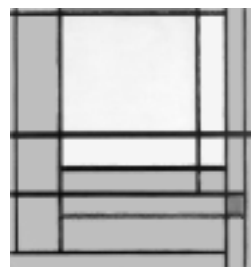
In the meantime, the "white line" wins new space on the right (**a**) until it regains the proportions of a surface, or rather of three surfaces that extend from the bottom to the top of the canvas. The space is thus opened up again to new measurements and proportions of a variable nature that attain equivalence every so often before overbalancing in one direction or the other.



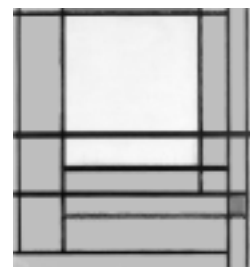
68.6 a



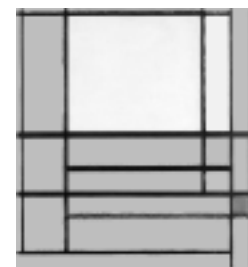
68.6 b



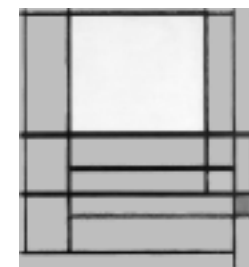
68.6 c



68.6 d



68.6 e



68.6 f

The unfinished work **68.6** develops in a similar way to **68.5**. In the upper central area we see a large square form that is born within a vertical field emphasized at the top edge of the canvas by a rectilinear element colored red.

In this case, unlike **68.5**, the vertical field expands horizontally toward the bottom, attracted by a small red plane. The vertical field seems to concentrate for an instant in the red as it flows downward. The "red horizontal line" at the top becomes a plane at the bottom on the right.

The composition is again born out of the intersecting of a single horizontal line running through the center, two vertical lines (on the right), and some horizontal and vertical segments. We again see surfaces moving from the marked predominance of one direction or the other to relationships tending toward equivalence.

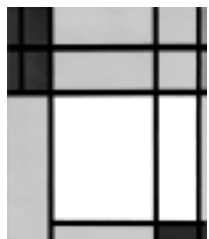
The red plane moves and takes on slightly horizontal proportions (**a**), reappears with a vertical predominance (**b**), and draws attention to a larger form (**c**). The large square field is a synthesis of two opposing rectangles (**e**, **f**) from which another form verging on equivalence (**d**) is generated for an instant. This is pulled to the right and expanded by the horizontal line running through the central area (**e**).

These compositions present a large square field in a state of unstable equilibrium with various possible forms contending with it for the space.

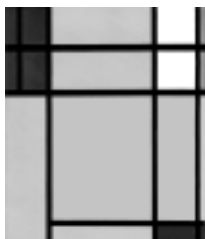
As Filiberto Menna rightly says, *"As a result, the unambiguous, incontrovertible spatiality that Mondrian had slowly achieved in the previous works by bringing everything back to the certainty of the plane is now challenged again and disintegrates into a variety of planes that clash with one another as each seeks to govern the overall definition of the pictorial surface."* ²³

The large "square" forming the focal point of the entire composition appears very clearly in **69.1**. With respect to the previous lozenges, the square deve-

lops here through a larger number of lines. I refer to it as a square even though it is not actually such. If anything, an authentic equivalence is established only if we regard the lower horizontal line as the base of the square. The other lines interfere, however, setting the space in motion again and making it impossible to focus the gaze exclusively on square form. The vertical lines help to expand the square horizontally, above all to the left, while the red pulls everything back toward the right, leaving the form in a state of dynamic equilibrium between expansion and concentration.



69.3 a



69.3 b



69.3 c

While **69.3** appears to be one of the compositions presenting a large square form open on three sides (**65.10**, **68.1**, **68.3**), we see a square that is again completely closed (diagram 69.3 **a**). Though divided by a vertical line, this square also retains more solid visibility than those left open on three sides in the above-mentioned canvases.

The prolongation of the vertical line running through the square and the prolongation of the line constituting its right side generate two smaller square forms in the upper section (diagram 69.3 **b**).

In other words, the vertical line divides the large square field, which undergoes simultaneous duplication and change in proportions higher up.

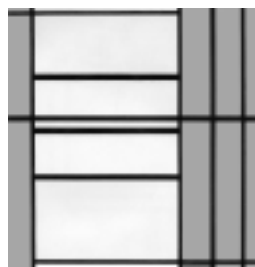
The two red areas on the left display similar proportions to the two white squares but are further divided by a vertical segment. Yellow, red, and blue work from the outside to emphasize the large square below and accentuate the dynamic aspect of the whole.

I regard this small canvas of 1938 as encapsulating the three tendencies mentioned above. It derives from **65.10**, **68.1**, and **68.3**. It presents a vertical field that runs through the central area of the canvas (diagram 69.3 **c**), as in **66**, **67**, **67.1**, **70.1**, and **70.4**, but also a large square form that, though open to the dynamic movement of the lines, retains marked visibility, as in **68.5**, **68.6**, **69.1**, and **69.2**. Finally, the composition displays a certain tendency of the square to multiply, as in **67.1**, **68.2**, **68.4**, and **68.7**. Though small, this is a very significant canvas.

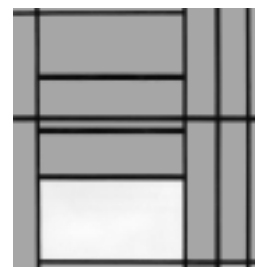
70.2, **70.3**, **70.4**, and **70.5** present an analogous development to **70** with a vertical field marked out by horizontal rectangles. Here too, the dynamic progression of two or three rectangles suggests probable equivalences of the opposing directions. Initially sketched out in 1938-39, the compositions were again reworked in 1942 with the addition of small colored surfaces that sometimes strike me as not really necessary, as in the cases of **70.2** and **70.5**.

With respect to the layout of **70**, the vertical field made up of horizontal rectangles in **70.4** is shifted to the left (diagram 70.4 **a**).

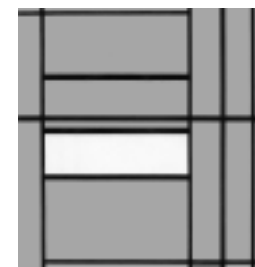
The marked presence of vertical lines on the right prompts a vertical reading of the horizontal sections inside the vertical field. On observing these sections, we note that their vertical component gradually decreases little by little as we move up from the bottom toward the horizontal line running through the middle of the composition, the only horizontal line present in this work. The other horizontals are in fact three segments set between the vertical lines and two in the lower and upper



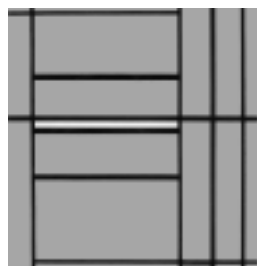
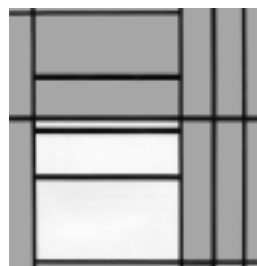
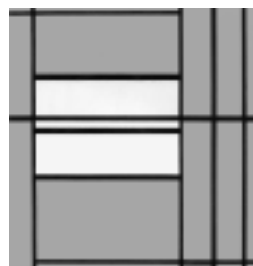
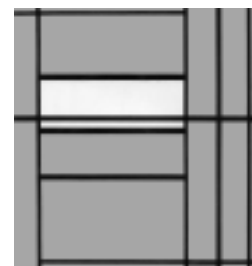
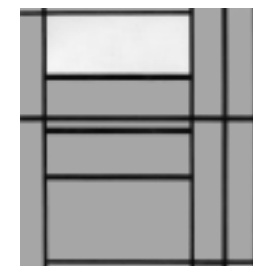
70.4 a



70.4 b



70.4 c

70.4 **d**70.4 **e**70.4 **f**70.4 **g**70.4 **h**

part that continue outside to the right and left respectively.

Reading from the bottom toward the center of the canvas, we thus see a decrease in the vertical component of each horizontal section (diagrams **b**, **c**, **d**). The vertical/horizontal space becomes almost entirely horizontal. During this process it is possible to intuit a square form (**e**) over which the horizontal suddenly prevails so that it becomes a horizontal rectangle (**f**, **g**) and is then lost in the upper part of the canvas (**h**).

While the space becomes almost exclusively horizontal proceeding from the bottom edge toward the center, the vertical component shows an increase as we move from the center towards the upper part of the canvas.

The horizontal rectangles contract in the center to assume the proportions of a very narrow white plane (**d**) that has practically the same thickness as the black segment and the line defining it.

The plane has in fact the appearance of a white linear segment. The planes (**b**, **c**) become a linear segment. Planes and lines (finite space and infinite space) and black and white are equivalent in this area. It is no coincidence that we see an equivalence of opposite values generated in the center of the canvas. Six years earlier (**64**), an increase in the thickness of the lines seemed to suggest their evolution toward potential planes while, in terms of color, yellow was used as an intermediate value between black and white.

Observe the contrast between the only horizontal line and the black segment beneath it. The latter appears slightly thicker than the other two segments and this seems to indicate a concentration of matter, as though the black horizontal line became the segment for an instant and the loss of extension were transformed into an increase in thickness. The concomitance of the line and the segment produces a space simultaneously undergoing expansion and concentration.

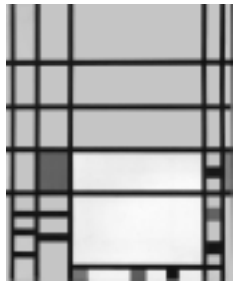
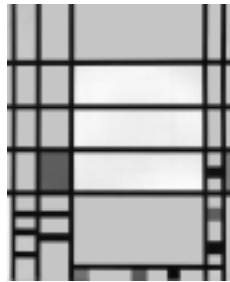
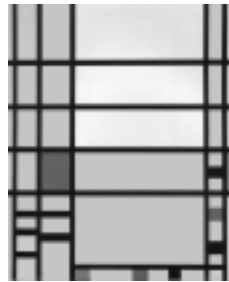
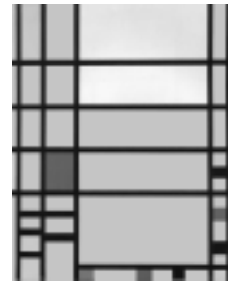
A measured red accent draws the eye toward the lower section and works together with the vertical lines on the right to reopen the space gradually accumulated toward the center. We are thus once again immersed in a vertical movement that gradually tends to become horizontal before reverting to vertical expansion.

The red counterbalances and reopens the center, where black and white attain dynamic equivalence for an instant.

It should be borne in mind on examining **70.5** that the composition was drafted in 1939 and the small accents of color present in the lower and right sections were added in 1943.

The additions strike me as no improvement and indeed as spurious interference with the initial composition, which follows the same layout as **70** with a

vertical development of horizontal sections (diagrams **a, b, c, d**).

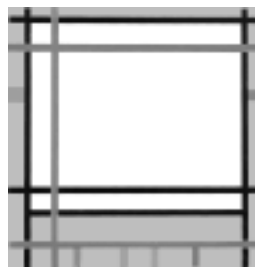
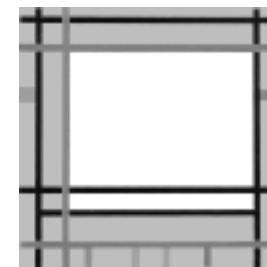
70.5 **a**70.5 **b**70.5 **c**70.5 **d**

Three horizontal rectangles maintain constant proportions and their sum suggests a square form (**b**).

Here Mondrian seems to find a compromise between the desire for interpenetration between the square and the lines (**70**) and the need to maintain the visibility of the particular instant in the composition when the opposite values attain equivalence, as in the compositions featuring a large square form

(**68.5, 68.6, 69.1, 69.2**). Reading up from the bottom, we see a square form that breaks up, reassembles, and finally dissolves in the course of its vertical progression. It is difficult to assess the whole in the light of the subsequently added accents of color. It should be pointed out in this connection that when the painter reworked some canvases begun in Europe in New York, the process of opening up unity to multiplicity had by then reached its peak in works like **71**, where it is no longer just the central area but the entire composition that develops square forms of different shapes, sizes, and colors. In reworking those canvases, the artist was therefore not concerned so much with making the equivalence more dynamic as with enriching the work as a whole by means of small colored planes free from the black contour of lines. Having observed the original canvas repeatedly, I must say that I find it unconvincing due to the unusual dryness of the chromatic texture. The white and the other colors appear strangely flat and monotonous.

70.7 offers food for thought as regards the painter's use of color in this phase, when it is rather form that plays a shattering role. As already noted for **68.7** and **69**, color also helps in this composition to maintain the integrity of a space that is disintegrating in terms of form. Observe the blue used to mark out a potentially square form that contains a horizontal rectangle, a vertical rectangle, and two squares of different sizes, forming a unitary and multiple synthesis. We see two horizontal rectangles and one larger vertical rectangle in the yellow. There are two white squares alongside these colored rectangles.

70.8 **a**70.8 **b**70.8 **c**70.8 **d**70.8 **e**

While the composition of **70.8** again develops a large square surface in the central area, the lines are no longer only black.

Biographical information indicates that the painting was initially exhibited at a show in February 1941, at which time the lines were all black. The artist would then have added the red lines-or perhaps, more probably, painted some of the black lines red-during the autumn of the same year.

The pattern formed by the black lines appears symmetrical and presents a large area in which the horizontal predominates (diagram 70.8 **a**). This tends to assume equivalent proportions if seen in relation to a black segment below (diagram **b**).

The red lines bring into play a vertical form (**c**) that gradually comes to display a new equivalence if seen first in relation to the black line (**d**) and then to the black segment (**e**).

The relationship between three black lines and one red generates another large area with proportions tending toward the square (**f**) and the interaction between two black lines and two red lines generates an authentic large square (**g**).

A vertical form (**h**) and a horizontal form (**i**) are to be seen in the lower left section. When considered together, these two complementary situations suggest a possible equivalence if they were to exchange their respective surpluses of verticality and horizontality.

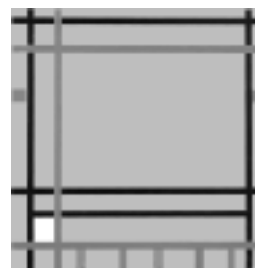
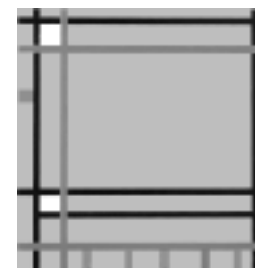
A synthesis of the two previous situations can be seen in the upper right section.

Observation of this painting reveals probable equivalences in which one direction or the other shows a slight predominance without either coming to prevail completely and establishing a permanent condition.

The section highlighted in diagrams **d** and **e** perhaps appears as the most constant area of space. All around it, however, everything reverts to the construction and deconstruction of unitary syntheses of the opposing directions, which are simultaneously syntheses of two colors in this case.

The accents of color that the artist must have added in 1942 (above all the small planes in the lower section) do not alter the composition significantly. They add "verticality" in an area that would otherwise be dominated by horizontals but serve above all to enrich the composition with color.

Traveling along the lines, the space opens up and then concentrates in the form of more stable relations that are then challenged again. Here too, everything changes while something evokes a sense of greater equilibrium.

70.8 **f**70.8 **g**70.8 **h**70.8 **i**

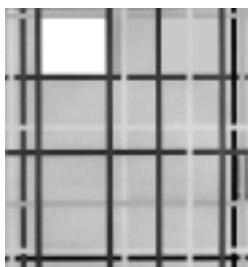
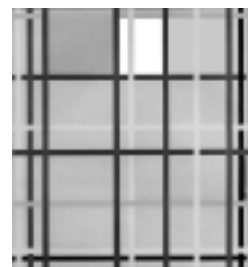
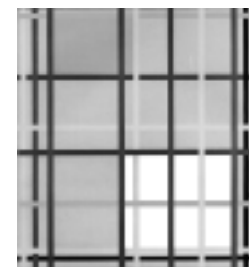
The composition of **70.9** is again crowded with lines, as in **68.4**, **68.7**, and **69**.

Details supplied by Joosten suggest that the painting could be a reworking of a canvas begun in 1938.

In addition to brushes and oil paints, New York offered Mondrian a new tool to use in producing his works, namely colored tape, which allowed him to change the positions of the lines and thus work on the composition with greater flexibility. Once a satisfactory configuration had been obtained, it could be made permanent in oils. Mondrian used tape during his work on this composition but never got round to the definitive application of paint. From what can be seen of this canvas today, he used yellow, red, and blue lines at the same time accompanied by two black lines and, unusually enough, also five white lines. The latter appear such in virtue of the fact that the canvas, if I remember rightly, was never primed and is therefore ivory in color.

The combination and observation of lines of different colors produces forms that change constantly in appearance. The different visual weights of the colors used for the lines emphasize certain forms with respect to others. The areas marked out with white lines are less conspicuous than those with red. A yellow surface can be seen in the upper left section and a blue surface of uncertain nature on the right edge of the canvas.

The only area that appears to express something more permanent at first sight is the yellow surface. This extends horizontally but is led by a red vertical line on the right toward a square formed by another red line on the left and a blue line below (diagram **a**). In the surface in a state of dynamic equilibrium between the horizontal expansion of the yellow and the concentrating force of the red, the opposing directions and the three primary colors attain equivalence for an instant in a square of yellow, red, and blue.

70.9 **a**70.9 **b**70.9 **c**70.9 **d**70.9 **e**

Another square form (diagram **b**) can be seen on the right formed by a yellow line at the top, a blue line below (the horizontals forming the square in diagram **a**), and two new red vertical lines. We therefore have another equivalence of yellow, red, and blue. With respect to **a**, however, the inner field of the square is no longer yellow, being crossed by a white vertical line. The latter works with a second white line on the left to generate a third square form (**c**). As noted above, square **b** stands out more than square **c** due to the visual weights of the colors. The silent white line that subtly disturbs the equilibrium of square **b** is strengthened (becomes red) inside **c**. Observe the two squares **b** and **c** in sequential order. The red line dividing square **c** seems designed to tell us that the equivalence of the opposites—the unitary synthesis of vertical and horizontal, yellow, red, and blue—is dissolving.

On reading **a**, **b**, and **c** in sequential order, we see a predominantly horizontal yellow area turn into a yellow, red, and blue square (**a**) that moves to the right (**b**). Its inner field is lightened through the disappearance of the yellow and its place is taken by a vertical line that splits the square in a way that is first barely visible (**b**) and then more obvious (**c**), thus triggering the disintegration of the equivalence (**d**). An area of horizontal predominance (the yellow

surface) is transformed into an equivalence (**a**) that then dissolves gradually (**b, c, d**). We note once again that different parts of a Neoplastic composition prove to be a single entity represented in its process of becoming.

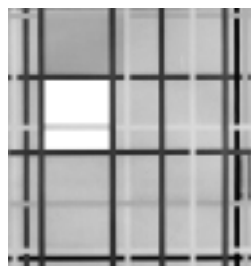
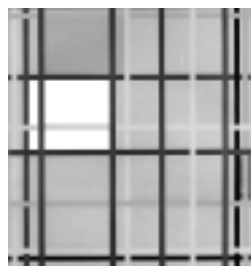
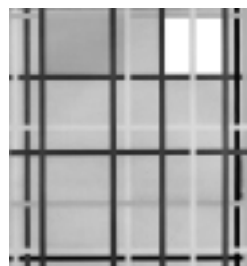
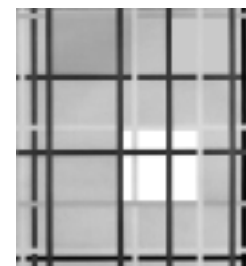
The same sequence can also be read in the opposite direction, from **d** to **b** and then **a**, as the birth of a unitary synthesis of yellow, red, and blue.

The readings proposed are not univocal. The explanation points out only some of the possible dynamic sequences. The perception of an image obviously involves a whole variety of parallel and sometimes simultaneous pathways. The content of a Neoplastic painting stretches far beyond the limiting and partial descriptions that verbal language can supply. The reading of a composition must be reiterated in order to capture all of its substance. The eye reads and rereads the same pathways, which evoke new relations every time and thus express a rich and varied "landscape". Through bright and exuberant colors, above all on beholding the original paintings, the eye addresses a dynamic set of relations that train the mind to think of things in their process of becoming.

The lower section of the composition presents a square form made up of three red lines and one black (**e**). The inner field of the large square area is crossed by lines of different color that generate a variety of more or less obvious rectangles.

Traveling along the lines, we then find a new form balanced between a slight vertical predominance (**f**) and a horizontal rectangle (**g**).

An uncertain square form scarcely has time to manifest itself before being pulled to the right by the rapid continuity of the lines (**h**). The dynamic move-

70.9 **f**70.9 **g**70.9 **h**70.9 **i**70.9 **j**

ment of the lines causes pressure and crisis for the equilibriums manifested for an instant through the equivalence of the opposite directions and the different colors. While the eye pauses on a single form, the space begins to move anew with an alternation of expansion and concentration.

The planes are barely visible when formed by white lines. The greater or lesser permanence of the square forms now depends also on the color of the lines forming them. While they are all squares, those highlighted in diagram **i** appear more fragile than **h**, which appears less stable than **e**.

The large form **j** is a synthesis of **e, f, g, h**, and **i**.

The blue plane on the right is so markedly vertical as to look almost like a segment of line. This plane appears designed to compensate for the absence of blue lines in that area of the composition and, at the same time, to endow the whole with a certain weight and counterbalance the horizontal yellow plane. With respect to the square (**e**), the blue plane is in the same position as the small accents of color in the canvases based on the N. III layout (**59, 62**). The position of the yellow plane also confirms a trace of N. III layout. Compare this canvas, for example, with **62.3**.



70.10 a



70.10 b



70.10 c

Like **70.9**, **70.10** again presents a multiplication of space with 14 horizontal and 10 vertical lines generating a complex set of varying relations.

Two black lines can be seen at the upper and lower edges of the painting. Four black vertical lines and three horizontals were covered by Mondrian with colored tape. As Joosten says, this suggests that the canvas is a reworking of a composition of the previous years.

We are faced once again with space that changes constantly

in appearance, a whole variety of situations produced by different combinations of the same elements.

We contemplate the variety of measurements and proportions on the one hand while seeking on the other conditions of more constant space (diagrams **a**, **b**, **c**), which is then always challenged by sudden horizontal or vertical expansion, the presence of one color or another.

As in **70.9**, the squares appear to be formed by more than four lines. They thus expand and contract, alluding to the loss and subsequent re-establishment of the equivalence of opposites. The squares are now less sharply defined and even more precarious than those formed by single lines.

There are no longer any colored planes appearing in this composition. A greater density of elements seems to be concentrated in the lower section, where the horizontal lines are so close to one another as almost to suggest a single surface made up simultaneously of the different colors. The greater weight observed near the bottom of the painting seems designed to anchor the composition as a whole so as to counterbalance the movement of the lines that accentuate the dynamism of the composition, especially in the upper and central section.

The uniformly black lines were thus transformed around 1940-41 into lines of color. The blossoming of colored lines constitutes a further development in the process of opening up unity to multiplicity that began with **65**.

Some critics have suggested a connection between the use of color for the lines and the above-mentioned availability of colored tape. I do not believe that this tape suddenly triggered a change that the foregoing analysis clearly shows to have been implicit in the development of Mondrian's work since 1915, i.e. since the unitary synthesis in square form (**C 45**) that opened up to color (**C 47, 52, 63, 64, 71**).

The opening up to color took definite shape in **71**, where the lines are yellow, red, and blue and there is no black at all. The composition apparently presented nothing but yellow lines and a red plane in its initial state but was later reworked by removing the plane and adding red and blue lines. 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 three 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.

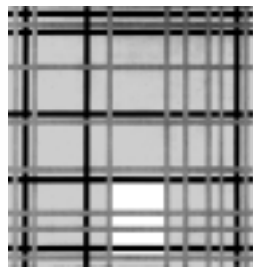
I shall use diagram **C 71** and some diagrams presented here in the text in my explanation of the painting.

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 in the different areas. Horizontal and vertical sometimes attain equivalence and assume proportions of comparatively greater stability.

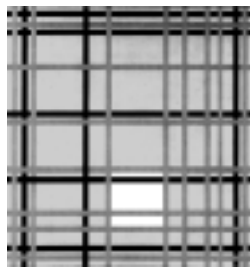
C 71 presents a series of square forms numbered from 1 to 7, some of which interpenetrate. Each square differs from the others also in relation to the position assumed within it by lines of the same color. Squares 1 and 5 are similar in terms of form but differ as regards their respective distribution of colors. The same holds for 2 and 3.

As already noted in **70.10**, squares 2, 3, and 4 are formed by six or eight lines of different colors and appear to be less sharply defined. Mondrian 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 equivalence dissolves toward the right and the square becomes a rectangle. The unitary synthesis marked out with the three primary colors is lost if only one color is taken into consideration. Other squares are formed of only two colors (6 and 7). In 6 a completely yellow horizontal rectangle attains equivalence with a red line; the same thing happens in 7 with blue.

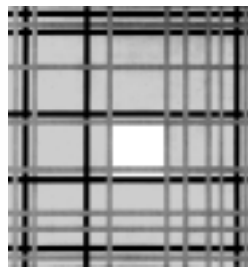
In 3 a field formed by four yellow lines has the proportions of a horizontal rectangle. The rectangle attains an equivalence of vertical and horizontal if seen in relation to the blue line above or without this but in relation to the red line below. If the yellow rectangle is instead observed in relation 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 slight horizontal predominance (all yellow) and a slight vertical predominance (yellow, red, and blue).



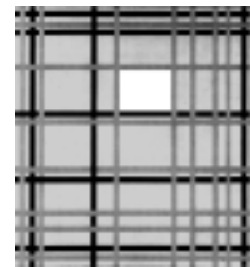
71 c



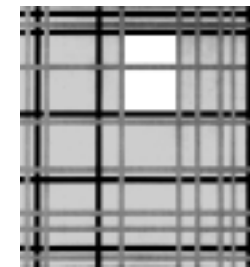
71 d



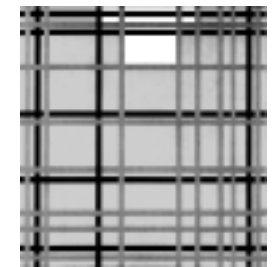
71 e



71 f



71 g



71 h

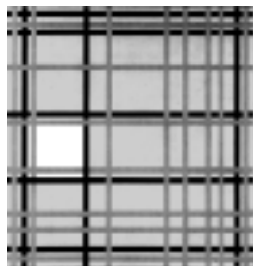
We now see that the square form is developed inside a vertical field that runs through the center of the canvas from the bottom to the top (see diagrams **c, d, e, f, g, and h** in sequence).

Reading up from the bottom, we see a red line and a blue line marking out a rectangular field (**c**) crossed by two horizontal yellow lines that seem to suggest a possible square (**d**), which takes shape in **e**. The slight vertical predominance generated in this square by the simultaneous presence of the blue and the red produces a counter-reaction higher up and the square now expands horizontally once again (**f**). The greater visibility of two horizontal blue lines draws attention for an instant to a vertical shape (**g**) that undergoes expansion in the opposite direction and flows back into the dynamic space of the lines (**h**).

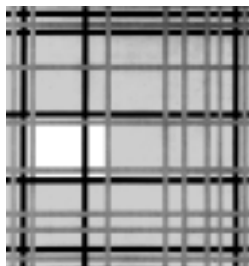
The composition displays an alternating predominance of the two directions (**c, d**), which succeed for an instant in attaining a dynamic equivalence (**e**) that then opens up anew to predominance (**f, g, h**). This recalls the vertical field of **70** (see page 102) but also, *mutatis mutandis*, the compositional development of **C 45**.

In diagram **f** a square form of four yellow lines is disturbed by a blue line, which challenges the equilibrium attained solely with the yellow. The situation produced here is the opposite of the one described in diagram **e**, where a yellow rectangle requires another color in order to attain more stable equilibrium. In this case, another color tends to destroy the equilibrium attained solely with the yellow. Though opposite, the two situations are similar in meaning: true unitary synthesis is now attained only when the different colors are simultaneously present and no longer solely when there is an equivalence of horizontal and vertical.

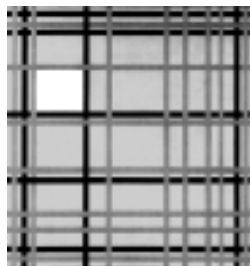
As noted above, the synthesis seen in **i** expands to the right (**j**) and is lost. The same thing happens with the square highlighted in **k**, which turns into a horizontal rectangle (**l**). What we see in **m** is instead an equivalence that struggles to assert itself through the predominance of the red line over the yellow, i.e. over the right side of the square. As already noted in **70.9**, 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.



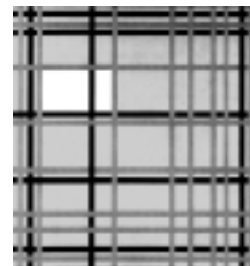
71 i



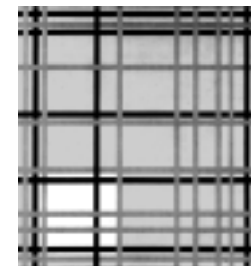
71 j



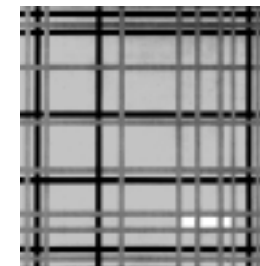
71 k



71 l



71 m



71 n

It strikes me as important that in the lower right section it is yellow and yellow alone that expresses rectangles with a predominance of one direction or the other (diagram **n**). These three forms are made up of lines of the same color. In this case, the variable relations between the opposite directions are wholly homogeneous in chromatic terms and it is form alone that expresses mutation, as in **69**.

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.

Observe **C 54, 55, 63, 64**, and **71** as a single sequence. In 1921-22 the colored planes had the function of decentralizing and dynamizing a space dominated by a single large white square formed by black lines. The square absorbed color over a span of 20 years (**54, 55, 63, 64**) and multiplied all over the

surface of the canvas in 1942, changing in terms of position, proportions, and relations between the different colors. A large square form (**o**) seems to present itself as a synthesis of all the others. In **71** we find a large square made up of a variety of squares. The single black and white unity of 1922 has undergone interpenetration with manifold space and is now wholly imbued with color and dynamism.

* * *

The date and catalogue number assigned by Joosten to **71.1** suggest that it is earlier than **71**. Like **70.9** and **70.10**, **71.1** also remained unfinished, possibly due to the development of **71** in the meantime.

The number of lines decreases in **71.1**. We see four yellow lines, two red, and one blue accompanied by three black lines, one gray, and four of a yellowish white. With respect to **70.10** and **71**, we thus have a decrease in primary colors and an increase in black, white, and gray.

The return to a smaller chromatic range and geometry based on larger proportions indicates the uncertainty felt by the artist, who appears intent in this canvas on again closing and condensing the space so daringly opened up in **70.9**, **70.10**, and **71**. Mondrian appears for an instant to have sought a return to the space of the canvases prior to 1940 but was in fact planning a new canvas at the same time, for which he produced the preparatory studies **71.2** and **71.3**.

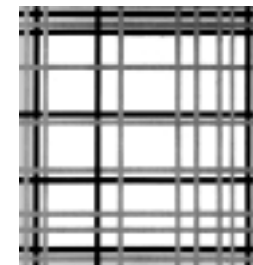
The existing bibliography indicates two certain studies for *Broadway Boogie Woogie*: *Study I* - **71.2** - and *Study II* - **71.3** -. There are also two drawings (catalogued as "*Studies for Broadway Boogie Woogie?*") that are seen as possibly related to the canvas. Some regard them instead as studies made by the artist after completing the painting with a view to alterations. I would interpret them as studies in their own right for a new work, but this is just an impression. I believe that the authentic studies for *Broadway Boogie Woogie* are the two sketches **71.2** and **71.3**.

In the two studies Mondrian drew a series of perpendicular lines that run uninterruptedly all the way through the visual field, as in **71**. He then inserted between them some short segments that, by virtue of their proportions, almost look like small surfaces.

Mondrian's lines were illuminated between 1941 and 1942 with red (**70.8**) and then simultaneously with yellow, red, and blue (**70.9**, **70.10**, **71**). As a result, the colored planes disappeared. In the Neoplastic compositions, planes express finite space and lines virtually infinite continuity.

Previously reserved exclusively for planes, color was applied to line in 1941, at which point Mondrian found himself grappling with compositions in never-ending development (**70.10**, **71**). In **71** 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 **71**, 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 1933 (**64**) had been to open up the unitary synthesis to multiplicity, it was now necessary (1942) 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.



71 o

As pointed out above, the composition was developed throughout the European phase of Neoplasticism not only with black lines and colored planes but also with segments that helped to delimit the latter in some points. The segments are finite measures and hence an intermediary between the infinite space of the lines and the finite space of the planes.

In the two sketches of 1942 (**71.2**, **71.3**) Mondrian focuses precisely on this transition from lines to planes, from infinite space to finite space, and expresses it by means of small segments that are, however, no longer black segments delimiting fields of color (as throughout the European Neoplastic phase). They are colored segments (like the lines) as from 1941 and thus become small planes of color when they increase in thickness (as can be seen especially in the second drawing).

It should be recalled in this connection that lines of increased thickness seemed on some occasions to suggest planes back in 1925 (**56.4**), 1926 (**56.9**), 1930 (**58.6**, **59.3**), and 1933 (**64**).

The first sketch (**71.2**) seems to have been made in one go and the second, which is more sharply defined, to clarify the ideas of the first. The second drawing clearly shows the artist's intention to channel the dynamic and continuous space of the lines toward finite and more constant relations. Some segments are clearly vertical, some markedly horizontal, and some display an equivalence in which horizontal and vertical are reciprocally neutralized. Originating in the line and tending toward the plane, the segment provided Mondrian with the way to express a finite and more constant dimension inside a space based exclusively on lines (**71**). This was to mark the point of transition from *New York City* (**71**) to *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (**72**), where areas of color are generated in the form of slices of finite space tending toward greater constancy that counterbalance the dynamic movement of the lines.

Another aspect that appears unsatisfactory in **71** is the fact that the points where lines of different color intersect are no longer marked by a single homogeneous plane, as happened with the black lines, but instead by the predominance of one color over the other. In **71**, with the exception of one point, the blue line always passes "behind" the yellow and the red, which passes "in front of" the yellow four times and always "in front of" the blue. The colors seem to be on three different planes, with yellow, red, and blue appearing respectively on the first, second, and third.

This superimposition creates an equally unexpected and unwelcome three-dimensional effect with which Mondrian could hardly be satisfied, since one of his aims had always been precisely the elimination of any perspective-based illusion of supposed and nonexistent third dimensions in order to express the reality of the world in the two real dimensions of painting. The problem arising as from this moment was to bring the three different planes of the yellow, red, and blue back onto a single plane.

In **D 1** the predominance of yellow over red or red over blue is resolved by ensuring that each line allows the perpendicular section covered over to reappear shortly after. A single plane is re-established and the three colors are brought together while preserving their specific qualities: sections of yellow, red, and blue begin to interpenetrate within every line in the shape of small squares (**D 2**, **3**). This is the genesis of *Broadway Boogie Woogie*.

The painting is referred to as *BBW* from now on. My explanation of it will be based on the twelve diagrams of Section **D**, in which I have broken down and analyzed its geometry. Viewed as a sequence, the diagrams help us to visualize a dynamic process.

For the first time in a Neoplastic painting (with the sole exception of **70.9**), the colored planes are no longer delimited with black lines.

The planes of *BBW* are nearly all different from one another in terms of size, shape, and color.

In **D 6**, **D 7**, and **D 8** some planes express a vertical predominance and others greater horizontal development. Some consist of a single color and others

of two. One plane (T), the largest, expresses a combination of the three primary colors. This plane constitutes the unitary synthesis lacking in **71**. Comparison of the two canvases (**71** and **72**) shows a yellow, red, and blue space of virtually infinite expansion in the first and its concentration in a finite dimension of those three colors in the second. The space that continues uninterruptedly in 71 finds a moment of more solid permanence and duration in **72**.

While *BBW* thus again displays visible unity within the composition, as in **C 45** (1915), **C 51** (1919), **C 53, 54** (1921-22), and **C 64** (1933), this now takes place in a wholly new and original way. In *BBW*, for the first time, the unitary synthesis is no longer a white rectangle (**C 51**) or a white square marked out with black lines (**C 54**) or yellow lines (**C 64**), but a concentration of yellow, red, and blue, a free and unpredictable interplay of form that depends on the respective qualities and quantities of the colors.

The equilibrium attained in the unitary plane of *BBW* is dynamic in nature and not tending toward the static, unlike the square taken by Mondrian as the equivalence of opposites from 1915 on. While it is true that he had always made flexible and dynamic use of the square form, it is equally true that the square dominated the evolution of Neoplastic space in certain phases, at least up to **64**.

The square form served Mondrian from 1915 to the mid-1930s as a sort of cornerstone or starting point to open his compositions up to change. At the end of this process (**72**), his space was asymmetric and colored all the way through, simultaneously multiple and unitary.

For the first time, the unitary synthesis is a plane made up simultaneously of the three primary colors.

I am reminded of the scattered rectangles lacking unity of 1917 (**C 47**), which now find synthesis in a single plane.

I am also reminded of **C 51** (1919) with the three larger rectangles (one yellow, one red, and one blue) surrounding a white rectangle in the center. The unsuccessful attempt to attain unitary interpenetration of the white rectangle and the colored rectangles in one large square form (**C 52**) is now finally achieved in *BBW*, where a synthesis of horizontal and vertical and yellow, red, and blue is attained with great visibility.

We shall now have a closer look at *BBW* before going on to examine *Victory Boogie Woogie* (*VBW*) and then considering all of Mondrian's work in an overview.

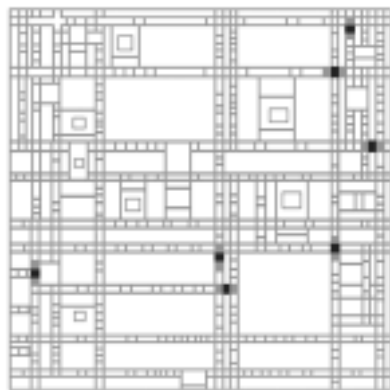
It should again be stated (for lovers of dates) that Mondrian appears to have begun *VBW* before *BBW*. As in other periods of his development, however, the dates on which individual canvases were begun and completed do not coincide with the progress actually achieved, which it is our present concern to indicate and explain. I regard *BBW* as coming immediately after *New York City* (**71**) and *VBW* as a continuation of *BBW*. My grounds for this will be stated below.

The interpenetration of colored lines generates a multitude of small gray, yellow, red, and blue squares in *BBW* (**D 3**). To be more precise, there are no yellow squares but only larger intervals of space between the gray, red, and blue squares. Yellow appears very rarely in the form of a small square and more frequently as a linear segment. The lines of *BBW* are therefore mostly yellow.

The uniform lines of **71** come into direct communication here, with fragments of the horizontal entering the vertical and vice versa. For the first time in a painting by Mondrian, each line expresses opposing thrusts clearly and explicitly within itself. I recall some lozenges of the mid-1920s and especially **64**, where increase in the thickness of the lines suggests an opposing thrust but in a way that is still only virtual.

Every horizontal line contrasts with the vertical part of the small squares just as their horizontal component expresses opposition when situated on a vertical line. They are therefore entities in a state of unstable equilibrium between horizontal and vertical. Closer examination shows indeed that the small squares present variable proportions, with some developing a slight horizontal predominance, some a vertical predominance, and some apparently attaining square proportions. The small squares continuously undergo slight expansion and contraction inside the lines.

Everything seems to change incessantly in **D 3**, 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.



72 a

Observation of the frenzied succession of small squares reveals some (red or blue) that join up with pairs of small gray squares. The red or blue square thus appears as the central point of a small symmetrical configuration (diagram 72 a).

Some larger symmetrical configurations made up of an increasing number of small squares are highlighted in **D 4**. The first, sporadic symmetries highlighted in diagram 72 a gain space inside the lines.

Symmetry can be described as an extension of space that presents an orderly rhythm generated by repetition of the same elements.

The changing space of the lines-i.e. the ephemeral progression of different small squares-is endowed with greater constancy through symmetries.

The symmetries highlighted in **D 4** can be seen as portions of measured and hence finite space generated inside an infinite space like that of the lines, as though the incommensurable space of the lines contracted for a moment into a finite segment (the symmetrical sequence) before reverting to infinite expansion.

The small square is born when two perpendicular lines meet for an instant before moving on. It is the point in which an infinite reality becomes finite reality for a moment. The absolute space of every single line becomes a relative space in the small squares. The finite and relative character of the small square thus contrasts with the infinite and absolute nature of every line.

What we shall observe from now on is a dialectic between the tendency of the small squares to concentrate the infinite space of the 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). This expansion severs the relationship between horizontal and vertical represented by the small square and therefore tends to negate it as a unitary synthesis of the opposite values.

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. The static vocation of the small square is placed under constant pressure by the dynamic nature of the line. It should be noted that these are two opposing tendencies of one and the same space.

Careful observation of the symmetries formed on the lines shows in fact that they 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 must 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.

I am reminded of the relationship the artist saw in the period around 1910 between the space of buildings (windmills, lighthouses, churches) and dunes, the former concentrating the physical extension of the world into a mental space and the latter expressing its virtually infinite expansion.

* * *

A certain vertical correspondence between two horizontal symmetries can be seen in the section of **D 5** labeled A. 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 B, where the correspondence is 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 surface, which covers the space between the two vertical lines. In **D 6**, at that very point, we see the birth of a small blue plane (C) and then of other planes.

Like the small squares, each of these new entities expresses a certain relationship between the opposing directions. The relationship between horizontal and vertical lasts for a longer period of time, however, in the more extended space of a plane than in the small squares inside the lines.

By comparison with the small squares from which they originate, the planes appear more stable with respect to the dynamic and unstable flow of the lines; more stable but still in a state of dynamic equilibrium between the two opposing directions. Some undergo greater horizontal influence, some vertical predominance, and some appear to attain a relative condition of equilibrium between the two opposite directions.

The planes increase in size following the alphabetical progression. Some are still partially combined with the space of the lines (G), some are partially isolated (D, E) and some appear to be totally self-contained (I). The two planes E and F appear to be equal on first sight but closer observation shows that F has slightly greater vertical development. As a whole, the planes indicated in **D 6** represent a variety of different situations in a state of unstable equilibrium between horizontal and vertical, between yellow, red, and blue; a space of change but tending toward greater synthesis than its counterpart in **D 3**.

Plane H extends downward (L) and drags with it a fragment of horizontal gray line, which is transposed into the vertical and becomes a rectangular field inside plane L. Planes H and L should be seen as two successive moments in a dynamic sequence transforming a yellow surface into one made up of two colors (yellow and gray).

If the painting is observed in a static way, the two planes H and L 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 the smaller plane H into L.

New planes are thus born (**D 7**) that differ from those observed in **D 6** by presenting an inner space marked with a different color.

Due to the vertical predominance in plane L, the internal gray band displays slightly greater horizontal development. Analogously, but in the opposite sense, plane M is counterbalanced by a red vertical segment just as the red vertical predominance of N is offset by a gray horizontal segment. The space of *BBW* is made up of constant contrast and reciprocal opposition.

Observation of the sequence L, M, N, O, P, Q shows that the process of spatial internalization (beginning with L) continues in other planes where the gray field, which is still open on the sides in L, is concentrated and stabilized in the form of a small square (O, P, Q). A sign of linearity opposing the layout of

the plane (L, M, N) gives way to a more balanced configuration that reduces the opposition to the interior of the same plane (O, P, Q).

Let us consider surface O for a moment in relation to plane P. 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.

Let us now summarize the various phases of spatial transformation observed so far as visualized in a single sequence. The intersecting of individual lines that continue uninterruptedly (**D 1**) generates a multitude of small squares (**D 2**, **D 3**) that cluster to produce symmetrical configurations (**D 4**).

The symmetries then extend beyond the thickness of the individual lines (**D 5**) to become planes (**D 6**).

The space undergoes gradual transformation from the condition of lines (infinite and absolute space) to the condition of planes (the same space but finite and relative). This metamorphosis can be visualized dynamically by going over the associated diagrams.

The lines can be regarded from now on as an external situation and the planes as the genesis and development of an internal condition of the same space that proceeds uninterruptedly from the outside to the inside. The lines become planes; an infinite space is transformed into a finite space. While we observe the finite fields of the planes, the lines continue uninterruptedly and the eye therefore finds itself in a state of unstable equilibrium between an extended space (symbolizing the incommensurable reality of the physical world) and the same space undergoing inward concentration (the relational space of thought evoked with the planes).

* * *

We can see at points R and S of **D 8** 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 S, red and gray in R. 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 T.

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 (**D 3**), attain unitary synthesis here.

Note how a quadrangle expresses equilibrium and synthesis of the opposing directions in the two planes R and S while a segment still opposes the field containing it.

We have seen in planes H, L and Q how an internal quadrangle (Q) develops (L) from a segment (H). The segment inside the two planes R and S is therefore an indication of a potential second internal quadrangle, which is shortly to develop in plane T.

The segments inside the two planes R and S tell us that they are still influenced by the dynamism of the external in comparison with plane T, where the entire space (yellow, red, blue) instead attains a more balanced relationship between horizontal and vertical. 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 this plane expresses a comparative state of calm, albeit in a dynamic way, by comparison with the surrounding space.

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 surfaces. These are transformed into a certain number of two-colored surfaces that then become a single surface constituting a synthesis of the three primary colors. The space of *BBW* undergoes uninterrupted transformation from a condition of multiplicity to one of unity, from the many to the one.

* * *

Plane U in **D 9** is the same size as plane T but consists solely of red and gray rather than the three primary colors. The inner space of the plane presents a gray quadrangle and two gray segments, one of which is part of a horizontal line running through the plane. The quadrangle is a sign of permanence and greater equilibrium between the two opposing directions while the two segments, especially the one belonging to the line, are signs of movement that accentuate the horizontal direction in sharp contrast to the vertical layout of the plane itself.

After the equivalence and the synthesis of three primary colors attained in plane T, the colors are again reduced in plane U and the external dynamism of the lines reappears to generate new opposition. The horizontal line running suddenly through the vertical plane tends visually to disrupt the previously attained equivalence of opposites. After the degree of comparative calm, constancy, and unity achieved in plane T, spatial movement thus seems to reappear in plane U. The unitary synthesis opens up to external space and the colors are separated and flow back toward the more dynamic and variable space of the lines (**D 10**).

The indication provided by plane U finds further confirmation in plane V, where blue, yellow, and red are juxtaposed but no longer interpenetrate as they did in plane T. The juxtaposition produces the impression that the whole is less compact and solid, whereas the interpenetration combines the three colors in a single structure of greater stability. Note how the yellow on the right of V already seeks to cross the perimeter of the plane and flow into the yellow of the surrounding lines. Plane V can therefore be seen as plane T in the process of dissolution.

Configuration Z possibly represents the conclusion of the process of reopening the unitary synthesis in that it can be seen as a continuation of the disintegration of V. The yellow section that tends to emerge to the right in V becomes the external space of the lines in Z. Still contiguous in V, the three areas of blue, yellow, and red open up and separate in Z under the dynamic influence of the lines to turn again into a variety of small yellow, red, and blue squares (**D 11**). The space proceeds from a comparatively static and wholly internal condition (T) toward one of growing instability (U) that is gradually transformed (V, Z) into the more dynamic and variable external space of the lines (**D 10**, **D 11**, **D 12**).

The lines are first concentrated into small squares and then into planes that became a single plane. This unity now opens up again and reverts to the more dynamic and variable condition of the lines. Observe the twelve diagrams as a single sequence. An external and manifold space gives way to an internal and unitary space and then again moves outward from the inside.

Starting from the group of planes on the left side of the painting (E, I, F) (N, O, P, Q) and continuing toward the upper right section (R, S, T), the composition tends to concentrate in a synthesis before opening up again to multiplicity in the lower section (U) and along the vertical lines to the right (V, Z).

The painting does not directly show the entire process of reopening illustrated here in the last three diagrams (how indeed could it?) but gives us a clear indication of it with the planes U, V, and Z.

It will not have escaped notice that the configuration labeled Z is made up of two planes (one red and one blue) labeled respectively G and C in **D 6**. C was

identified as the first plane generated in the transition from symmetries to planes and G as one of those belonging to the first stage of development of monochromatic planes. The same planes now play a completely different role. On the interpretation offered here, the first plane (C), which triggers the process leading to the unitary synthesis (T), would also be its last fragment (Z). The same parts perform different roles in *BBW* depending on the context and the moment.

The geometry of *BBW* can therefore be summarized as a dynamic sequence that moves from a multiplicity of lines to the unitary synthesis of a plane and then expands from the unity of a plane toward a multiplicity of lines. From expansion toward increasing concentration and then from concentration back to expansion: this is the way *BBW* breathes. It is an idea expressed by the painter as early as 1915 with a sign of equivalence enclosed in a square that then opens up again to manifold space above (**C 45**).

It is necessary to view the work in a state of dynamic equilibrium between one stage and another of the process rather than stopping on the isolated states of the individual parts; to see the geometry in its 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.

The space of *BBW* blossoms in a multitude of different entities that gradually turn into a single "thing", which then splits and reverts to a manifold condition. This happens endlessly in accordance with an interminable flux that is necessarily depicted by the painter in a certain form but not exhaustively captured within it.

Expansion and concentration: something changes every time there is expansion and every instance of concentration will appear in new and different form while consisting of the same energy or matter. Like nature: immensely varied but nevertheless one. Like every single thing: simultaneously one and many.

In the unitary plane of *BBW* the dynamic and virtually infinite space of the lines is transformed into a finite and lasting space. It would, however, be a mistake to see this as calm in the sense of a total absence of inner tension. The unitary synthesis of *BBW* should rather be seen as a temporary equivalence of opposing thrusts that neutralize one another. Any slight horizontal expansion of the yellow would produce an imbalance and set the mechanism of oppositions back in motion, as would even the slightest vertical increase in the blue. While each color remains such, its size and proportions—and hence its value—depend on the tonality, proportions, and size of the other color. It is necessary to see the respective measures and positions of yellow, red, and blue give birth to a free interplay of reciprocal tensions. Every proportion depends on another in an unpredictable development of form that now depends directly on color, unlike the works produced between 1915 and 1940, where the scale of colors was established a priori by form.

Mondrian wrote as follows in a note sent to J.J. Sweeney on May 24, 1943: *"Only now I become conscious that my work in black, white and little color planes has been merely "drawing" in oil color. In drawing, the lines are the principal means of expression; in painting, the color planes"*.²⁴

Form and color were kept separate throughout the European phase of Neoplasticism (from **53** to **70**). Black lines delimited the colored surfaces from the outside with no direct involvement in their space. Drawing (the black lines) became color in 1941, and when the lines became planes with *BBW*, there was no longer any distinction between form and color, drawing and painting.

Blue is the darkest value in the range of colors in *BBW* and therefore appears to perform the function previously assigned to black. In actual fact, there are two different shades of blue, the darker hue of the small squares inside the lines and the lighter hue of the planes. This dual tonality is found in none of the other colors and seems designed to underscore the function of the blue of the lines as a darker value also with respect to the blue of the planes.

White, gray, yellow, red, and blue constitute a gradual progression from the lightest value to the darkest, from ethereal and indistinct (white) to solidity and sharpness of definition (blue). The yellow lines draw upon white through the small gray squares and then arrive through red at the opposite value in blue.

The monotonous continuity of the black lines turns in *BBW* into a variable sequence of tonalities that range within the same line from light to dark, from weightless to heavy, from indefinite to definite. Yellow is the value intermediate between the extreme of white and gray (light, weightless, indefinite) and the opposite extreme of red and blue (dark, heavy, definite). In the stretches where it becomes gray and is almost confused with white, the line of *BBW* seems to tend toward the indistinct, the invisible, the interconnection of all phenomena, and in fact toward the negation of drawing itself. In the more clearly marked stretches with red and blue, it tends instead toward sharp definition, i.e. the separation of one thing from another. The duality of light and dark acquires tension and turns within the same line into a flexible structure in a state of unstable equilibrium between the two opposite hues (white and dark blue).

Mondrian succeeds with this painting in establishing direct and visible communication between the opposite values: horizontal in vertical at the level of form; lighter in darker and vice versa at the level of color. In point of fact, form is already color in *BBW*.

We are reminded of the double black lines of 1932-38 enclosing a white line. In *BBW* a more gradual transition toward black ultimately blossoms from white (gray, yellow, red, blue). The yellow lines of 1933, an intermediate value between light and dark, also come to mind.

I do not agree with the readings that see yellow in the foreground in *BBW* and blue in the background. It makes no sense to see Neoplastic space in terms of the three dimensions. Even in the case of planes consisting of two or three colors, it is a matter of juxtaposition or interpenetration but not of overlapping interpretable as space developed in depth.

I am not convinced by certain academic rules, according to which a blue surface would suggest depth while a yellow one, for example, would remain in the foreground.

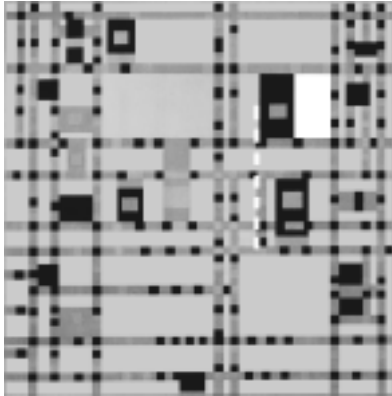
If anything, we can talk of the colors as possessing different visual weights. Blue proves heavier because it is visually darker than yellow. But this is not necessarily always so. There are canvases in which a yellow of a certain proportion can weigh more than a red or a blue. In the art of painting as a whole, but especially in the Neoplastic vision, the visual weight of the colors, their value, always depends on their measure and position with respect to one another.

* * *

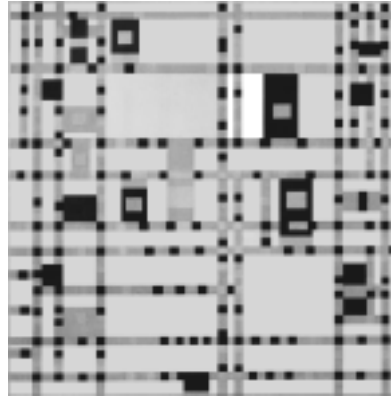
Plane U is described above as plane T undergoing disintegration.

In addition to the reasons already given, I should like to make some further observations in this connection.

The small vertical segment on the left of plane U in **D 9** underscores the position occupied above by plane T, from which it appears to derive (diagram 72 **b**). With respect to the position occupied by plane T in the upper section, this can be seen as a movement in the lower section, plane U, caused by the hori-



72 b



72 c

zontal line running through that plane and pushing it to the right.

It is, however, the geometry not only of the "solid" space (gray, yellow, red, and blue) but also of the "void" space (white) that generates the impression of an entity of greater solidity and visual constancy in the case of surface T and a disintegrating entity in the case of surface U. We note in fact that the proportions of surface T are repeated identically to its right with a white field (diagram 72 b). In the left part of surface T the white field would have the same proportions as the surface but for the interference of the shorter line (diagram 72 c).

The space around surface T appears constant because the proportions of the same surface reappear unchanged nearly three times. The "void" is equivalent to the solid in that area, and this helps to give the solid greater equilibrium and stability. The invisible (white) becomes visible (the

plane of three colors) for an instant.

BBW seems to present a unity that is expressed with the three primary colors and at the same time white (as throughout the European Neoplastic phase). This would appear to confirm the value Mondrian attributed to the white field of the rectangle (51) and then of the square (54) as an ideal synthesis of the three primary colors.

The proportions of the white space around plane U are instead completely different and in no case underscore those of the plane itself. There is a lack of proportion between solid and void, with the former predominating to such an extent that the "void" is under pressure to redress the balance. The space around the plane appears to be agitated by the movement of that vertical segment and that horizontal line, which will soon gain the upper hand and open the plane up again.

The white space therefore also appears designed to suggest that the unity of plane T represents the utmost degree of synthesis, after which the space begins to disintegrate again.

I cannot be sure, never having bothered to take precise measurements, but something tells me that in *BBW* the combined quantity of the four colors is equal to or slightly less than the amount of white.

If the "solid" represents what appears in an obvious way to our senses while the "void" represents what we cannot see but nevertheless exists and provides us with constant sustenance, how can we fail to feel the deep wisdom and sorrow of this geometry? What we see depends also on what we do not see.

* * *

The process I have pointed out in *BBW* might make one think of it as the result of a premeditated design. After reading the explanations provided above, some will indeed wonder whether Mondrian actually thought of the image in the way described here while painting it. We would have to ask the artist himself, but I think I can safely say that the answer would be no.

The process observed in the painting is not the result of a plan of the moment. This is a work constituting the compendium of an entire life, an image in

which the artist finally succeeds in adequately expressing the synthesis he had always sought within himself in response to the immensity of the world: with landscapes (5), still lifes (7), the tree (35), and the Pier and Ocean (45). Reconnecting the outer world with the inner world was the purpose of his entire life.

Nor do I believe that Mondrian calculated the phases of the process observed in *BBW* in the way it is explained here. I am rather inclined to believe that the sequence took shape with no premeditation while the painting was being born. I say this on the basis of my experience as a painter, having worked on compositions the true meaning of which I only discovered much later.

Cézanne: *"If one feels in the right way, one will think in the right way. Painting is first of all a way of looking. The subject matter of our art is there, in what our eyes think."*²⁵

I believe that Mondrian gave shape to the composition in a spontaneous and intuitive way, adding, removing, and modifying the parts in no precise order. To tell the truth, I do not believe that Mondrian ever consciously visualized this process even after finishing the work. In his interview with J.J. Sweeney in 1943, he declared his inability to express what he was doing with sufficient clarity.

Mondrian did not conceive *BBW* in the way it is explained here. He painted it, and for a painter, for a true artist, painting is equivalent to thinking. The reflections and explanations come only later, if at all, when it is all over and done with. A true artist is wholly involved in the intuitive interplay dictated by the eye and not in reflective reasoning.

Consider a yellow line that continues uninterruptedly and a red small square inside it. When the painter adds one and then another small gray square that work with the red to form a symmetrical configuration, he is not thinking about its conceptual meanings. Not at all. He sees and takes pleasure in placing the second small gray square that lends slightly more stability to the red point immersed in the rectilinear yellow flow. His eye delights in seeing the brighter contrasting colors take on a measured form and an appropriate proportional relationship. Mondrian sees the line expand and the small square give birth to a movement of concentration. There is no need to think. The painter sees and what he sees goes straight to the heart. This is how I believe he worked, the way a true artist works.

* * *

I think it necessary to say a few words also about the title Mondrian gave this painting. It may have been as a tribute to the place that offered him a home, as he had already paid tribute to Paris with a work entitled *Place de la Concorde* and to London with *Trafalgar Square*. The title has, however, given rise to no small number of misunderstandings by suggesting superficial parallels with the outward appearance of the city of New York.

The painting obviously has very little to do with the theaters of Broadway, the lights of the skyscrapers, or the street plan of Manhattan. If we really want to stick to the city where the image took shape, we could if anything think in terms of its pulsating rhythm, of the contrasts, the constant movement, the infinite variety of humanity, situations, and disparate elements that make up New York. I would attach little importance to any direct links with boogie-woogie music, which the painter certainly loved.

He pointed out in his interview with Sweeney that he saw true boogie-woogie *"as harmonizing in intention to his own aim in painting: the destruction of melody, which is equivalent to the destruction of natural appearances, and construction through the constant opposition of pure means: dynamic rhythm."*²⁶

Always keenly aware of the educational function of art, Mondrian used an analogy with boogie-woogie, as earlier with the fox trot and jazz, to suggest a

parallel helping us to understand plastic expression at a different level from the image, with a language, i.e. that of music, which is perhaps the closest to Neoplastic painting, since music has been expressed in abstract terms from the very outset. I do not believe, however, that Mondrian ever intended with *BBW*, as with other works of his, to give pictorial form to a certain type of music, or indeed that music was the primary source of inspiration for his compositions. What the fox trot or boogie-woogie may have in common with Mondrian's paintings is the fact that both music and images tend to create dynamic sequences. The analogy with music must, however, serve toward the full understanding and enjoyment of painting.

No, *BBW* is not to be understood through reference to its title. The substance of things lies and remains wholly in the visual data. Those capable of seeing in the painting only what the title suggests to them will have to wait until their vision becomes more finely honed and reveals the deeper reality, which lies always and exclusively in images and not in words, at least in the case of the visual arts.

As Mondrian observed, "*A true critic can, simply by drawing upon the depths of his humanity and observing with purity, write about the new forms of art even without a knowledge of the working technique (...). But a true critic is somewhat rare.*" ²⁷

* * *

Let us finally have a look at *Victory Boogie Woogie* - **73** -, a canvas that Mondrian worked on at the same time as *BBW* and that was to remain unfinished after various episodes of reworking.

A photograph of 1942 shows the artist laying out *VBW* in continuous, uniform lines that he presumably then divided to form a variety of planes. He believed that the painting was actually finished at a certain point but later felt dissatisfied with the result and reworked the canvas with modifications that death prevented him from making permanent. The canvas was thus left with the colored tape provisionally added during the phase of rethinking, and it is my impression that this was no coincidence. I believe that *VBW* was necessarily left incomplete. I shall explain the reasons for this conviction after analyzing the painting.

The canvas is the same size as the one used for *BBW* but this time in the lozenge position.

What characterizes the composition at first sight is a further increase in multiplicity.

Another significant difference with respect to *BBW* consists in the almost complete absence of continuity in the lines, which are reduced to seven horizontal and two vertical rectilinear sequences. The lines appear continuous in *BBW* because the space between the small squares is predominantly yellow. The rectilinear sequences of *VBW* are instead made up of a tighter rhythm of small squares, so closely arranged as to reduce the sense of linear continuity to the absolute minimum. In *VBW* the small planes are laid out in rectilinear sequences whose continuity disappears with changes in the color, size, and position of the planes.

In *BBW* the planes are generated by the lines and return to them; in *VBW* lines and planes seem to become one and the same thing.

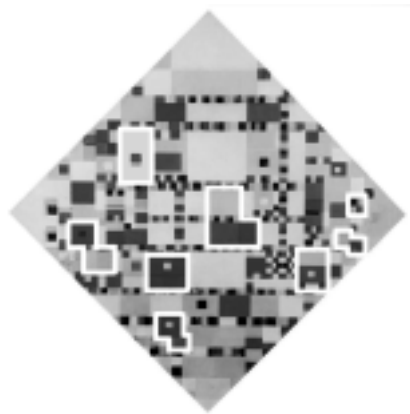
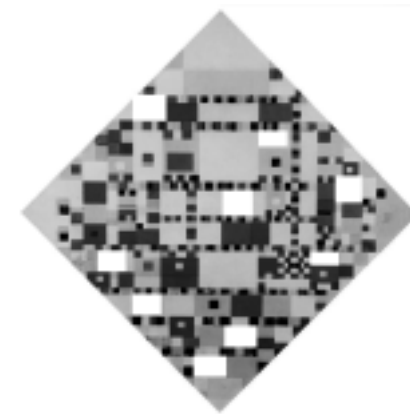
While the space is nevertheless very dynamic (not least because of the lozenge format), its dynamism is the result of a virtually unlimited number of planes interacting with one another. While the finite dimension of the planes appears to predominate now, their enormous number and variety tend to evoke an infinite space. The infinite space of the lines is now expressed through the finite space of the planes.

Transition from smaller to larger planes involves an increase in spatial duration and vice versa.

Everything varies in this painting, as it does in *BBW*, but we no longer see any process leading to a unitary synthesis. It is multiplicity that predominates here.

VBW appears to present an endless sequence of possible syntheses of yellow, red, and blue manifested in constantly varying forms (diagram 73 **a**). In actual fact, this is precisely what *BBW* tells us: unitary synthesis opens up again to multiplicity. We encounter a great many instances of partial unity (including white) in *VBW*, but not one that holds for the composition as a whole. All the planes are in a state of reciprocal motion. They are all relative and there is not one that establishes itself as a synthesis of all the others. I am reminded of the multiethnic society of New York, where all cultures and all religions necessarily assume relative value.

This difference between *BBW* and *VBW* recalls the transitional relationship of 28 years earlier between **45** and **45.1**. There too, the clearly visible unitary synthesis seen in the former opens up and dissolves in the manifold space of the latter, where the variable aspect increases and there is no longer any unity to be seen.

73 **a**73 **b**73 **c**

We mentioned unitary syntheses in white. A white form verging on the square can be seen in the upper section (diagram 73 **b** A). On the left we see a white plane (B) (with the same proportions as the unitary synthesis of *BBW*) inside which two small notes of color (yellow and red) are born. These then develop linear sequences inside a third white area (C), which is analogous in its proportions to the square (A). The synthesis we see in A is manifold at the same time (C). All the colors (C) blossom from the white (A): first the two small accents of yellow and red (B) and then more substantial sequences of yellow, red, and blue (C).

A quick view taking in the composition as a whole picks out a group of yellow planes that seem to evoke something more constant (diagram 73 **c**). On clo-

ser observation, we note that the eight yellow planes present analogous amounts of color but vary in their proportions or present the same proportions but vary in terms of position and relations with the surrounding parts. We are thus observing either different entities that are related to the same thing or the "same" entity in a state of becoming, constantly changing in appearance: the one and the many. Here too, as in the canvases of 1930, there is nothing more different than things that appear to be almost the same.

Mondrian shows us this broader variation of yellow in order to suggest that the variety he intends to evoke is in actual fact far greater than the canvas can display. It prompts us to imagine all the other different shapes, sizes, and proportions that the white, gray, red, and blue could also assume in all the possible positions and reciprocal relations: a truly infinite "landscape".

BBW already presents something similar. In diagram **D 7** the three yellow planes (O, P, Q) containing a gray rectangle actually constitute a small variation of the same degree of spatial development, the variation of one and the "same" thing constantly changing in form. The degree of variability the painter wishes to express is far greater than what manifests itself on the canvas. The possible variants of every passage are in fact endless and in no way restricted to what the image can display.

As noted above, *VBW* is characterized by the almost complete disappearance of lines, a crucial component of Neoplastic space all the way up to *BBW*. In *VBW* lines and planes become the same thing and the sense of multiplicity or totality previously expressed through the continuity of the lines now appears to be wholly concentrated inside the canvas. This has a precise meaning upon which it is necessary to reflect.

Neoplastic lines were born when the oval of the Cubist period (1913-16) expanded beyond the finite space of the canvas (**45, 46, 47**) and the planes joined (**48**) to generate linear segments (**49, 50**) that then became continuous lines (**51**). The totality of space expressed by the oval as a whole within the canvas (**45**) opened up (1916-19) and became a totality manifested through lines that continue uninterruptedly (**51**). The idea of totality conceived in a metaphysical form (the oval) gave way to the assumed totality of real space, to which the canvas belongs and the lines allude.

The manifold aspect of space underwent constant reduction as from 1919 (**51, 52, 53, 54**). Mondrian's Neoplastic compositions attained greater synthesis in the early 1920s because the artist saw the finite space of the canvas connecting with the objective space of the world through lines. The lines performed the vital function of maintaining a link between the limited space of the pictorial representation and the infinite space of reality.

Mondrian thus concentrated all through the 1920s on unitary synthesis (the square form), which admitted color, opened up, and multiplied (all the compositions based on the layouts labeled N. II, N. III, and N. IV, e.g. **55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63**). He saw the need for the finite space of the canvas to open up to the diversity of the world. The unitary synthesis expanded beyond the canvas almost as though in an attempt to coincide with the infinite space evoked by the lines, especially in the lozenge compositions (**64**).

As from 1934, when the compositions gradually opened up once again to complexity (from **65** to **70**) and the lines blossomed into color (**71**) as a multitude of small squares (**72**), the sense of totality displayed in a virtual way only by the black lines manifested itself in tangible and concrete form within the canvas. It was as though the uniform black lines had contracted to draw all of the variety previously situated outside the painting back into the canvas. In *VBW* the lines appear as sequences of small squares or planes that begin, develop, and end inside the canvas. The lines no longer continue beyond the edges of the canvas because "all" of the manifold aspect of the world is now manifested inside the canvas itself. Subjective representation seeks to coincide with the objective reality of the world.

Manifold space, previously expressed as assumed and non-visible infinite extension (the continuity of the black lines), gives way to manifold space understood as the largest amount of variation wholly visible inside the painting: variety that had not been seen since **51**; multiplicity that the painter had endea-

vored between 1920 and 1933 (from **52** to **64**) to drive beyond the canvas with lines in order to concentrate on a unity designed to express both the one and the many at the same time (**64**).

From this viewpoint, the Neoplastic lines could be seen as a sort of "memorandum" serving for over twenty years as an ideal link between the representational space of art and the space of reality (the oval) and then dissolving on the return of the latter (the variety of planes).

The lines in *VBW* restore all the variety of the world to the composition, which means that the totality of space (formerly expressed by the oval) re-enters the canvas in the two last paintings.

The whole of the European Neoplastic phase is a slow and gradual opening up of unity to multiplicity (from **45** to **72**). The one finally opens up to the point of coinciding with the many (**73**). While it is unity that alludes to virtual multiplicity in **64**, it is multiplicity that alludes to a series of possible unities in **73**.

This is probably what Mondrian felt in his heart but was not yet able to explain clearly when he said that there was too much that was old even in *BBW*. While the painting does express a high degree of multiplicity, he probably saw something old in the fact that it was still necessary to evoke a part of reality virtually through the continuity of the lines.

In talking about this work, the artist is also said to have expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of yellow, which is tantamount to saying the same thing. He must have felt that lines were still excessively present in *BBW*.

Lines are the primary means of expression in drawing, just as colored planes are in painting.

The lines become planes in *BBW*, and everything is a plane in *VBW*.

Mondrian was again dissatisfied with *VBW*, and I can understand this. Some parts are not resolved very well and it is now impossible to understand what state the composition was in when the painter initially decided that it could be regarded as a finished work. The area of space in the left corner of the lozenge is weak because the two small black planes abruptly interrupt the rhythm flowing from the central section. There is also something wrong with the section on the right, where a marked concentration of small planes can be seen, and with the area by the upper corner of the lozenge, which appears to be unduly summary. With compositions of this sort, one could obviously work for some years before obtaining an even barely satisfactory result.

I myself recently finished a composition begun three years earlier and am still unsure whether it all works as it should.

I shall return to *VBW* and the artist's work as a whole in the next chapter and explain my reasons for believing that this painting was in any case bound to remain unfinished.