Green's Farms

by Ronald A. Kuchta

1. Batuz

For three years, since 1978, Batuz has lived with his family in a big white turn-of-the-century house at Green's Farms, Connecticut, half a mile from the Long Island Sound. The house and its outbuildings once belonged to the co-founder, with Solomon R. Guggenheim, of the Museum of Non-Objective Art in New York, Hilla von Rebay, who filled its rooms with the paintings of Kandinsky, Klee, and other pioneers of the modern movement. In a fortuitous expression of lineage, these same rooms are now filled with the works of Batuz in an informal and constantly changing exhibition that reflects the ongoing development of his art.

Behind the house are a guest house and barn, both used by the artist as studios and work spaces. For the past two years, during the warmer months, he has worked inside and outside the garage of the guest house, preparing his works in paper from large vats of pulp. A lush garden spreads out between the artist's two arenas of artistic activity. It forms part of an ecosystem, a cosmos that is the reality of the artist, created for himself and his family much as he creates his art. With seventy-one varieties of trees, a large vegetable garden, numberless flowers, and a newly planted orchard of fruit trees on the compact property, which borders a bird sanctuary, the natural setting lends an ordered serenity to daily events which are animated by the creative energies of artist and family. His wife Ute, two teenage sons Sasa and Bandy, and daughter Dada all appear productive, growing in their own directions, and healthy. It is the atmosphere of an artist and an aristocrat. His is the life of a rare contemporary humanist, a self-sustaining, independent, and international personality; one who says he prefers being an unknown somebody to being a known nobody.

The place, like the paintings, seems to reflect all that the artist knows

2. Batuz' barn studio at Green's Farms

3. Rear facade and garden of Batuz' house at Green's Farms

Overleaf:

4. Batuz' paper-making, workshop, house, and studio (left to right)

about history and philosophy and life—a synthesis of his life's research. The tensions and tragedies of an exiled experience seem at bay, at a distance here. Batuz says he feels at home here. It reminds him of his ancestral place in Hungary. The same kind of strawberries and currants grow in the garden, which is also layed out similarly to the family garden he remembers in Hungary. He enjoys suburban Connecticut and its proximity to New York, just fifty miles away, though he visits the city infrequently, commuting to his previous home, Buenos Aires, and to Europe almost as frequently over the past few years.

To the artist, the kind of life he lives is essential to his art. America, he feels, has given him support and instigated his present work rather than influenced him with its own art. What he likes about the United States is that it is a society which permits him to do his job, which gives a form of "open support" rather than sponsorship. Here he can work and dream and think with a degree of independence, holding off for the time being the pressures of the commercial and political art world.

He questions whether he would have been better off and in a stronger position if he had lived in one place rather than in four—Hungary, Austria, Argentina, and now America—but muses that per-

5. Batuz in his Green's Farms studio. *No. 48, Omen* at left

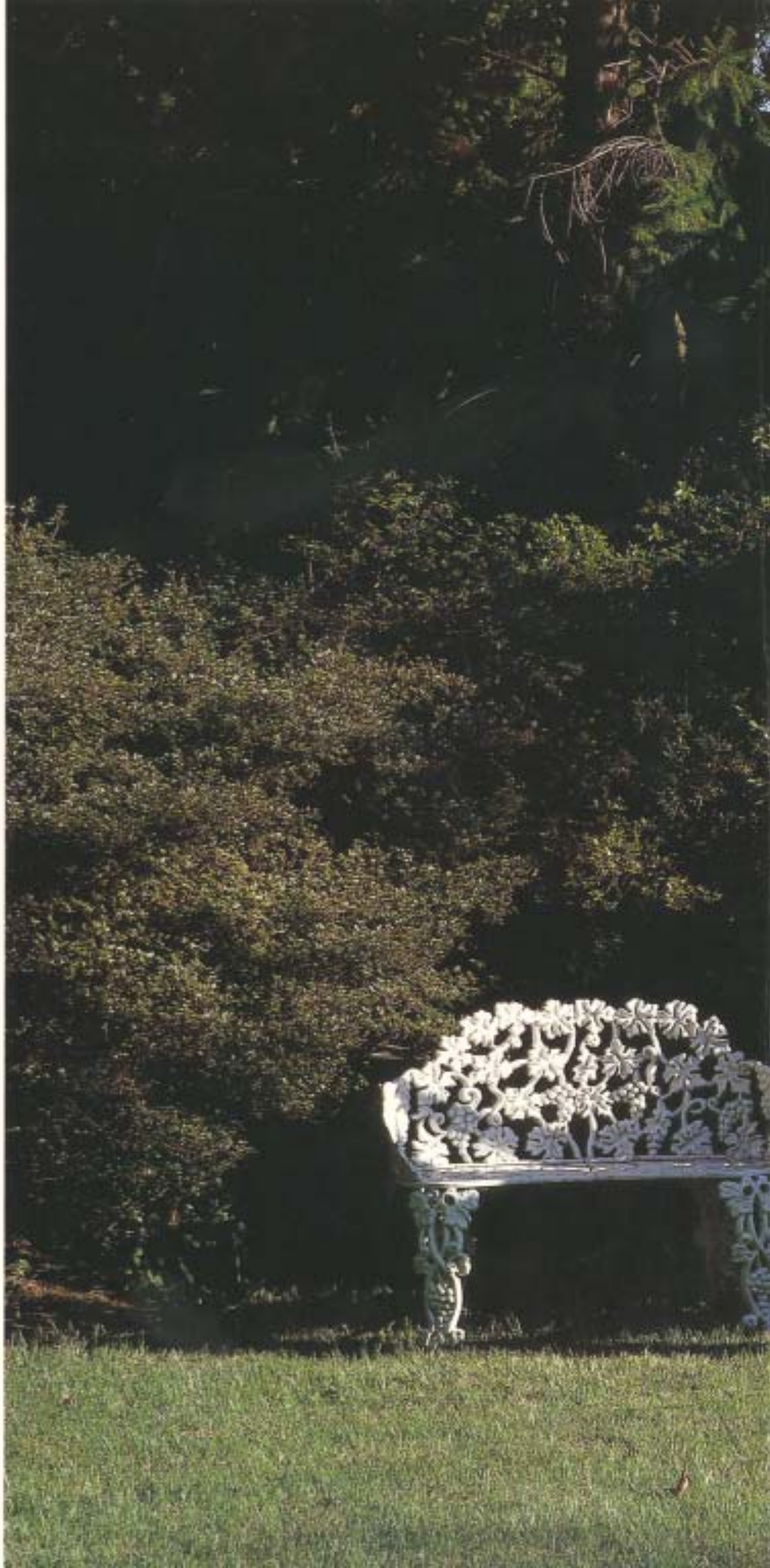
haps he is stronger now for having lived in a number of places, cut off each time from security and having had to cut down and distill forms as well as practices of living to essentials.

The full spirit of the artist is what Batuz would convey in his soft-edged forms impinging on one another in a consistent progression of luminous images which absorb our attention. That spirit so inured to the struggle to maintain "well-being" has little to do with fashion or systems or groups but much to say about an approach to life which has required great endurance and courage and taste.

Batuz explains why it is more sustaining for him to live in the country amidst nature than in the city, and why every artist has his own requirements for the gestation of ideas and creativity. "To create an idea and the materials to realize it, an artist needs a certain atmosphere almost as human beings need air. The wrong place can be inhibiting, counterproductive, even annihilating. It may be that Henry Miller suffered more spiritually in Brooklyn than Solzhenitsyn did in the Gulag Archipelago."

It is not incidental that Batuz refers to these two destinies. He can speak of them with authority, since he has suffered both—in his early years the horrors of war and the humiliating and lasting experiences of refugee camps, and later the alienation and social displacement of being forced to live in foreign countries. That these experiences instead of destroying him made him the artist he is today teaches us again that man is here not only to survive but to prevail. Batuz, through great force of personality and creative effort has, in a lifetime of searching, found an agreeable setting from which now emanates an art to match his genius for life.

6. *No. 81.* Aug. 1980. 93 × 49". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Jay Bauer, Westport, Conn.



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BATUZ

Works in Paper

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Introduction
by Rafael Squirru

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There are two types of artists: those who start from an idea and channel their creative energy into the service of their conceptual insight, and those who arrive at an idea as a result of vital experience and are then able to translate this experience into plastic form.

Needless to say that there are also those who are totally lacking in any kind of idea and thus escape both categories, no obstacle as far as they are concerned to filling miles of canvas with statements that are a true hymn of lost time, not the kind Proust tried to recapture, but the kind that is irremediably lost.

Amongst the creators of the first category I dare mention Borges, Albers, and Vasarely; as examples of the second, Henry Miller, Nolde, Van Gogh, and Batuz. Keeping Nietszche in mind, I would say that the former are Apollonian and the latter Dionysian artists.

It would be a mistake to mix up these categories with those of classical and romantic, a distinction that has more to do with quality and that is measured by the capacity of the artist, whether Apollonian or Dionysian, to consider his work more important than himself; in the last instance a matter of humility.

The fact that the vital experience of Batuz has led him to deal with a calligraphically eloquent line as the principal protagonist of his work is something that even the most unadvised of critics cannot believe is a matter of chance. It is more than mere obsession. It is the result of the inevitable, the veritable must of any image that an artist expects us to share with him. Art, as distinct from philosophy, is not a matter of persuasion but of imposition; we are only willing to believe that artist who believes in his own vision of the world with enough strength to free us of any possible doubts as to the power of his imagination.

Images of Philip IV of Spain or Pope Innocent X we don't dare

imagine could be other than as they come to mind in the portraits of Velázquez and not as they also appear in the works of other painters. That is the mark of Velázquez' genius, and because those images so belonged to him, we can still share in that belonging.

I do not believe that Batuz is the sole owner of line; it is also the theme of such important masters as Lucio Fontana. Yet for the latter it remains an aesthetic problem, while in the case of Batuz we are made to feel the tragic condition of human existence.

Line becomes for Batuz the limit of conflicting forces that war between themselves in precarious equilibrium, the wound that refuses to heal like deep sentiment in the work of James Joyce, the abyss from which the world emerges, the slash made by the sword of Pizarro; it is a line that leaves little margin for joking. It grabs the carefree optimist by the neck and screams at him: And what the hell are you laughing about???

Tragedy does not imply despair; it simply reminds us that the ultimate reality of the human is revealed through pain, and that to ignore this means becoming estranged from the sublime unity of the species. The supreme value of *humanus* has always been *pietas,* and in order to find the necessary heroic support that enables us to bear our tragic human condition it is essential that we have piety.

Hungarian born, with Argentina as the background of his youth, Batuz is now American by option. His art reminds us that nobody can talk better to man than he who is a real man.

9. *No. 25.* Apr. 11, 1979. 70 × 60″

Lines from Life to Being

by Dieter Ronte

The more than eighty works in paper that Batuz has created since the beginning of 1979 represent a highly individual innovation in technique and, more importantly, a new apprehension of the spiritual in art. His focus is on the importance of line, not to describe life or visual phenomena, but to evoke the inner essence of being. These pictures express the tremendous tension of life as an eternal quality of our ambivalence, what Batuz refers to in German as *"Zwei sein im Eins"* ("being two in one"). In a dialogue with the viewer, they challenge and reply in a cultural context. Batuz' art is an interpretation of the artist's life confronted by ordinary life, and as such it is a compendium of all cultures.

Throughout the latter decades of abstract painting these meanings and values of the artist have often been ignored; art has been reduced to formal experiments subject to formal criticism. *The New York Times* critic Hilton Kramer recently pointed out in reviewing a Russian avant-garde exhibition in Los Angeles that innovations in art are more than formal aesthetic inventions or answers to problems of social revolution, answers to the ethos of one period.[1] Kramer wrote that only in the case of Kandinsky has the subject of spirituality been pursued by art historians and critics. It should be clear that even abstract art can be more than design and shapes and colors, that all real art, whether abstract or not, encompasses an idea of human nature. Art is neither decoration nor a matter of utility but a profound question about, and individual response to, human existence, the last human visual discipline out of the net of materialism that transcends the daily round of use and waste. When mankind finally creates a new inventory out of which to construct a new world removed from pure materialism, we shall again have to study philosophy and to rediscover spirituality.

After Kandinsky's initial breakthrough, the great issues raised in his

10. The grounds at Green's Farms

11-13. Batuz' studio in Villa Gesell, Argentina, designed and built by the artist

14. *The Old King*. Detail of lava rock sculpture. 1967

15. Sculpture of chicken wire and cement. 1967

art were largely laid aside. Abstract painting in the 1920s and '30s lost the original impetus of the early abstractionists and concerned itself with immediate, materialistic aims. Spirituality and the will to plumb the depths of human experience were postponed by the negativism of Dada, the social engineering of the Bauhaus, and the concurrent political phenomena of socialism and Nazism. After World War II, Abstract Expressionism was followed by a similar declension into Pop and Minimal art. Batuz, in his own work, repudiates the idea that human beings are meant for mere living and that art is meant to serve that idea. The purpose of his art is to look for something beyond daily life or, as Batuz has said, to go from life to being. This is central to an understanding of the demands made by his art and perhaps difficult to come to terms with in a world in which visual communication is so ubiquitous and practical and full of red and green lights. Batuz' forms and lines go further and deeper, expressing states of being, conditions of soul *(Seelenzustände)*. They describe the constant contradictions of joy and melancholy, stasis and energy, desperation and inspiration, birth and death that comprise any given moment of our lives. Life is captured in an interplay of tensions, from beginning to end, from morning to evening. For Batuz this results not in the invention of decorative designs, but in the formal and aesthetic statement of an individual, a message on the human condition and human possibilities in philosophical terms.

The Works in Paper

Batuz' exciting experiments with paper pulp are a logical consequence of his earlier works. He has never restricted himself to a single medium. As a self-taught artist in Argentina during the 1950s he began with paintings in oil and drawings and later turned also to acrylic on canvas. In the 1960s

16. *No. I.* 1978. Oil and charcoal on paper mounted on canvas, 77 × 48¼". Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

17. *No. IV.* 1979. Charcoal on paper, 22½ × 18"

18. *No. II.* 1978. Charcoal, acrylic, and crayon on newspaper mounted on wood, 30 × 35". Collection Dr. John H. Abeles, New York

he designed and constructed a house and studio in concrete on the southern coast of Argentina (pls. 11–13) and made a series of sculptures out of lava rocks and cement (pls. 14–15).

Living and working in Argentina after having left Hungary in 1949, Batuz evolved his visual language from a description of the world of things, particularly in landscapes (pl. 36), toward the free improvisation of abstract forms that express an essential feeling for life. A decisive step in this development came when he settled with his family in the United States in 1973. "It became clearer and clearer to me," he wrote, "that America is not only a country or a nation, like so many others, but an animistic state, a feeling. Not just a big country, but another dimension—the dimension of freedom, in all the beautiful and tragic sense of this tremendous word."

The first years in the United States were dedicated to oils and acrylics on canvas, silkscreen prints, and collages. An exhibition at the Phillips Collection in 1978 showed an evolution from flat to activated, shimmering surfaces (pl. 16), which led directly in January 1979 to experiments with a new surface made of a collage of old newspapers on ply-

19. *No. 2.* Mar. 1979.
32 × 24½"

wood (pl. 18). Then, after completing a series of drawings on ordinary paper (pl. 17), he was introduced to the use of paper pulp in the workshop of John Koller, a master of handmade paper in Woodstock, Connecticut. This new medium perfectly accommodated the artist's desire to create new visual inventions in terms of an ancient craft that involved the artist completely in the process of creating the work itself.

20. *No. 19.* Mar. 1979. 24 × 31". Private collection

21. Hans Hartung. *T. 1956-9.* 70 7/8 × 53 7/8″

22. Jackson Pollock at work on *Number 32.* 1950

23. *No. 60.* Jan. 1980. 45 × 53″.
Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Batuz was shown the classic techniques of papermaking and printing, for which Koller uses a pulp that is extremely pliable, flexible, and, after drying, durable. He noticed that the prints made by Koller for other artists were all different, that there was no way to make an edition that reproduced exactly the same effects each time. Why not use the pulp for individual, unique pictures? He became fascinated by the pulp itself, by the possibilities of using it the way a painter uses paint. All the ideas he would be able to realize with the handmade paper were already present in his art, but the new material allowed him to carry the transformation of these ideas a few steps further.

Batuz gradually evolved his own procedures for working with the pulp. The reduced fibers, usually cotton, are diluted in water and kept in large vats. Spreading the pulp on a blanket or canvas supported by a sheet of plywood, the artist establishes the basic rectangular shape of the work, either large or small, with irregular edges. He is not interested in using a mold to produce pressed paper with smooth surfaces, but rather in the various textures he can achieve, which reveal more than a single level of expression—not a flat surface but tensions through textures. He works the pulp with his hands and with other available objects so that the surface retains its own topography and texture. Into the first wet layer Batuz now introduces color (although in some cases he begins with colored pulp). He puts one layer or stratum on another, as painters have traditionally done with paint, adding one color to another. The first color, though covered by others, contributes to the overall impact of the work in a translucent glazing construction that merges all levels in the final result. Every work has its own life. There is a process of birth, youth, and maturity that always remains in evidence.

A decisive step is the drawing of the major vertical line that divides

24-30. Paper pulp work in progress. Opposite page, background: *No. 27*. May 2, 1979. 72 × 62″. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Jim Barrett, Toledo, Ohio

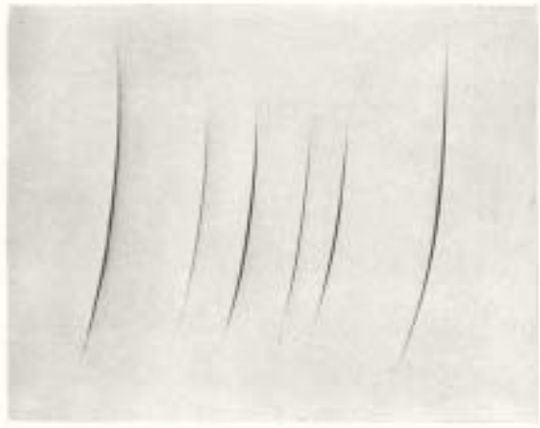
31. Mark Rothko. *Browns.* 1957. Oil on canvas, 92 × 76¼". Private collection

32. Lucio Fontana. *Spatial Concept, Attese Red with Five Cuts.* 1960. Oil on canvas, 38¼ × 51¼"

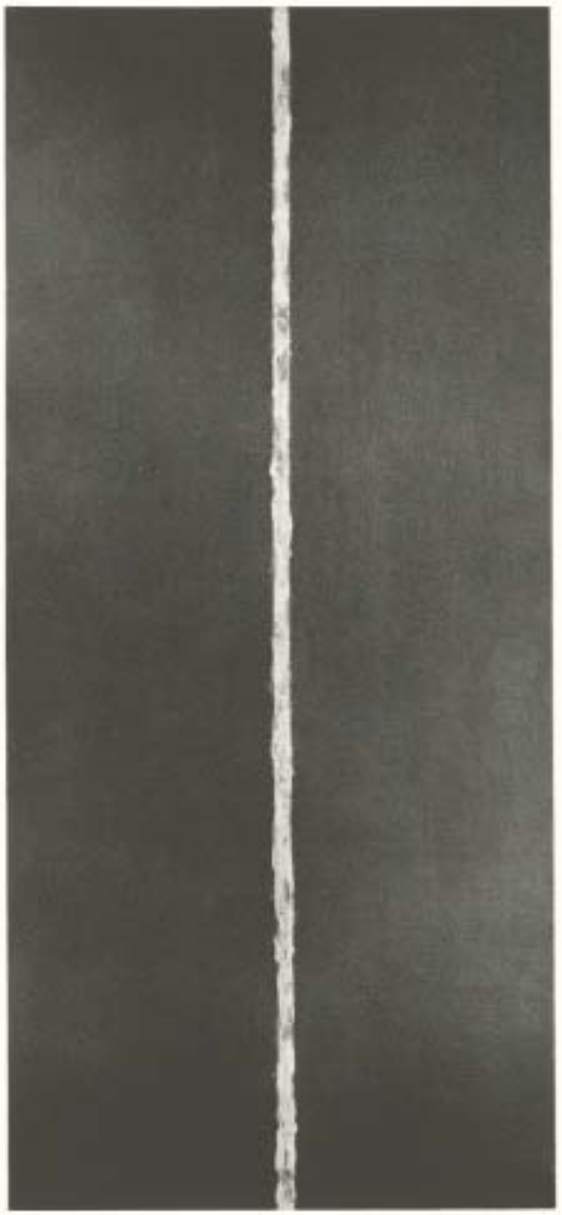
the picture into left and right sections. This may come at the beginning or after the pulp has been laid down. Batuz starts very slowly, following the impulses of his hand, inventing curves, coming back to thicken the line over and over again, running in a contemplative way from top to bottom. The line grows as the artist accentuates its forms. From a thin line he expands it to a line with various dimensions, energies, directions, and activities. The principal line may be echoed or opposed by a second one. This allows for the possibility of surrounding the picture with no stopping point. The line runs and lives within the substance of the paper. It is not like the spontaneous line of the Abstract Expressionist, the slashes of Hans Hartung (pl. 21) or the dripped arabesques of Jackson Pollock (pl. 22), but suggests rather the calligraphy of a Buddhist monk. Batuz is always in search of the ontologically true line.

At this point Batuz adds a strip of metal, bent to follow the drawn line in the paper. The strip is nailed through the pulp and blanket and into the plywood or wooden structure on which everything is resting, creating a barrier between left and right. It prevents the wet colors from crossing over and may remain forever as part of the picture or may be removed, though it still suggests itself to the viewer, a firm separation line, like an iron curtain.

Batuz now applies areas or spots of color pulp or pure color to the sheet, using a spoon or a can filled with colored water. He presses the new pulp in with his hands, making his fingerprints part of the material. He then may create different textures on the sheet by laying old newspapers on the pulp. The newspapers dry the pulp and change the surface of the sheet. He continues to work with other colors or even to integrate new materials, such as reeds or grass, into the layers of pulp. At this stage the



33. Barnett Newman. *Onement #3*. 1949. Oil on canvas, 72 × 34". Private collection



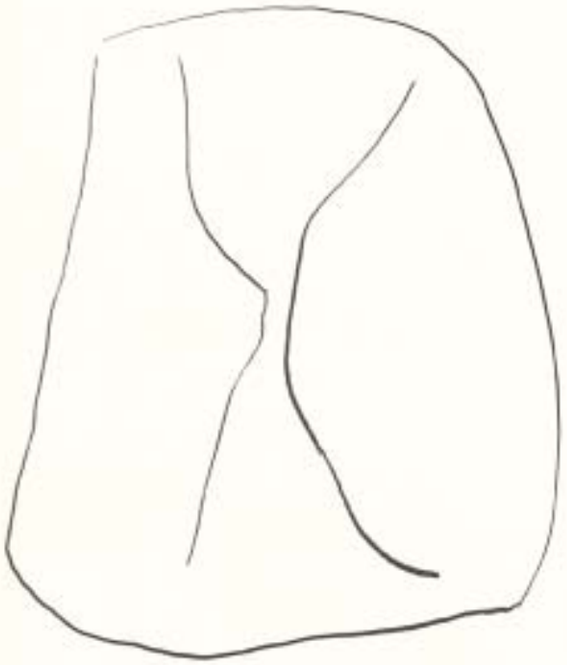
work is like a living landscape. The structure dries out gradually, an unfinished artifact containing an organic process of living materials. In the sunlight it may look like a map or a view of the earth from an airplane or mountain.

The final coloring is done either with new colored pulp or with a crayon pencil. Batuz sometimes works with the flat side of the crayon so that only the high points of the paper's texture are colored. Because the paper is still wet the crayon color spreads in the pulp. Last touches are added with a brush. By pressing with his hands, Batuz finally molds the complex structure of materials into a single entity.

After finishing the painting, which might have taken several days, Batuz either strips the dry pulp sheet from the blanket or canvas or leaves it as is, with the support serving as a frame around the deckled edges of the paper.

What are the intentions of the artist in these works? They all seem to follow the same scheme; a vertical line divides each painting into two parts. Sometimes there is a surrounding framing line. The line is always drawn freely from top to bottom without the help of calculations or instruments and it is therefore never the same from one painting to another. It follows the daily impulses of the work in progress, entering into a dialogue with the shapes of the paper. It is the central energy in each picture.

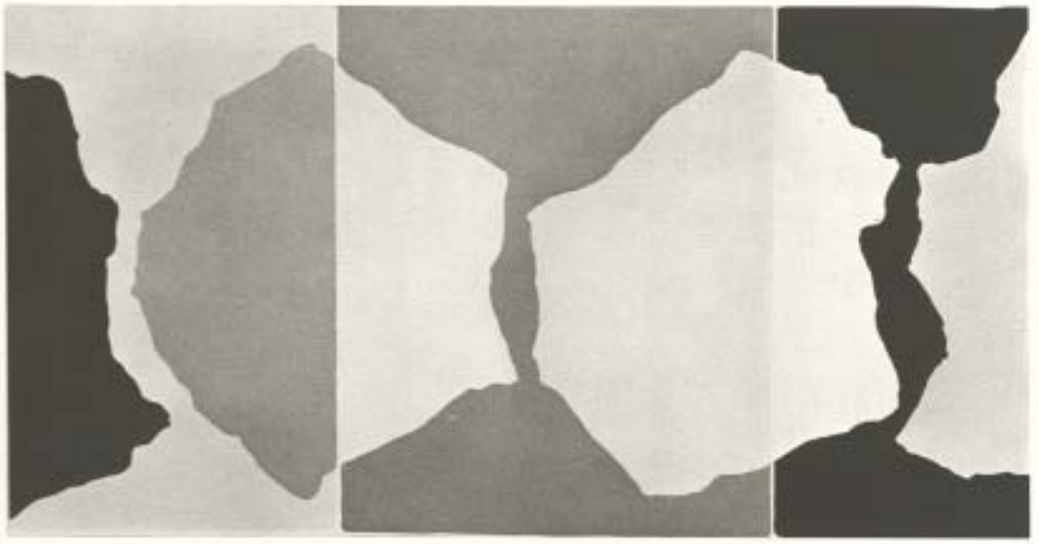
As the old Venetian masters preferred the diagonal and modern painters such as Rothko the horizontal (pl. 31), Batuz argues exclusively with the vertical line. But it is neither part of a constructivist balancing of forms and shapes nor even a vertical division of space, as in the work of



Barnett Newman (pl. 33). Batuz' line has its own vitality, dividing the picture as though with a sword, not to destroy the canvas in the manner of Lucio Fontana (pl. 32), but to be the main protagonist in the picture, the only force that both activates and focuses the forms in tension. Batuz draws masculine lines without lyricism, strong formulations to accumulate the power of the left and right sides of the picture, lines that struggle with the surface, the texture, and the forms because they are the pure essence of their existence.

The iconography of the line has its roots in earlier paintings and screenprints by Batuz. In 1974 he began several series of abstract works—called "Toldis," "Botonds," and "Polymorphics"—each with its own characteristic relationships of forms, lines, and colors (pls. 37–39). In other works he used a single line ("Saman") or two lines ("Taltos") to further emphasize the importance of line (pls. 40–41). (These titles, except of course "Polymorphic," refer to Hungarian names and are used not for narrative, historical purposes, but for their sound and what they evoke on an abstract level.) All these works deal with forms in tension, with the divisions between decisively acting areas. The shapes in the picture, whether dual or multiple, push toward the lines and are repulsed by them, producing a tension.

But beyond their abstract qualities, the lines in the works in paper are also descriptive. As in earlier paintings, for example the "Polymorphics," the lines describe shapes. "Each of these shapes," in the words of the artist, "is related to another shape or to the void, the no-thing . . . sometimes to the negative which surrounds it, . . . or becomes surrounded by it."[2] They are male and female structures, penetrating each other in an interaction of shapes:



34. Window of Batuz' studio in Villa Gesell, Argentina

35. "Taltos" drawing

36. *The Three Trees.* 1959. Oil on canvas. Private collection

37. *Polymorphic No. 4.* 1977. From a portfolio of four serigraphs, 22½ × 35″

> If we enclose two spaces with two lines, our attention is directed to each of the resultant forms which the independent lines enclose. These become the positive forms and the space which remains between them is the negative space, whose form depends on the interrelation of the two others. A line adopts another function when it is alone. In this case it has to define itself the negative and positive space, assuming the role of two lines. In other words, the drawing has to be made in such a way that one side of the line encloses a smooth, soft form, and the other side encloses an aggressive one. As in reality, both sides of the line define a different and opposite form. It is obvious that there is not one line—indeed, it's always two.[3]

Batuz here elucidates his ever-present principle of "being two in one."

The line for Batuz is a crucial artistic argument. It separates forms but at the same time is a definition of those forms. The line is abstract, but it also refers obliquely to nature, to the lines that can be seen, for instance, in the crowns or between the branches of trees, themes that were important in Batuz' early landscapes (pl. 36). Beyond any of these functions—abstraction, definition, description—line is a combination of all of them. In this larger sense line is autobiographical. Every line has its own life. Without having a literal meaning it is a subject in itself, a

38. *Toldi No. 3.* 1975. Oil on canvas, 84 × 72″

39. *Botond No. 8.* 1976. Oil on canvas, 32¼ × 32¼″. Collection Stephen Campbell, Weston, Conn.

40. *Red Saman II.* 1979. Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 78½ × 44½″. Collection Stephen Campbell, Weston, Conn.

41. *Taltos.* 1978. Oil and charcoal on paper, 56 × 42″

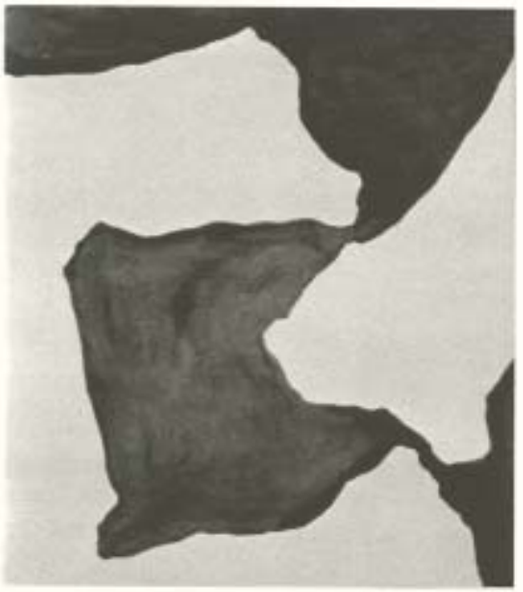
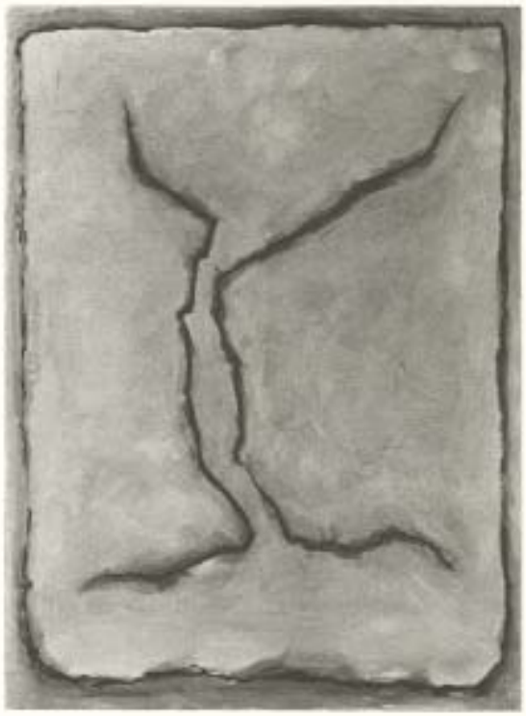


diagram of energy, a meeting place in the picture and its ultimate definition. "If a point, as for Leibnitz, contains the projection of a line, so much more does the line of a painter contain the essence of his whole artistic experience." Batuz further noted: "The tracing of an abstract line is direct handwriting. It carries no other message than the one itself expresses."[4]

In his own concern for the spiritual and ontological in art, Batuz goes back to Kandinsky (pl. 42). He often refers to Kandinsky's thought about art, to his historic treatises, particularly "On the Spiritual in Art." Kandinsky makes a distinction among three different sources of inspiration:

> 1. A direct impression of "outward nature," which is expressed in pure artistic form. These pictures I call "impressions." 2. Intuitive, for the greater part spontaneous expressions of incidents of an "inner nature," this kind I call "improvisations." 3. With slowly evolved feelings, which have formed within me for a long time, and tested pedantically, developed after they were intuitively conceived. This kind of picture I call "compositions." Reason, consciousness, purpose and adequate law play an overwhelming part. Yet, it is not to be thought of as mere calculation, since feeling is the decisive factor.[5]

Batuz paints neither impressions, nor improvisations, nor compositions. He has never abandoned his impressions of outward nature. Indeed, he works outside and compares his own creations with those of nature, looking at them under huge trees and surrounded by vegetation, for similarities in texture and structure. But he is free of enslavement to



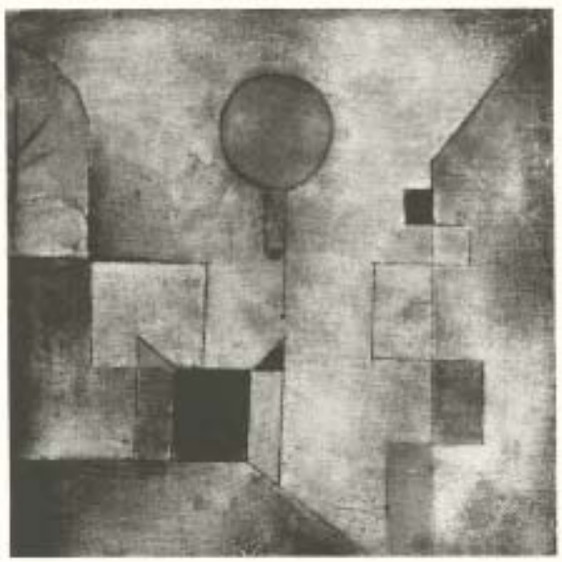
the model and follows his own spontaneous expressions of an inner character through slowly evolved feelings that emerge in the purposeful movement of his lines. His works in paper, keeping Kandinsky's definitions in mind, combine all three sources of inspiration. He arrives at a *fourth* solution, giving universally understandable meanings to abstract forms.

For centuries artists depicted a world that depended on the observation of reality. Apprehension of the work set up a triangular situation between the viewer, the work itself, and the real world to which the work refers. The viewer sees in a picture how the artist, with his own spirituality, describes an object, a tree, a landscape, a person, but he can never forget his own knowledge of the world. In abstract art, realism or naturalism is replaced by evocation. The artist is free from the slavery of following a model and can work out his own inner vision without necessarily referring or connecting it to the outer world. Klee said that art makes visible what you normally cannot see (pl. 43). Abstract painting requires a different mode of understanding than representational painting. It involves a direct dialogue, a dualistic discussion, rather than a deflecting triangulation. The picture itself carries everything without reference to visual reality; it is an entirely new, original phenomenon and depends for its life on the willingness and preparedness of the viewer to enter into and complete the dialogue with what he brings of his own powers of association, his own inner remembrance, his affinity to signs and new forms.

The viewer and the artist himself thus become part of a new relationship with the inner self, or inner being as it is expressed in the painting, something that Kandinsky found already highly developed in music:

42. Wassily Kandinsky. *Painting No. 198 (Autumn)*. 1914. Oil on canvas, 63 × 47⅝". Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

43. Paul Klee. *Red Balloon, VI 179*. 1922. Oil on gauze mounted on board, 12½ × 12¼". Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



44. *No. 68*. Mar. 1980. 65 × 65"

> A painter who finds no satisfaction in the mere representation of natural phenomena, however artistic, who strives to create his inner life, enviously observes the simplicity and ease with which such an aim is already achieved in the non-material art of music. It is easily understandable that he will turn to his art and will attempt to reciprocate it with his own medium. From this derives some of the modern search in painting for rhythm, mathematical abstract construction, color repetition, and manner of setting color into motion. . . . Painting today is still almost exclusively dependent on natural forms taken from nature. The painter's contemporary task consists of testing its power and means of counterpoint, as music did in the attempt to apply those means for the purpose of creation.[6]

For Batuz, even more than for Kandinsky, line is not simply an abstract sign. It is the mystical basis of his art, the non-materialistic embodiment of being. Art reaches beyond the practical necessities of everyday life, the problems and tasks that confront everyone in our society, including the artist, toward another way of being that depends on the inner vision of the artist as the joker in society, the man with his own ideas, full of innovative energy, but responsible only to himself and completely alone is his decisions.

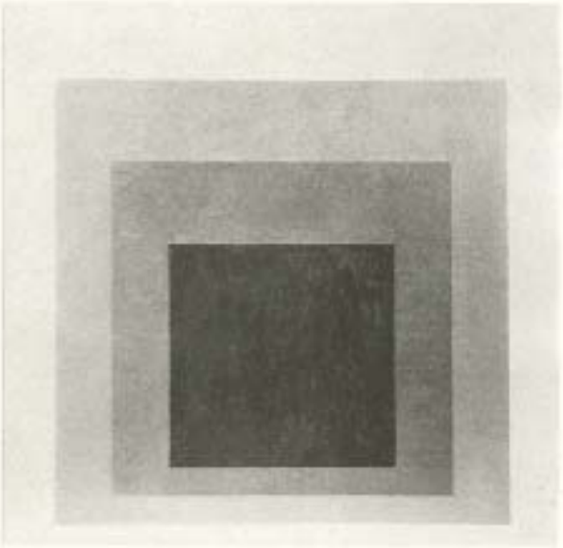
In this role Batuz is linked and responsible to all mankind and to every culture, however diverse. His own life is a history of movement from one place to another through various upheavals that have affected the world over the past fifty years—from Hungary to Austria, Argentina and the United States; from Central Europe to Latin America to North

America. His art reveals these different backgrounds and roots and the merging of them in the search for and definition of his own being. In expressing these multi-cultural experiences, he denies the accidental circuit of life and transcends his personal topography.

Lines and surfaces express a personal topography that becomes universal, a landscape of the artist's life, his experiences, his defeats, his successes, his sadness, his joy. They do not stand for a single action. We learn nothing of an actual event. Batuz tells no story, for he loves the truth. We see the sum total, the result, the philosophical abstraction.

His structures and lines are both within and supersede the pictures themselves, signifying deeper issues of existence. They deal with misery and broken hearts rather than with happiness, because happiness only describes the limitations of any given situation. They parallel the individual, timeless experiences of all human beings, but they never speak of social problems or individual tragedies. Rather they deal with the human condition as a whole. Seen in this way, the lines of Batuz move between the irrational and the logical, and in both senses are inevitable and forceful. As the surfaces and structures of the works in paper lie between flat, bas relief, and high relief, the lines are both determined by and master of the different possibilities of the materials.

As the lines activate the forms, so the colors activate the lines. Batuz' use of colors is neither traditional, as Goethe wrote about them, nor strictly abstract, in the manner of Josef Albers' interaction of colors (pl. 45). He does not use complementary colors but searches for ways of juxtaposing colors of different origins. The interrelation is intensely subjective and private and is not based on harmonies of tone but often involves dissonances that activate the painting and heighten the expres-



45. Josef Albers, *Homage to the Square—Glow.* 1966. Acrylic on masonite, 48×48". Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

siveness of the line. It creates a dynamic structure that enhances the surface and texture. In some works color is reduced to grays and blacks.

Batuz' colors are neither descriptive nor symbolic, but rather embody the artist's emotions, his psychic condition, and evoke those of the viewer. Their role in the dialogue of emotions, which directly impinges on the viewer, is extremely complex. They act in a way that has been described by Harold Osborne in a parallel context:

1. Apart from the apprehension of "represented" emotional situations, the "emotional response" in appreciation of artworks is thought of as inextricably attached to the cognitive act by which we become aware of the visual or auditory pattern, not as a subjective reaction casually induced by the artwork.
2. It is nowadays recognized that the gracefulness of a vase does not depend upon this or that person's pleasure in looking at it and to this extent the gracefulness can be thought of as inherent in the vase. Similarly "emotional qualities" such as the sadness of music do not depend upon the experiencing of the emotion of sadness by this person or that—still less on the projection of such experienced emotion back upon the music—but are intimately connected with the actualization of the music in awareness, with our apprehension of the aural pattern.
3. The emotional experiences of works of art are often described as *sui generis:* by this is apparently meant either or both that they are more general than the emotions of every-

day life and that they are more specific to the pattern of awareness with which they are connected.

In certain respects the contemporary outlook on emotion in relation to artistic experience may be thought to have some affinities with the Indian doctrine of *rasa*.[7]

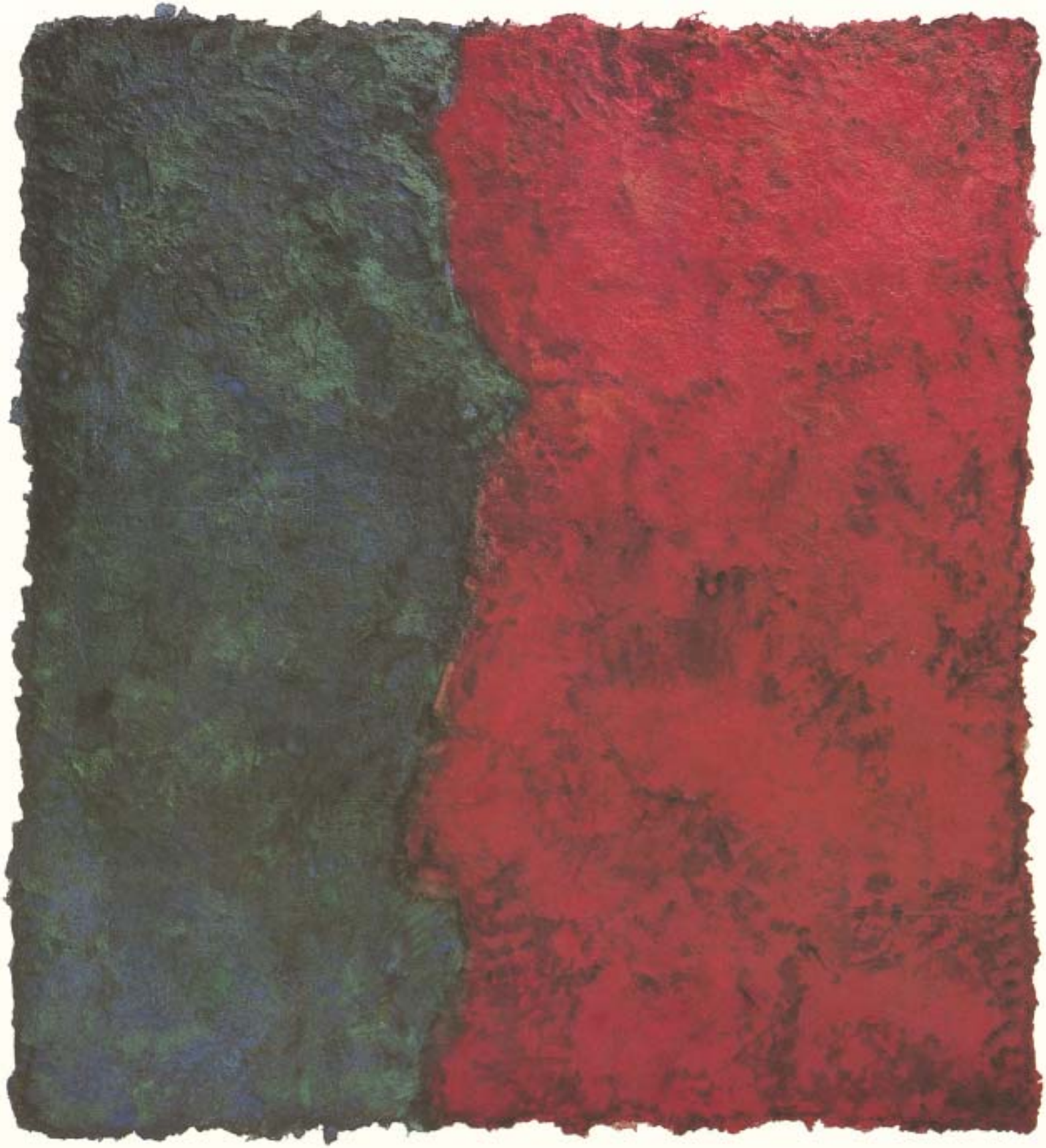
46. *No. 79.* Aug. 1980. 38 × 37". Private collection

The pictures of Batuz are very ambitious in that they aim to give concrete and direct expression to emotion in the work itself without the intervention of realism. An ideal of reality is created without illustrating reality. The subject matter is the interplay of forms and colors, which are notations of human existence. Forms for Batuz are everything or nothing, parallel signs for thinking, looking, and feeling. They are not defined but are variations and interpretations on a single theme. They are as descriptive as the visual signs, the visual notations of scientific research which signify phenomena one can normally not see.

Yet Batuz does not give us "measurable facts or intuitive understanding." As the British astronomer A.S. Eddington wrote in 1928:

> We are drawing near to the great question whether there is any domain of activity—of life, of consciousness, of deity—which will not be engulfed by the advance of exact science; and our apprehension is not directed against the particular entities of physics, but against all entities of the category to which exact science can apply. For exact science invokes, or has seemed to invoke, the type of law inevitable and soulless against which the human spirit rebels.[8]

Science often asks for exact notation and interpretation. Batuz is closer to the approach exemplified by Albert Einstein, who remarked in reply to questions about his methods of thought:

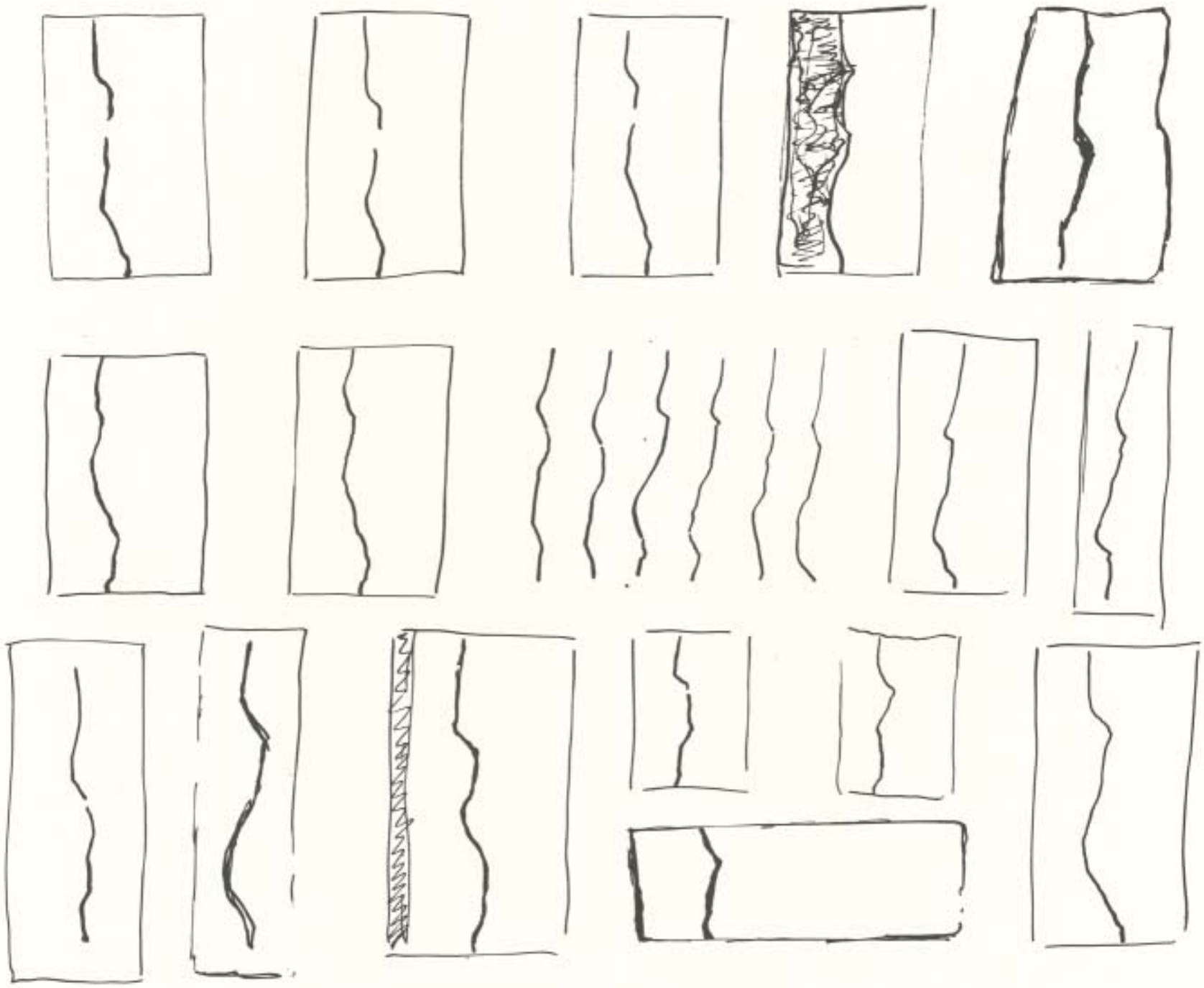


> The words of the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be voluntarily reproduced and combined. . . . The above mentioned elements are, in my case, of visual and some of muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in the secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be reproduced at will.[9]

47. Drawings for works in paper

Artists develop new languages in order to state new truths and provide new insights, since by definition the existing language is inadequate. As Wittgenstein pointed out, any given event is impossible to grasp conceptually, in its totality, since the human mind can only comprehend some things, possibly many things, but can never comprehend everything that there is. That is one of the reasons why Batuz is not a descriptive or realist painter. He shows in his art the interconnections which exist in real situations in order to uncover the deep nature of feelings, and in doing so returns to nature itself. Instead of a description he presents situations in their hidden forms, making visible the multifarious meanings of the invisible.

It is understandable that most of Batuz' works in paper, unlike his earlier paintings, are not titled. He now numbers pictures chronologically. Sometimes he adds a subtitle to honor a particular memory, but this provides only a hint, one of many clues for discussing the picture. The viewer should be open-minded, ready to involve his own feelings and beliefs, willing to engage in a direct dialogue with the abstract work in front of him while remembering his own visual and emotional experiences of the world.



Omen

Among Batuz' works in paper the picture titled *Omen* (pls. 48–50) is unusual not only for its enormous dimensions, its integrity, and its impact, but because it sums up various aspects of the artist's work in a single picture. It is one of the few titled works in paper because Batuz discovered that for those who have seen it, the painting is indeed ominous and oracular, with hidden qualities and meanings that only slowly reveal themselves.

The first time I saw it—rapidly and superficially—I knew that it was an important painting, but I did not know why. I hesitated to return to it for some days, to put questions to the canvas, feeling unprepared for the difficult challenge I knew it would present. And I was right. This picture exceeds the scope of ordinary viewing, of routine entertainment, of saying merely, "I like it," or "I don't like it." *Omen* is completely absorbing. You forget the first questions you had in mind because you are involved in a drama, a drama of thousands of years of human existence. It turns you then from history to the present, toward the future.

Omen asks questions about the essential human condition, as Gauguin asked them at the end of the 19th century: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" It penetrates thoughts, correcting and transforming the way we perceive ourselves and the world through a new experience, a new structure, a new pattern of expression and spirituality.

48. *No. 48. Omen.* Sept. 11, 1979. 169 × 109"