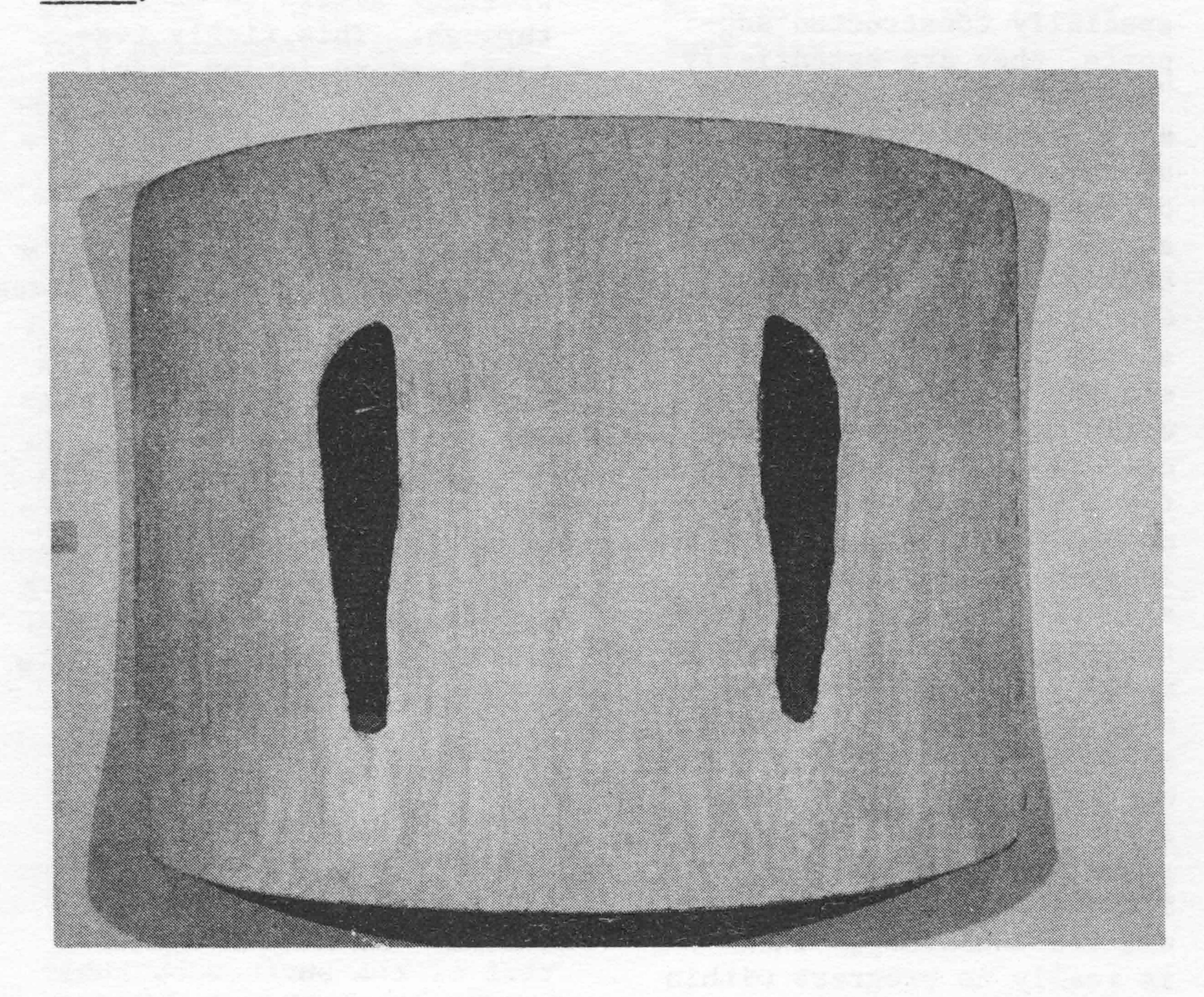
Comet, 1974



The salient characteristic of Ron Gorchov's paintings is their shape. Gorchov has discarded the traditional flat, rectangular plane as a format for his painting in favor of a shape which bends out from the wall projecting itself into the viewer's space. All of Gorchov's paintings since 1968 are of a similar ideosyncratic configuration. Made of canvas stretched on specially constructed supports, they are essentially "saddle" shaped presenting a surface which advances at the top and bottom edges of the canvas and recedes at the left and right edges. Decidedly nonrectilinear, Gorchov's works replace strict angles with subtle slopes and curves. His works neither enhance nor conform to their architectural surroundings, but assert themselves as highly independent entities. In a recent conversation Gorchov remarks, "I think a reaction against the strict geometry and clean angles of international style archchitecture is a part of our times. A lot of us are looking at primitive cultures that have a different concept of form and craftsmanship. There is really no progress within these concepts, just different ways of approaching them." (conversation May 11, 1978).

Gorchov's peculiar canvases function as a kind of proscenium stage upon which pictorial events occur. The painted surface is a central concern in Gorchov's work. He attaches his canvases to the front of the supporting stretcher bars rather than wrapping them around in the traditional manner. He fastens the canvas with staples which are clearly visible on

the painting surface. Such devices emphasize the fragile, membranous character of the painted surface.

Gorchov covers his canvases with a coat of white primer followed by two or more subsequent layers of pigment. He applies the pigment in loose, vertical strokes with a brush or spatula allowing previous layers to show through. This richly textured underpainting results in an optically fuzzy, slightly luminous field of indeterminate color. For Gorchov, texture and color are integrally related elements. "I'm really more interested," states Gorchov, "in the mechanics of color than its hue. When I'm looking for a color I'm looking for a certain feel to it, how it's going to spread. In almost every case, if it spreads right, it's going to be the right color." (Early Work by Five Contemporary Artists, The New Museum, NY, Nov.-Dec., 1977, p. 7)

Centered within the overall field of Gorchov's surfaces are two abstract symmetrical forms. Set off from the rest of the surface by their color, these forms vary in configuration. In some paintings, they take the form of forceful vertical brush strokes. In other paintings they are organic in appearance assuming lung or kidney-like shapes. In a number of works they are vaguely ovoid. There are always two marks to a canvas, each a mirror image of the other and each approximately the same distance from the edges and center of the canvas. The spatial location of these "marks," as Gorchov refers to them, in relation to the overall ground of the

painting is ambiguous. The marks appear to simultaneously hover over and penetrate into their surrounding field.

The use of symmetrical marks as central images relates obliquely to Gorchov's method of painting. He frequently paints the left side of his canvases with his left hand and the right side with his right hand. This procedure reflects the symmetry of the human body which is in turn reflected in the biomorphic symmetry of Gorchov's canvases and painted marks. Gorchov's paintings suggest the human body as an archetype for creating abstract form. The shape of his canvases roughly corresponds to the shape of the human torso. He acknowledges this association. Speaking of figurative connotations in his work Gorchov remarks, "If there are any figures, I feel that the whole painting is a figure and the marks are the armholes." (Detroit Artists Monthly, June, 1977, p. 7).

The symmetrical and elemental character of Gorchov's abstractions is open to a variety of associations. Numerous critics, for instance, have compared his paintings with primitive tribal art and artifacts, particularly shields and masks. Gorchov's paintings do project a raw presence which one generally associates with so called "primitive" forms of expression. For Gorchov, however, such references are not intentional. He states, "I'm not interested in making mysterious, neo-primitive art, although I've come to the conclusion that allusions are unavoidable. Ultimately, my paintings are about a mood or feeling I'm trying to express at a given time."
(conversation, May 11, 1978).

Ron Gorchov was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1930. He has attended the University of Mississippi, the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Illinois (BFA 1951). He has taught painting at Hunter College in New York and currently teaches painting at Wayne State University in Detroit. He presently lives in New York City.

MA

Works in MATRIX:

Comet, 1974, Oil on canvas, 60 x 75½". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Gifford Phillips, Santa Monica, California.

Untitled, 1974, Oil on canvas, 49½ x 75½". Lent by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Marsteller and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Walk, 1974, Oil on canvas, 51 x 75½". Lent by Lynda Benglis, New York City.

Selected one-person exhibitions:
Tibor de Nagy, NYC '60;
Tibor de Nagy, NYC '63;
Tibor de Nagy, NYC '66;
Everson Museum of Art,
Syracuse NY '72; Fischbach
Gallery, NYC '75; Texas
Gallery, Houston Texas '76;
Susanne Hilberry Gallery,
Birmingham, Michigan '77.

Selected group exhibitions: Stable Gallery, NYC '58; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, Young America 1960-Thirty Painters Under 36, '60; Tibor de Nagy, NYC '61; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, The 1961 Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, '62; Hunter College, NYC, Fine Arts Series, '63; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond VA '64; Waddell Gallery, NYC '65; Westmoreland County Museum, Westmoreland, PA '66; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse NY '71; Bykert Gallery, NYC '73; John Doyle Gallery, Paris, France '74; Pratt Institute, Brooklyn NY '74; California State University, Los Angeles CA, New Work/ New York, '76; School of The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Il '76; Fine Arts Building, NYC '76; State University of New York at Brockport, Brockport NY, Recent Abstract Painting, '76; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, Biennial Exhibition: Contemporary American Art, '77. Selected bibliography about Gorchov:

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<u>Monthly</u>, vol. 2, no. 6 (June 1977), pp. 7-8.

Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC (February 1977).

Davidson, Nancy and Donald Sultan, eds. Name Book 1:

Statements on Art, "Ron Gorchov at Dave's Corner (a tape with Liza Bear)," N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago, Il, 1977, pp. 59-62.

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