

**Eden on Earth:**  
**An Analysis of Piet Mondrian's Later Works**

Matthew Fastow

**In a Tortoiseshell:** *In this art history paper, Matthew explores the potential factors in Piet Mondrian's decision, upon entering the United States, to shift his aesthetics towards the naturalism he had previously disavowed. Matthew's **roadmap thesis** lays out the topics his paper will explore, without giving us all of his conclusions. By **motivating** not only his paper as a whole, but also individual arguments, paragraphs, and sentences, Matthew dexterously complicates his arguments; with a prose **style** that prioritizes rhythm and narrative, he makes sure we stay along for the ride.*

“The creation of a sort of Eden is not impossible if there is the will.”

—Piet Mondrian<sup>1</sup>

Of all the metropolitan scenery which Mondrian admired in New York City, perhaps the electric street lamps were his favorite. He had frequently complained about his Parisian studio's gas lamp, which bathed the space in flickers too natural and too rhythmic. Electric light provided the ideal antidote to such issues: its “evenness, its disengagement from natural rhythm, and its ‘abstraction’” complemented Mondrian's aesthetic tastes.<sup>2</sup> Mesmerized, Mondrian began to paint at night, transmuting his visceral fascination into artistic creation. It comes as no surprise, then, that the color yellow came to dominate Mondrian's later work; he makes fifteen out of twenty-two lines in *New York City I* (Fig. 1) yellow, and *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (Fig. 2) comprises of a predominantly yellow grid, peppered with brief, energetic pulses of blue, red, and gray.<sup>3</sup>

Following this logic, the physical similarities between *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and the city begin to unravel. Fauchereau equates the flickering coloured rectangles to New York's towering skyscrapers and billboards;<sup>4</sup> Jaffe cites the “daily rhythm of New York itself [and] the pulsating movement that animates Broadway” as the driving force behind the painting.<sup>5</sup> It is not difficult to imagine the painting as an abstracted representation of New York's grid from above. The atomized bands intersect orthogonally as city streets would, dotted with the automobiles which traverse them, and the coloured rectangles resemble skyscrapers viewed from above: a series of concentric rectangles, almost suggesting a hint of illusory depth. The MoMa's own gallery label from 2011 discusses its resemblance to “the city's grid, the movement of traffic, and blinking electric lights.”<sup>6</sup>

While astute in observing the connection between painting and city, these texts fail to recognize the implications of their statements. Any representational form, no matter how subtle, stood antithetical to Neoplasticism's ideological basis. Mondrian had spent his entire life eliminating any remnants of naturalistic transposition from his work: a trajectory originating with paintings such as *Red Tree*—a synthesis of Pointillist technique, Fauvist color, and van Gogh's expressionist brushwork—and culminating perhaps in *Tableau I* (Fig. 3)—a work which abolishes the figure-ground opposition, which evokes a transcendental order beyond reality, which examines objective plastic relationships at the expense of subjective form. To him, naturalistic form was nothing more than “a hindrance.”<sup>7</sup> Why would Mondrian abruptly backtrack on his foundational principles?

Beyond the resemblance between city and painting, Mondrian violates a second tenant of his Neoplastic philosophy: individualism vs. universalism. Mondrian had long attempted to purge his paintings of the particular, of any sense of individual subjectivity. Art, to him, was “The absolute and annihilating opposition of subjective sensations.”<sup>8</sup> (Jaffe points out that Mondrian and Kandinsky arrived at abstraction from diametrically opposed directions: one exploring the essential properties behind reality, the other subjectively reacting to orchestral music.)<sup>9</sup> Mondrian described his *New York* paintings, however, by claiming that “This is what New York meant to me when I first saw it...”<sup>10</sup> A divide arises between these two quotes; how could Mondrian despise subjective impressions so deeply, and yet create artwork stemming from his own visceral reactions to New York?

With Mondrian's meticulous thought, care, and perfectionism, we must note that it is unlikely such divergence from custom was merely accidental or groundless. It becomes necessary, then, to investigate what prompted Mondrian to vary his aesthetic style upon entering America. I explore three potential factors in Mondrian's decision: the first about his interactions with American artists, the second about public reception of his art, and the third about his membership within the *De Stijl* movement.

Upon Mondrian's arrival in New York, American artists were busy negotiating the fraught sociopolitical dynamics of a post-Depression landscape. Many became government employees during the 1930s, participating in programs to promote the arts among the public; however, this work brought them into interaction with the public's hostile view towards abstract art. Due to their relative isolation from European culture, and due to the Depression-era ethos of frugality, Americans criticized abstraction for its lack of social relevance.<sup>11</sup> Mondrian confronted such criticism head-on upon entering New York.

Mondrian also developed close friendships with American artists who vocally opposed non-representational art. The most important of these was perhaps Charmion von Wiegand, who helped Mondrian translate his writings into English and make the language more accessible to a widespread audience. At the time, von Wiegand was a vocal and unapologetic critic of abstraction, remarking that “[she] did not understand pure abstract art, finding it ‘cold’ and ‘without content’... art meant painting objects from nature, no matter how distorted... Mondrian had gone beyond this into what seemed a bleak mathematical world.”<sup>12</sup>

We can compare one of von Wiegand’s earlier works—*City Lights* (Fig. 4)—with *Broadway Boogie Woogie* to demonstrate their mutually influential relationship. Like Mondrian, von Wiegand heavily accentuates yellow, reminiscent of city streets at night time. While most of her naturalistic forms have dissolved into the abstract grid, several remnants of the city are still visible: a small streetlamp resides at the top-center of the work, flanked by two luminous orbs on either side. She scatters four upper yellow semispheres throughout the painting, each redolent of the sun setting over a skyscraper, and several inverted conical shapes remind us of urban searchlights scanning the misty skies. Similarly, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* presents a yellow-dominated grid, subtly hinting at representational forms (billboards, city streets, skyscrapers). While von Wiegand focuses more on the austere, metallic exteriors to New York’s buildings, Mondrian adopts a more celebratory tone, capturing its culture and its nightlife. And although von Wiegand includes more direct allusion to naturalistic forms, the interaction between the two paintings is evident.

While many have written about Mondrian’s influence on subsequent American abstractionists, few have considered the possibility that Mondrian himself was influenced by American figurative art. It is known that, at the very least, American artists introduced Mondrian to the medium of colored tape, which inspired him to inject color into his previously black grid.<sup>13</sup> This tactic also generated a sense of illusory depth into his paintings, since each intersection point had to favor one color over the other. *New York City I* bears similar compositional techniques to a painting by Burgoyne Diller from just four years prior, *Second Theme* (Fig. 5); both employ orthogonal colored bands, overlapping to create a depth which Mondrian had staunchly avoided in his earlier Neoplastic work.

Along with influence from American artists, Mondrian’s guiding philosophy might have differed from what conventional wisdom assumes. Most view Mondrian as the uncompromising champion of objectivity, in eternal pursuit of the essential and the universal. Bois however points out that, above all, Mondrian opposed any “axiomatization” of his art, and that he worked through intuition rather than calculation.<sup>14</sup> As such, Mondrian disliked any fixed, categorical perception

of his art. Back in the 1920s, Mondrian frequented various Dada soirées with van Doesburg;<sup>15</sup> it is possible that he acquired this subversive nature from such gatherings. Just as the saying “Dada is Anti-Dada” goes, Mondrian’s opposition towards categorization could have driven him to reincorporate quasi-naturalistic forms into his work.

Fer also warns us to take Mondrian’s Neoplastic writings with a grain of salt. She describes his work as a “permanent state of differentiation,” in which principles were not solidified in advance but rather established retroactively.<sup>16</sup> Mondrian’s writings allowed him to “figure out” what he was painting, and in doing so, ignored the anomalies “in favour of a desired resolution in unity and essence.”<sup>17</sup> Since Mondrian painted *Broadway Boogie Woogie* so close to his death, he might have not had the time to tailor or to augment his Neoplastic philosophy to incorporate this new colorful aesthetic style.

Mondrian had also withstood lifelong criticism from those who believed Neoplasticism held little capacity for evolution or change.<sup>18</sup> Such criticism partially accounted for his shift away from the checkerboard-like symmetrical grid, prompting him to explore asymmetry in depth. Recall *Composition: Checkerboard with Light Colors* (Fig. 6). While Mondrian thought that the piece harbored a repetition and a rhythm too naturalistic, he also worried that it was an artistic dead-end, that he would continue to rearrange colored squares in arbitrary fashion ad infinitum. He thus moved on to asymmetrical works such as *Tableau I* and *2*. Similarly, Mondrian capitalized on his fascination with New York City to prove that Neoplasticism was still a malleable field.

Harry Holtzman, a close friend of Mondrian in his final years, claims that Mondrian saw himself as a “social instrument,” geared towards ultimately producing “social and cultural progress.”<sup>19</sup> As mentioned above, Mondrian withstood more criticism of his art upon entering America, since the public was less receptive to abstraction than his European audience. Consequently, the aesthetic leaps taken in *Broadway Boogie Woogie* might have stemmed from Mondrian’s desire to appeal to a wider audience, to make key modifications so that abstraction might ultimately flourish in this new homeland. Greenberg famously wrote that art appeals to more people when there is “no discontinuity between art and life”;<sup>20</sup> perhaps Mondrian’s New York works could be his compromise between his purely Neoplastic values and his impetus towards social progress.

In addition to the public perception of his work, we must also consider Mondrian’s admiration of New York City in further depth. Between 1917 and 1924, Mondrian was intimately involved in the *De Stijl* movement, which advocated for the extension of Neoplastic aesthetics into other fields, primarily architecture and interior design. One of the greatest examples of this



expansion was the Rietveld Schröder house, which included only primary colors and various shades of gray, comprised mainly of rectangular panels, and drew little distinction between interior and exterior space.<sup>21</sup>

To Mondrian and other *De Stijl* artists, one house was simply not enough. Mondrian yearned for the day when abstract art would eventually merge with the environment, when his ideals of universalism and egalitarianism would manifest on a global scale, when humankind could finally forge their own Eden. He laid down several ground rules for the architecture of this new Eden in his essay “Home—Street—City”:

“1. Surfaces will be smooth and bright, which will also relieve the heaviness of the materials. This is one of the many cases where Neoplastic art agrees with hygiene, which demands smooth, easily cleaned surfaces.

2. The Natural color of materials must also disappear as far as possible under a layer of pure color or of noncolor (black, white, or gray).”<sup>22</sup>

It is not far-fetched that, for Mondrian, New York City became the quintessential embodiment of his hypothetical Eden. The Great Depression had spawned the construction of an entirely new family of skyscrapers, including the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, and 30 Rockefeller Plaza. Such buildings followed the Art Deco style, which glorified metallic surfaces, and thus stainless steel, chrome plating, and glass windows were heavily integrated into their structure.<sup>23</sup> The entire city, it seemed, began to evolve towards Mondrian’s architectural ideal: surfaces at once smooth, bright, and gray in hue. Moreover, these new modernist structures emphasized geometry (specifically rectangles) in their design; Mondrian’s grid expanded into the third dimension before his very eyes, appearing even to defy gravity.

We can begin to understand why Mondrian felt more comfortable including New York in his paintings than he had been with previous representational forms. He was not capturing the natural rhythms he despised so deeply; rather, he was capturing an environment which had already transcended natural forms in favor of abstract ones.

Let us not ignore the influence American music had on his art as well. Mondrian admired jazz and boogie woogie music for its syncopation, its polyrhythms, and its improvisational tone. This same melodic structure manifests in *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, wherein the blue and red rectangles form a syncopated, ostinato rhythm as we traverse the grid. The intersections, in a sense, divide each coloured band into a series of “measures.” Along the largest vertical corridor,

we see four iterations of the same progression: gray, blue, red, blue. While the colors, or “notes”, remain the same, Mondrian varies the spacing between them, just as a jazz musician would both repeat and augment a particular musical phrase. Mondrian’s most common groupings, in fact, come in threes and fours, mimicking the two most common rhythmic structures in jazz: triplets and swing eighths.

We must also specify why Mondrian admired the rhythms of jazz and not those of his gas light lamp. As Bois points out, a younger Mondrian labeled both rhythm and repetition as components of the “particular” and instead pursued a “nonrepetitive opposition of plastic elements.”<sup>24</sup> In Mondrian’s 1927 essay “Jazz and Neoplastic,” however, he dissociates rhythm from repetition; while repetition still ought to be avoided, the “free rhythm” of jazz generates a harmony through mutual opposition, a balance between complex, syncopated phrases.<sup>25</sup> This structure differs from his gas light lamp because it is no longer so repetitive or formulaic—it perpetually experiments and defies expectations.

Mondrian was not the first modern artist to revert to naturalistic forms in his later career. Picasso famously created several strikingly representational works in around 1920, including *Olga Picasso in an Armchair*, *Seated Woman*, and *Pierrot*. *Seated Woman* (Fig. 7), in particular, appears to violate many tenets of the Cubist aesthetic: clear recessive space, shadows stemming from a single light source, generous use of curvilinear line, and the human figure kept intact. While Picasso still does distort several features of the woman—most notably, enlarging her hands and feet—it is difficult to believe he created *Three Musicians* (Fig. 8) just a year later. In the latter, he adopts the collage techniques of late Cubism, he generates ambiguity between surface and depth, and he dissociates each figure into a collection of polygonal forms. Of these contrasting aesthetics, Picasso remarked: “I do not believe I have used radically different elements... in painting. If the subjects... have suggested different ways of expression I have never hesitated to adopt them.”<sup>26</sup>

The Picasso analogy shows us that it is not entirely unusual for a painter to appear to backtrack on his artistic principles later in his career. But while Picasso had come close, he never completely divorced himself of all representational form as Mondrian had. (As the famous Mondrian saying goes: “Cubism has not accepted the logical consequences of its own discoveries.”) Thus, while *Three Musicians* and *Seated Woman* appear more aesthetically disparate, there arguably exists an even greater divide between *Tableau I* and *Broadway Boogie Woogie*: one presents a purely plastic universe, the other a celebration of our own.

Mondrian’s final years represent a marked break from his previous work, reverting to forms which appear quasi-naturalistic in the context of New York City. During the time, he

developed close friendships with American artists, who encouraged him to integrate new techniques and content into his painting. He also confronted the harsh criticism that Neoplasticism was neither malleable nor socially relevant, and felt the need to address these concerns. And finally, he felt himself captivated with the scenery, the music, and the rhythm of the city, a fascination which inevitably materialized on his canvas.

According to Holtzman, Mondrian cherished his final years in New York City as the “happiest of [his] life,” and he felt more productive there than ever before. His social life, by all indications, blossomed upon entering America, and he frequented the city’s cultural scene, visiting cafes, dancing parties, and gallery shows on a near-nightly basis.<sup>27</sup> From these records, we can draw two tentative conclusions. First, that we must not dismiss his New York works as those “past his prime” and instead attempt to understand the mechanism at work behind his aesthetic shift. And second, that in this radical new explosion of color, especially from an artist historically so restrained, we are witnessing the renaissance of a man reborn in his later years. We are witnessing someone who celebrates the stability and vitality of American life, who previously felt isolated and trapped in a war-torn Europe. To many, it appears odd that such a highly acclaimed artist might alter his aesthetic style so drastically in the final years of his life, although to Mondrian, the drive towards truth, towards discovery, and towards answers had persisted since his earliest days as a painter. Asked to sum up his philosophy of life and art, Mondrian simply wrote two words: “Always further.”<sup>28</sup>

## Image Catalog

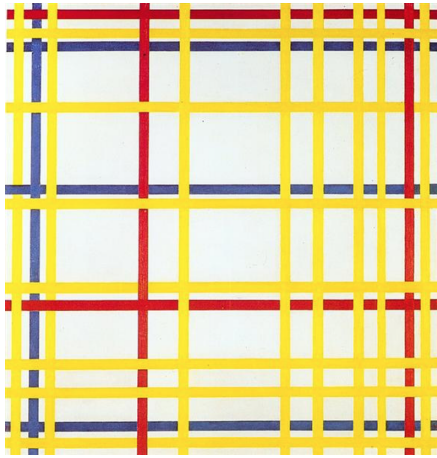


Figure 1. Piet Mondrian, *New York City I*, 1942, oil on canvas, 47.25 x 56.75". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York. Photograph from WikiArt, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/piet-mondrian/new-york-city-i-1942>, accessed January 15, 2018.

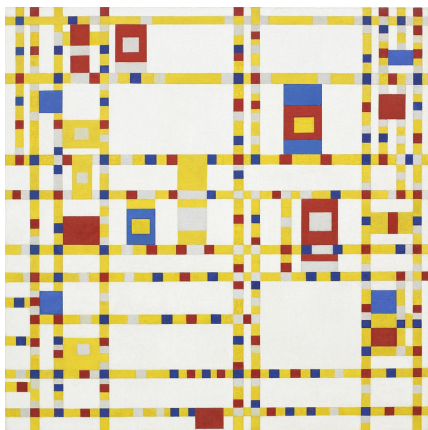


Figure 2. Piet Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, 1942-3, oil on canvas, 50 x 50". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph from MoMA website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78682>, accessed January 15, 2018.

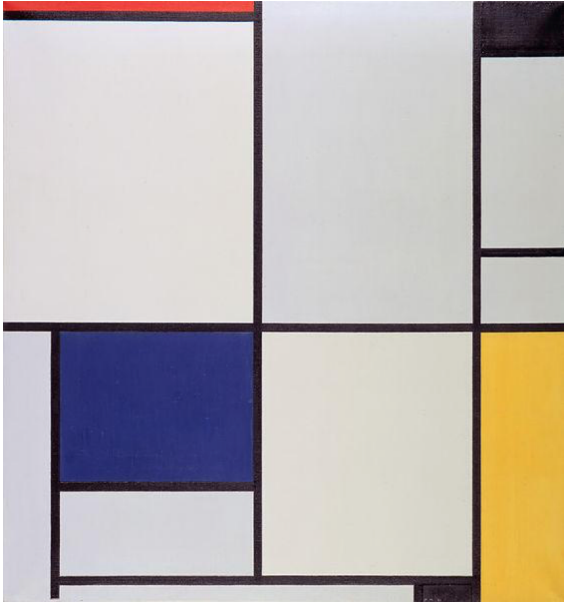


Figure 3. Piet Mondrian, *Tableau I*, 1921, oil on canvas, 40.5 x 39.4". Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph from Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tableau\\_I,\\_by\\_Piet\\_Mondriaan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tableau_I,_by_Piet_Mondriaan.jpg), accessed January 15, 2018.



Figure 4. Charmion von Wiegand, *City Lights*, 1947, oil on canvas, 32 x 24". The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Photograph from Pinterest, <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/1d/a0/19/1da0195016e39cb0518ba8d1d0277783.png>, accessed January 15, 2018.

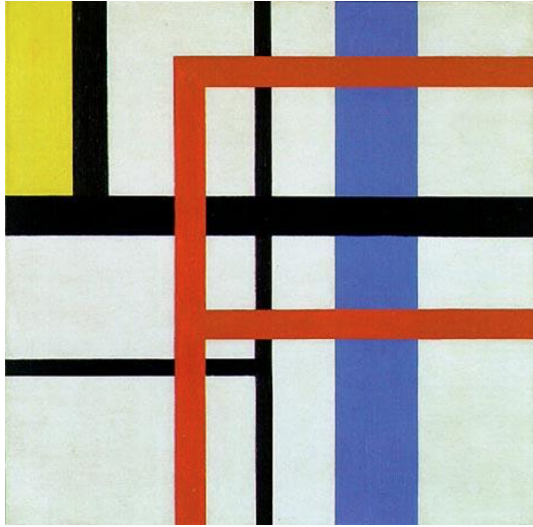


Figure 5. Burgoyne Diller, *Second Theme*, 1937-8, oil on canvas, 30 x 30". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photograph from Met website, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/489306>, accessed January 15, 2018.

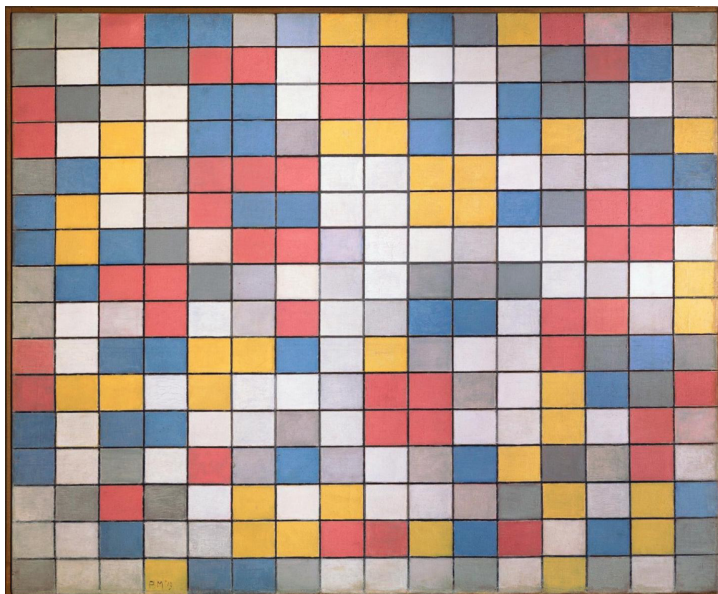


Figure 6. Piet Mondrian, *Checkerboard: Composition with Light Colors*, 1919, oil on canvas, 33.9 x 41.7". Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph from the Charnel-House, <https://thecharnelhouse.org/2015/09/04/mondrian-order-and-randomness-in-abstract->

painting-1978/piet-mondrian-title-composition-with-grids-checkerboard-composition-with-light-colors-work-type-painting-date-1919-material-oil-on-canvas-measurements-86-x-106-cm/, accessed January 15, 2018.



Figure 7. Pablo Picasso. *Seated Woman*, 1920, oil on canvas, 36.25 x 25.5". Musée Picasso, Paris. Photograph from Studio International, [http://studiointernational.com/images/articles/p/picasso-2016/picasso\\_seated\\_woman.jpg](http://studiointernational.com/images/articles/p/picasso-2016/picasso_seated_woman.jpg), accessed January 15, 2018.





Figure 8. Pablo Picasso. *Three Musicians*, 1921, oil on canvas, 79 x 87.75". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph from MoMA website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78630>, accessed January 15, 2018.

#### Notes

1. Piet Mondrian, "Home—Street—City," in *Piet Mondrian: The Wall Works, 1943-44* (New York: Carpenter & Hochman, 1984), 26.
2. Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990), 176.
3. John Milner, *Mondrian* (New York: Abbeville, 1992), 176.
4. Serge Fauchereau, *Mondrian and the Neo-Plasticist Utopia*, trans. David Macey (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), 35.
5. Hans Ludwig C. Jaffé, *Mondrian* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1969), 123.
6. The Museum of Modern Art, *MoMA Highlights* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 187, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78682>.
7. Piet Mondrian, *The New Art—The New Life: the Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986), 77.
8. *Ibid.*, 135.
9. Jaffé, *Mondrian*, 9.
10. Nancy Troy, *Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1979), 9.
11. *Ibid.*, 6.
12. *Ibid.*, 12.
13. *Ibid.*, 9.
14. Bois, *Painting as Model*, 163.
15. Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 33.
16. *Ibid.*, 35.
17. *Ibid.*, 37.
18. Troy, *Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America*, 5.
19. Harry Holtzman, "Introduction," in *Piet Mondrian: The Wall Works, 1943-44* (New York: Carpenter & Hochman, 1984), 4.
20. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 545.



21. Nancy Troy, *The De Stijl Environment* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), 12.
22. Mondrian, "Home—Street—City," 28.
23. Richard Strinter, "Art Deco: Polemics and Synthesis," *Winterthur Portfolio* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 23, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1181301>.
24. Bois, *Painting as Model*, 161.
25. Ibid., 162.
26. Pablo Picasso, "Picasso Speaks," in *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 217.
27. Holtzman, "Introduction," 4.
28. Jaffé, *Mondrian*, 9.

*Author Commentary*

Matthew Fastow

Modern art arose, in large part, as a rejection of earlier Renaissance and Neo-Classical movements. Think Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel or Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Marat*—these are incredibly detailed, complex, and most importantly, “naturalistic” canvases (meaning they mimic what we see). Many Modernists, Mondrian included, attempted to purge their canvases of these naturalistic, hyper-detailed figures in favor of what they considered the “essence” of a given object or idea.

As I sat in Professor Hal Foster's ART 213 (Modernist Art: 1900-1950) class—a bit lost, I might add—I contemplated this push towards abstraction and what it entailed. If Mondrian's goal was to render purely objective forms, how might “objectivity” appear visually? Why would Mondrian consider rectangles more objective than, say, circles? Why a larger canvas over a smaller one?

I found little justification for these seemingly arbitrary decisions in either Mondrian's writings or the literature surrounding them. (To complicate it further, different modern artists presented different solutions.) I did, however, find a coherent set of guidelines outlining what Mondrian thought his art ought to look like. Thus, my motive emerged as a comparison between Mondrian's self-imposed guidelines and his physical paintings, exploring the harmonies and dissonances generated through their interaction.

This motive created an initial problem for me: how could I reconcile an incredibly theoretical corpus of writing with a material canvas? I made several stylistic choices to mitigate this issue. First, I made sure to incorporate ample descriptions of the painting's physical appearance; I found that in discussing modern art—with its uniquely philosophical bent—I tended to get bogged down too deeply in the theory and lose track of the artwork as a visual experience. Second, I discussed the various benefits and drawbacks of Mondrian's writings, presenting them as helpful and yet somewhat flawed interpretations of his work.

I also encountered the issue of weaving together various fields of research in one paper, including architecture, history, music theory, and philosophy. This challenge, too, demanded crucial structural choices. I decided to both start and finish the essay by giving the reader a window through Mondrian's eyes—how he viewed the city, his fellow artists, and his own canvas. This

choice helped integrate the whole argument, in all its diverse shades and hues, into one coherent narrative arc. Moreover, whenever I introduced a new discipline into the essay, I stepped back from the central argument and gave 1/2-1 page of background knowledge on the topic. This way, the reader would not have to struggle and understand both my argument *and* the new material simultaneously.

*Editor Commentary*

Annabel Barry

Matthew's essay, written for an art history course, epitomizes our thematic focus on "anti-thesis." That is, he doesn't offer us a "thesis statement" in the way we traditionally understand it, as a one-sentence summary of his paper's main claim. Instead, he tells us his paper will "explore" the "potential" factors in Piet Mondrian's decision, upon entering the United States, to shift his aesthetics towards the naturalism he had previously disavowed. Here, the key term is "explore," which tells us that Matthew plans to take us on a journey. In keeping with this metaphor, Matthew's thesis acts as a roadmap, helping us to anticipate the structure of the paper, rather than all of its conclusions.

As Matthew's commentary indicates, this is truly an essay about motive. Through his ever mutating argument, he demonstrates a way to re-conceptualize motive, not as a single statement that appears only once towards the beginning of the paper—but as a more consistent inclination towards questioning and complication that can be used to justify the introduction of new ideas, paragraphs, and even sentences at every point. The strains of Matthew's thought might have seemed disparate—he brings together biographical, art critical, philosophical, and aesthetic evidence—except that they always do crucial work within his analysis, allowing his paper to build on, critique, and transform itself as it goes along. Ultimately, Matthew handles complication with an impressive dexterity. He is confident enough to inhabit the space of ambiguity and mystery in relation to art, and he is a deft enough writer to allow us to enjoy this uncertain space as well.

Finally, in commenting on Matthew's writing, something must be said about style. Matthew's writing really sparkles because of his exceptional command of sentence structure, rhythm, and diction. (It is not an out-of-place metaphor to say that Matthew's prose is a work of art.) What most stands out to me about this essay stylistically is its sense of narrativity: its motor is storytelling, rather than thesis. Yet, with a writer like Matthew, it might be said that even in places that seem like pure narrative (or exposition or description), his phrasing is always, subtly, giving us his argument.

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## Bios

**Matthew Fastow '21** hails from Houston, Texas. He plans to concentrate in Astrophysics with a certificate in Creative Writing; as such, his interests lie in bridging the gaps between qualitative and quantitative fields of study. Matthew spends his free time competing on the Princeton Debate Panel, performing slam poetry with Ellipses, writing for *The Nassau Literary Review*, and peeling oranges. He wrote this paper as a freshman.

**Annabel Barry '19** is an English concentrator from Southport, Connecticut, pursuing certificates in Humanistic Studies, European Cultural Studies, and Theater. Outside of her work in the Writing Center, she is co-editor-in-chief of *The Nassau Literary Review* and a set designer for theatrical productions on campus.