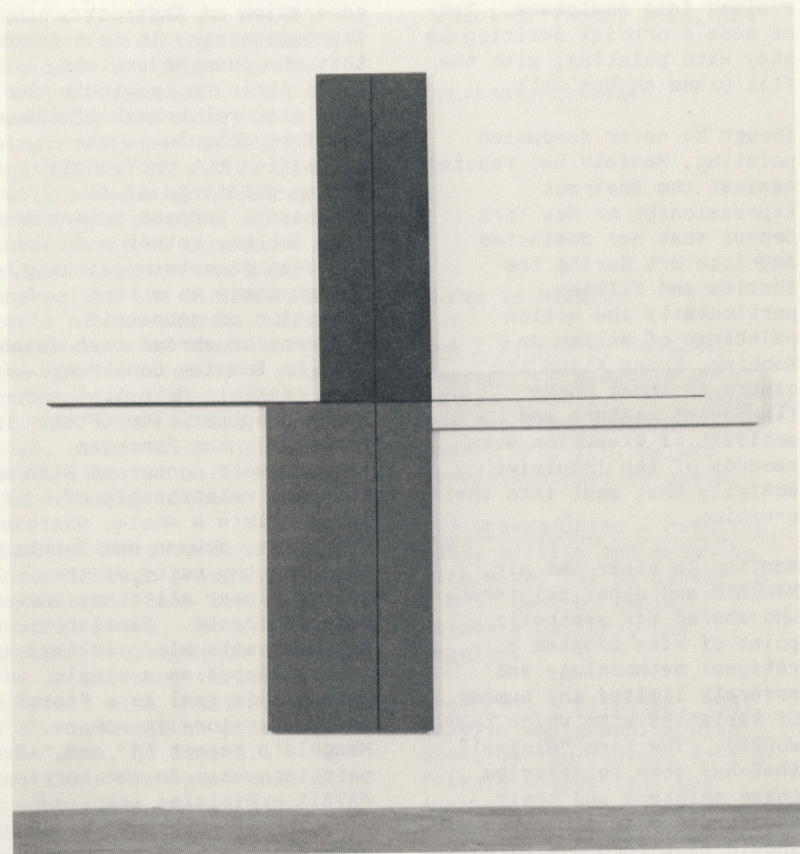


Robert Mangold
MATRIX/BERKELEY 68

University Art Museum
December - mid-January 1984

Red/Green/Yellow + Painting, 1983



During the mid-sixties, artist Robert Mangold noted that "everyone was declaring painting to be dead... sculpture seemed to be a much more exciting area. All the bright people seemed to be heading toward some kind of three-dimensional or situational or environmental thing." At that time, Mangold was making paintings on wood that resembled sections of wall, work that might have evolved into sculpture. Yet he made a crucial decision to stay with painting, with the flat plane on the wall.

Though he never denounced painting, Mangold had reacted against the Abstract Expressionist or New York School that had dominated American art during the forties and fifties, particularly the action paintings of Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and others in whose works flamboyant gesture and accident of execution were records of the intuitive activity that went into their creation.

Wanting to clear the air, Mangold and other painters who shared his aesthetic point of view adopted a rational methodology and severely limited the number of variables with which they worked. The term "Minimal" that has come to describe these painters and their counterparts in sculpture should be understood as a description of means. For the past two decades, Mangold's vocabulary has consisted simply of geometric form, drawn line, and subdued, evenly applied color. The paintings themselves are shaped and sometimes sectioned in geometric configurations. Yet within these strict parameters, Mangold

has achieved a remarkable richness of expression. Along with other leading Minimalists such as Robert Ryman and Brice Marden, Mangold eschews emotionalism and heroics in favor of a feeling of quiet contemplation and enjoyment that derives from order and clarity.

Now that twenty years have elapsed since Minimalist artists broke with the older generation of Abstract Expressionists, it is evident that the younger artists found their roots within the less gestural branch of the New York School--in the simplified but profoundly moving paintings of Ad Reinhardt, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko, rather than in European geometric painting. Though there is a long tradition of geometric abstraction abroad that dates back to Russian Constructivism (Kasimir Malevich) and Dutch Neoplasticism (Piet Mondrian), the European artists were concerned with a balanced relationship of parts within a whole, whereas Reinhardt, Newman and Rothko stressed the unity of the painting over all other surface incidents. Similarly, Mangold wants his paintings to be grasped as a single entity; his goal is a "total unity of color-line-shape." Mangold's recent "X" and "+" paintings seen in the current MATRIX exhibition are a culmination of work that began with the Masonite or wood sectioned paintings of the mid-sixties. Mangold started dividing his circle-segment paintings of the late sixties with pencil lines. The circle and square series occupied much of the early seventies; in the mid-seventies Mangold introduced the triangle into his spare geometric language. The

first X-shaped paintings appeared around 1980. In the earliest works, pale, monochromatic oil paint was applied with an air brush. By 1970 Mangold was working on canvas with brushed acrylic paint in neutral colors and graphite line. Mangold began to use bold reds, yellows and oranges in the late seventies, but no one was prepared for the bursting forth of the rich, saturated color of the X within X paintings shown in New York in 1982. For the first time Mangold was using more than one color in a single work and in highly unusual but effective combinations--aqua/grey/ochre; green/aqua/orange. Always subordinate to structure in his work, color now also emphasizes the structural parts of the canvas. Another new feature of these works is the line created by a steel bar that at times bisects one of the "arms" of the paintings, contrasting with the drawn line, or serves as the crossing element itself.

Mangold tends to work out ideas through groups of paintings. Each series spans several years. He now feels that he has begun to exhaust the interesting variations possible with the X's and +'s. Although he preplans each work, he says his decisions are based more on hunches than on rational systems. The next group of works will no doubt continue to manifest the clarity and elegance that has marked Mangold's work from the beginning.

Born in 1937 in upstate New York, Robert Mangold attended the Cleveland Institute of Art before receiving a B.F.A. (1961) and M.F.A. (1963) from Yale University. His works

have been included in individual and group exhibitions throughout the United States and Europe since 1963. A retrospective exhibition of his paintings organized by the Akron Art Museum will travel to the University Art Museum, Berkeley in fall 1985. Mangold lives with his wife, painter Sylvia Plimack Mangold, and family near New York City. He teaches at The School of Visual Arts, New York.

Constance Lewallen

Works in MATRIX:

Red X Within X, 1980-81, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 9'5" x 9'4". Lent by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; T.B. Walker Foundation Fund Purchase.

Red Orange/Green + Painting, 1983, acrylic and graphite with steel bar on canvas, 8' x 8'. Lent by Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles.

Green/Red + Painting, 1983, acrylic and graphite with steel bar on canvas, 8' x 8'. Private Collection, Los Angeles.

Green/Aqua/Orange + Painting, 1983, acrylic and graphite with steel bar on canvas, 8' x 8'. Lent by Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles.

Red/Green/Yellow + Painting, 1983, acrylic and graphite with steel bar on canvas, 8' x 8'. Private Collection, Los Angeles.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Fischbach Gallery, NY, '67, '69, '70, '71, '73; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, '71, catalogue; Lisson Gallery, London, '73, '75, '81; Annemarie Verna, Zurich, Switzerland '73, '78, '81; Daniel Weinberg Gallery, S.F., '73, '76, '83 (Los Angeles); John Weber Gallery, NY, '74, '76, '77, '79, '80, catalogue; Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, W. Germany, '74, '76, '79, '82; Sidney Janis Gallery, NY, '82; Stedelijk Museum, Holland, Paintings 1970-1982, '82, catalogue.

Selected group exhibitions:

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, Systemic Painting, '66, catalogue; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA, A Romantic Minimalism, '67, catalogue; Bykert Gallery, NY, '67; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, Modular Paintings, '70, catalogue; Kassel, W. Germany, Documentas 5, 6, 7, '72, '77, '82, catalogues; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, American Drawings: 1963-1973, '73; The Museum of Modern Art, NY, Drawing Now, '76, catalogue; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, American Painting of the 1970's, '78, catalogue, traveled; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, Biennials, '79, '83, catalogues; Tyler Museum of

Selected bibliography about the artist (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

Lippard, Lucy. "New York, Robert Mangold, Thibaut Gallery," Artforum, March '64.

Battcock, Gregory, ed. Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology (NY: Dutton, 1968).

Lippard, Lucy. "Silent Art: Robert Mangold," Changing (NY: Dutton, 1971).

Kraus, Rosalind. "Robert Mangold: An Interview," Artforum, March '74.

Masheck, Joseph. "A Humanist Geometry," Artforum, March '74.

Rose, Barbara. American Art Since 1900: A Critical History (NY: Praeger, 1974).

White, Robin. "Interview," View (Oakland, CA: Crown Point Press, '78).
Cohen, Ronny. "Robert Mangold." Art News, Sept. '82.

Groot, Paul. "Robert Mangold, Stedelijk Museum," Artforum, March '83.

MATRIX is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency.