Establishing 21st Century Expressionism

Philip Messina

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ESTABLISHING 21ST CENTURY EXPRESSIONISM

by

PHILIP MESSINA

Under the Direction of Dr. Susan Richmond

ABSTRACT

Within my thesis I propose to establish the existence of what I call 21st century expressionism. This genre of art is an extension of the movement that began in 20th century post-war America. 21st century expressionists create works that are intended to promote emotional responses within the viewer. “The term `expressionism” can be used to describe various art forms but, in its broadest sense, it is used to describe any art that raises subjective feelings above objective observations. Its aim is to reflect the artists’ state of mind rather than the reality of the external world”. Lee Krasner and Tony Smith, represent prime examples of 20th century expressionists and, Etsuko Ishikawa and Beth Cavener Stichter represent artists of 21st century expressionism.

INDEX WORDS: 20th century, Expressionism, 21st century, Abstract-expressionism, Phenomenological, Intuitive, Action-painting, Jungian
ESTABLISHING THE EXISTENCE OF 21ST CENTURY EXPRESSIONISM

by

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Introduction

Within my Thesis, I intend to establish the existence of what I call 21st century expressionism. This genre of art is an extension of the movement that began in 20th century post-war America. First I will define my terms, and establish a frame work that will display the core tenets and philosophy of 20th and 21st century expressionist art. I will then apply this framework onto established 20th century artists, then I will in turn do the same with artists of the 21st century. This will allow me to show concrete examples alongside the artists who I have termed as 21st century expressionists and better display the correlation between them. 20th and 21st century expressionists create works that are intended to promote emotional and phenomenological responses within the viewer over representations of the external world. To achieve these ends these artists utilize innovative application of medium, coupled with an intuitive design process. I will display this via an in-depth examination or four artists. The first two, Lee Krasner and Tony Smith, represent prime examples of 20th century expressionists. The following artists, Etsuko Ishikawa and Beth Cavener Stichter, represent contemporary artists who fit into my framework of 21st century expressionism. I have chosen these artists not only because they each represent the facets of their respective movement, but they also complement in style and media. Krasner and Ishikawa are two dimensional artists who utilized their media in new and inventive ways. Additionally Smith and Stichter being sculptors represent the three dimensional incarnation of their expressionist movements. In choosing these artists I will display the connections that exist between the current forms of expressionism to those that preceded it.

Within the first chapter of my thesis I will begin by establishing a compound definition of expressionism. Through an in-depth examination of expressionism I will define my terms by comparing several views on the philosophy of expressionism. I intend to distill a core idea, and a
framework that can be applied to the artists of 20th and 21st century expressionism. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a template that I will apply to artists who are established expressionist artists of the 20th century, as well as artists within the 21st century who I will use as exemplars for the existence of the this current incarnation of the movement. Additionally I will examine how the rejection of representational aesthetics that existed in the philosophy of the 20th century version of the movement, is mirrored by the so called return to beauty, which is in itself a rejection of modern and post-modern aesthetics. Expressionism in both the 20th and 21st centuries has been exemplified by a rejection of narrative and allegorical communication within art. Great emphasis is placed upon the communication and induction of emotion and experience. The works created by expressionist artists are not concerned with representation and resemblance, rather they are concerned with creating a dialogue between the artist, the work and the viewer, a dialogue that communicates in an experiential rather than allegorical manner. They promote a phenomenological avenue of communication. They do not obfuscate the process of creating their works, rather they utilize processes that increase the viewer’s connection to the initial creation of the work. Innovation combined with the use of traditional mediums is a hallmark of the expressionist movement. (Landau p 165-168)

The following chapters will be dedicated to applying the template I have constructed in the previous chapter to 20th century expressionist artists in order to provide proof of its validity as well as display the varied forms that expressionist art can take. The first artist that I will examine is Lee Krasner. Krasner was a deeply influential artist, who while often overshadowed by her relationship with Jackson Pollack had a lasting impact upon the formation of 20th century expressionism established within the New York school. Her paintings exemplify much of the abstract expressionist movement that was the core of the New York School. (Wagner 2)
New York School and abstract expressionism marked the beginning of the expressionist movement in America. Krasner along with the other artists of the New York School were at the heart of this incarnation of expressionism.

In the following chapter I will examine the expressionist sculptor Tony Smith. Tony Smith has been called many things: architect, painter, sculptor and minimalist. Although he has been hailed as the possible father of Minimalism, he is in fact the last of the abstract expressionists of the 20th century. Tony Smith had a definite vision of the world and what he wanted to create to define that world. What sets Tony’s work apart from the Minimalist goals and ideologies, is his philosophy, his design process, and the highly charged emotional content of his sculpture. He was the product of a generation prior to the Minimalists, thus the questions he wished to answer, the influences that shaped his philosophy, the ideologies he rejected and reacted against were very different to those of the contemporary artists of the 1960’s.

The Following chapters will be dedicated to examining 21st century artists who exemplify what I call 21st century expressionist art, artists whose work also fits within the framework that I have established and exemplify the very definition of this style of art. The first artist I will examine is Etsuko Ishikawa. She is a Japanese born artist who lives and works in Seattle WA who utilizes blown glass in an innovative method of creating pyrographs. Ishikawa describes the emotional and intuitive process that she utilizes in creating her works in the following quote:

These works are glass pyrographs that are made by drawing hot molten glass, leaving the immediate charred tracery of my movement with the heat. It is a way of capturing a fleeting moment and eternalizing it and it gives the viewer the opportunity to see a gesture. “I see this process as a metaphor of my daily life in terms of encounters and impressions relating directly to my work. Meeting someone, seeing some event, hearing a piece of music - these encounters are
fleeting moments, but sometimes the impressions of these moments take on their own lives.” (Ishikawa)

This combination of intuitive gestural process and emotional content create haunting and emotional works.

Lastly I will discuss the work of Beth Cavener Stichter whose unique use of clay, sculptured into anthropomorphic animals which generate a profound emotional impact upon the viewer. Clare Oliver, one of Stichter’s gallery representatives describes the impact made upon the viewer: “Cavener Stichter cajoles the viewer into looking at the darker side of the human condition by cloaking it in animal skin.” (Clare Oliver p1). While Stichter’s sculptures contain recognizable forms, the intense emotional dialogue that the artist fosters between the viewers and her works displays how neatly she fits within the context of a 21st century expressionist.

Through the examination of these artists I will display the link to the past forms of expressionism that exists within the 21st century counterpart. My goal is to show that these movements, as with much of art history are not stand-alone points in art historical time, but are movements that remain and evolve. The artists I have discussed show not only how this movement progressed, but also how each artist adapts expressionism to better communicate through their own personal contexts and the contexts of the world that surrounds them and the viewer.
Chapter One: Establishing the Framework.

Expressionism is a movement within art history that has evolved over time, while at the same time the essential core of expressionism, the concepts of shared emotions and experiences have remained in the forefront. Although there have been a number of peaks and valleys in the popularity and exposure of expressionist art like many other forms of art, it did not stop and start, but progressed through time as new artists took up the mantle. I will be examining the 20th century iteration of expressionism, specifically abstract expressionism and the New York School, as well as what I call 21st century expressionism to display the core framework that can be applied to all forms of modern expressionist art. This framework will enable me in later chapters to accurately identify contemporary artists who exemplify the motives and methods of 21st century expressionism.

American abstract expressionism began in the wake of many sociological and political changes. The period following the Second World War, was filled with a number of artistic movements that were based upon a gamut of philosophical and psychological ideologies. Many of these can be argued to have been influential in the genesis of expressionism in America. Although there existed a movement of expressionism in Europe, mostly centered in Germany, the American form of expressionism, which evolved into the current expressionist movement in 21st century art, was separate from the former. During the mid-1940’s, abstract expressionism emerged amidst an environment that was focused upon European art and artistic movements. Abstract expressionism was more than a synthesis or a reaction to the movements emanating from Europe.-the prevailing emotional turmoil caused by the Second World War greatly influenced these artists to attempt to create a form of art that would help express their emotional states. The ideology of accessing the inner most recesses of the human psyche became a primary
concern to the artists who would become known as abstract expressionists. Robert Motherwell’s philosophy was “that art’s function is to produce the felt expression of modern reality and that painting is a medium in which the mind can actualize itself” (Landau ...32). Art was for these artists a vehicle with which they could explore their emotional understanding of their world as well as the affect the world had upon their emotional state. The turbulent and chaotic world of Post-War America had a profound impact upon the lives of these artists and shaped their experiences, world views, and undeniably their art. At the same time the flood of European influences that these artists were now privy to also had a hand in the formation of what would become America’s first form of expressionist art. The changes in the world culture and zeitgeist engendered the artists to reexamine the role of the artists and the methods with which they create their art. Ellen Landau quoted a number of abstract expressionist artist describing this phenomenon. Here she quotes Gottlieb, on his opinion of the role of the artist. “…the role of the artist, of course, has always been that of image-maker. Different times require different images. … We seek the primeval and atavistic roots of the ideas rather than their graceful classical version; more modern than the myths themselves because we must re-describe their implications through our own experiences” (Landau ... 33). While I am taking Gottlieb’s words with a grain of salt as artist’s statements can be suspect and self-serving, the ideology he is espousing is partially true. The expressionists of the 20th century were seeking to change the role of the artist and the discourse promoted by their art.

These artists were well aware of the changes in the world and the culture around them and transformed their art in-kind. They sought to abandon ‘classical’ philosophical thought and instead create works that stem from the very core feelings of the artist. They wanted to abandon the reliance of the ‘pure’ classical idea of a concept and wanted to create works that were
grounded within their own contexts. In doing so their philosophy was not to seek the truest purest concept of an idea but rather connect the viewer with their personal definitions and experiences. In their opinion this was to generate a more intimate experience with the viewer, additionally the discourse was accessible to all not just for the elite. This was not sophism, these artists were not asserting that their experience and view was the only true experience. They were seeking to bridge common ground with the viewer on an emotional level to better connect with them and further the discourse.

Another influence that greatly affected the ideology of abstract expressionists was Jungian psychology also known as analytical psychology. This was a relatively new form of psychological thought that originated from the ideas and theories of a Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung. Jung was himself a student of Sigmund Freud, but his ideas on the realm of psychology differed from the former. One of the primary tenets of Jungian psychology is the concept of the ‘Collective Unconscious”. In Jungian psychology the mind contains two forms of unconscious, the “Personal” which is a kind of reservoir of experience that is unique to each individual. The second is the “Collective”, which is as Jung stated “…collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents” (Jung ... 43). The ideology that all humans have shared experiences that are the same for all individuals, experiences that are inherited though the generations and thus transcend time, place and personal experience, was a cornerstone to the formation of abstract expressionism and by extension 21st century expressionism. A ‘universal’ reaction to stimuli, the abstract expressionists, believing in this concept set out to create works of art that would tap into these shared emotions and create
dialogues with the viewers via their works. Stephen Polcari proposes a compelling theory as to why abstract expressionists were attracted to Jungian ideology.

Overcoming nihilism” to use Nietzsche’s phrase, was the task the abstract expressionists generally set of themselves. They attempted to recreate purpose and pattern to human life when, in the darkest days of Western civilization, there seemed no end to the human capacity for evil, that medieval concept rediscovered in a modern world of machines, technology, and science. By attaching the idea of human endeavor to the pattern of dynamic historic continuums, to the process and cycles of nature, to the heritage and hope of psychological life… (Polcari ...37)

The fear and despondence that prevailed spurred the abstract expressionists to create works that would unite people on common ground through the shared experiences and emotions that Jung espoused exists within all humanity. In the light of major sociological upheavals, which included WWI and WWII, the psychology of the world, especially in the west, was forever transformed. The great depression with its economic chaos, the massive loss of life caused by the two wars, plunged the world into uncertainty. In the face of this expressionist artists turned away from nihilistic thought and sought out a means of reconnecting to the community of humanity. The Jungian psychological idea allows for the reconnection of humanity through shared experiences. This idea of the shared consciousness was hopeful, in the face of the horrors that were driving men and women apart these artists hoped to reconnect with people through their art. By accessing and fostering these communal emotional responses, abstract expressionists, sought to find new avenues of communication between artists and viewer. This rosy ideal. The artists that would establish abstract expressionism sought to find means, through their work, to tap into this shared reservoir and utilize it as a path to communicate and bring the ideas and emotions of the unconscious into the conscious realm. The Jungian ideology in their opinion allowed for a form of mass communication. Unlike the artists of the surrealist movement, these expressionists were concerned with emotion rather than with the ambiguity of the symbolic meanings of dreams.
Abstract expressionist’s primary concern was recreating the experiences from the world that surrounds them rather than those of the dream world.

These American abstract expressionists believed that they could tap into this shared reservoir of experience through their art and create an experience that is universal no matter the viewer or their personal contexts and experiences. They began to explore the ideologies and methodologies of movements emanating from Europe which also dealt with tapping into the unconscious, such as the Surrealists. While the expressionists may not have been interested in the dream world like the surrealists, large parts of their ideology and methods could be utilized to communicate through the shared Jungian reservoir. The surrealists opened up new possibilities with their emphasis on tapping the unconscious. The devices and concepts used by the surrealists, such as “automatic” gestural painting, were very attractive to abstract expressionists, and they adopted aspects of them to create new methods of reaching this shared emotional reservoir. Jackson Pollock was one such abstract expressionist artist who utilized these methods to create his works.

He was engaged in a revision of modernist artistic practice consciously directed at accommodating the unconscious, giving it reign, of space, or voice- whatever “it” preferred, so long as its presence and force were signified. The uncertainty owed in large part to the difficulty of the concept but it was compounded by the fragmentary and inconsistent character of Pollock’s learning; he had absorbed disparate bits and pieces of information concerning psychic operations and contents. If they were to add up to anything it would happen in his process and imagery of his art. Where those fragments became the flint he hoped would set his subconscious firing (Gibson p 73).

In other words Pollock actively combined a multiplicity of artistic and psychological philosophies in order to create his unique painting technique that enabled him to effectively communicate to the viewer. This combination of philosophies is what, in my opinion, lead to what we recognize as abstract expressionist art. Pollock along with the other members of the
New York school began to experiment and push the boundaries of the function and appearance of art. Auping in his article on the formation of an Avant-Garde in NY, states that the aims of the New York school was to “re-examine and redefine “the goals of art. (Auping p 13).

Symbolism and semiotics was not the primary focus as it is with the surrealist movement. Although abstract expressionism was greatly influenced by the techniques of many of the surrealist artists. They allowed their unconscious to influence their work and artistic techniques abstract expressionists tap into the reservoir of collective experience to generate works that speak to the viewer on that level. Many abstract expressionists like Pollock created works through a form of ‘automatic’ creation, a means of allowing the unconscious to control their actions in creating their works. Deborah Wye expounded upon this stating: “Through emphasis on the technique of automatism, most New York school painters moved in a direction of a pure abstraction involving large format allover composition, atmospheric fields and sublime mystical content...” (... 42 Landau). In other words abstract expressionists adapted the automatic techniques of the surrealists into a method of communicating the shared experience. If we return to the works of Jackson Pollock we can see perfect examples of this within his “action” paintings. By allowing his unconscious mind to control his actions while painting he could impregnate his experience into his paintings exemplified by Figure 1.1. By utilizing his unconscious he was according to Jungian thought enabled to tap into that collective reservoir via the color selection and movements of his body when painting. The viewer would then react to those cues left by Pollok’s unconscious through the Jungian collective.

The expressionist artists of the mid-20th century like Pollock, Smith and Krasner harnessed abstraction as the primary means of conveying these Jungian emotions. In past movements like cubism was a form of analysis of the surrounding world. Irving Lavin, in his
article “Abstraction in Modern Painting: a Comparison”, addressed the reasons for the choice for these artists to work in abstract and non-representative forms. He refers to abstraction within art: “It has been transformed from a means of analysis into a means of expression. As a means of expression, no less than as a means of analysis, it can be a sharper, more sensitive, and more penetrating instrument than traditional art. It has had to upset traditional concepts of order and discipline, but as a result it can expose depths and areas of feeling that many people are reluctant to recognize in themselves. . Part of the reason abstract art continues to be a problem, I believe, is that it has gained new power to disturb and to challenge us” (Lavin ... 169). Through pure abstraction the expressionist artists could then begin to create works that focused purely on an emotional level. Instead of examining the surrounding world though abstracted forms and scenes taken from it, these artists created abstract forms that were to represent and promote emotional introspection. They took the tool of abstraction and refined it to work specifically for their philosophical aims. By abandoning the physical world not for an imagined dreamscape as in the case of surrealists, but for an abstract forms that can only be created through allowing emotions to guide their hand.

Through harnessing these ideologies and techniques abstract expressionist, and 21st expressionist art can be described by these physically unifying factors: “1. the elimination of specific subject matters and a preference for spontaneous, impulsive qualities of experience. 2. The unfettered brush-discursive, improvisatory techniques-motion, motion organization, and an activated surface” (...143 Golub). Although seemingly reductive, these factors are, in actuality, perfect descriptors for the methodology of creating 20th and 21st century expressionist art. In their attempts to create works that are focused upon the communication of experience alone, these expressionist artists devised a manner of producing their works that would fulfill that goal.
In his article *A Critique of Abstract Expressionism*, Leon Golub describes the method of creating abstract expressionist art; “…”instinctual” to a pre-conscious state of mind. Actuality [purpose] is attained by abbreviated means through the "direct" impact of non-referential sensation. ‘Contact’ becomes the meaning.” (Golub ...143). Although Golub is criticizing the methods of abstract expressionists, his description indicates how these artists communicate through their works. What he describes as the impulses the artist utilizes to create their art is in actuality the artist tapping into their intuition to create works that communicate the emotions of their experiences. It is as he describes an “instinctual’ process,” these artists are not abstracting images or forms from the real world as other abstract artists have, they instead are creating works that represent the feelings that spring from the Jungian collective. When a person taps into their intuition, or instinct they are essentially allowing primitive emotion to dictate action. I posit that the intuitive process that these artist utilized was in their opinion springing from their collective unconscious. Golub further states that “contact” is the primary aim of the works. This is exactly what the goal of 20th and 21st century expressionist art is, contact. For the artist to connect to the viewers via the collective reservoir, utilizing their works as a medium for that connection.

What unifies these artists is their methods and aims when they create their art, but this very method engenders them to create works that differ greatly in execution medium and form. Tony Smith for example creates works that have often been misinterpreted as minimalist, based upon the sharpness of his lines, and the extremes of geometry his works can take. It is only when his ideology and his artistic processes are examined is his abstract expressionist nature revealed. What makes an artist a 20th or 21st century expressionist can often be lost in misinterpretation. It is often hard to determine the ‘intent’ of an artist’s work, when we move onward in examining these modern forms of expressionist art, it will therefore be very important to examine the tenets
and methods I have previously discussed. As in the case of Tony Smith many critics and artists have looked upon his work as minimalist, they reduced his works down to simplistic forms of geometry. Landau examined his process for convening works and she uncovered the true expressionist impetus behind his work (Landau p 130).

From this analysis I have created a set of criterion, a framework that we can utilize to display the existence of the movement I have entitled 2st century expressionism. I will be examining the works and philosophies of established 20th century expressionist artists as well as those who I have titled 21st century expressionist artists through the prism of this framework. As we have seen, modern expressionist art is concerned with the emotional interactions that we all share. Although many artists of the 20th and 21st century forms of this movement do not directly reference Jung and his psychological ideology, the Collective Unconscious is an important aspect of expressionist thought and is one of the most important unifying factors these artists share in their philosophy. They all believe in a form of shared experience, one that on one level or another all viewers of their work will recognize. Another is the utilization of a form of intuitive creation, where the artist allows their emotions to dictate the creation, or the initial design of their work. And lastly they utilize a form of abstraction and non-representation to create their works. These three components are essential, modern expressionist art as it existed in the 20th century and exists in the 21st century can be easily identified by these unifying factors. While reductive, this framework was not created to define this movement, but allow us to view and recognize the existence of the movement within these two distinct time periods.
Chapter Two: Lee Krasner

In this chapter I will begin to discuss the first of two artists who are known within art history as being abstract expressionists. The purpose of this discussion is to allow us to utilize the framework for 20th-21st century expressionism and see how it accurately can be applied to artists who, although different from their 21st century counterparts, are none the less very similar in their aims and methods for creating art. I will begin by discussing Lee Krasner, who has been cited as one of the most influential artists of the New York School, although she is often overshadowed by her relationship with Jackson Pollock. I will begin by giving a brief biographical background for Krasner. Then I will begin to discuss her art via a dissection of her method for her creation process, the overall look of her work, and finally the philosophic ideology she ascribed to her work. In discussing these elements of her art I will demonstrate how the framework I have established in the previous chapter applies to her and to her work.

Krasner was born in New York on October 27th 1908 in Brooklyn New York to a Russian-Jewish family. Krasner, who has admitted to having little interest in art in her younger years, went on to enroll in the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Art and Science in Manhattan, later in 1928 she transferred to the National Academy of Design. According to her biography her professors were unimpressed with her work and her work ethic (Levin p 39). In spite of their lack of confidence in her work she would produce what is considered her first important work, (fig. 2.1) a self-portrait which after its submission to the National Academy of Design enabled her to study with live models rather than casts (Levin p 226). Within this work we can see many of the movements Krasner was interested in and influenced by, chiefly Fauvism. While in college she attended a number of classes with Hans Hoffman. Hoffman was a
noted professor of art and a great artist himself, he would go on to become one of the many abstract expressionists in the United States after ending his teaching career.

Krasner was greatly influenced by Hofmann and her work shifted and she began to focus on the possibilities afforded by abstraction. As Gail Levin in her biography of Krasner shows several examples of her work and the influences that can be seen within these works. In Fig (2.3) as Levin points out Krasner was obviously influenced by Mondrian. The geometric shapes and pallet of primary colors are clear indications of her beginning experimentation with his form of abstraction. She was still very far from discovering what would be her mature style, but this early experiment shows that she was intrigued by the possibilities that abstraction held over representational art. Soon thereafter Krasner would meet Jackson Pollock and become heavily associated with the movement that would mature into abstract expressionism.

As Levin points out Pollock influenced her style and mark making, and she began to create works that would soon progress into her mature works. This can clearly be seen in fig. (2.3) Inspired by Pollock, Krasner now worked more from instinct than she had before. Much like Pollock’s action paintings Krasner allowed her emotions to guide her in creating her works. In addition to the influence that Pollock’s work and ideas had on her stylistic choices, he was not the only important influence upon her work. Her friendships would have a profound impact upon her work. The surrealists that associated with Peggy Guggenheim must have exposed Krasner to the psychological elements of their work, namely utilizing psychological thought to create works based upon the unconscious, and the varied philosophies of psychological ideology. In addition to this they utilized concepts of ‘automatic’ creation. This was a process in which the artist allowed the unconscious mind to control the artist’s actions while creating their works. This is similar in concept with that of “action painting” which would become a staple for Pollock’s and
Krasner’s mature works. While the surrealists concentrated upon the dream world Krasner and Pollock focused upon experience. It was not long after Pollock began to perfect the painting of his mature works that Krasner’s painting flourished and her style drastically changed as well. As Gail Levin describes in her biography of Krasner, Inspired by Pollock, Krasner now worked more from instinct than she had before. She also tried to be more at one with nature and developed her own all-over patterns of strokes with her palette knife and brush handle. [i.e. Untitled] ’’ (Fig.3.2) (Levin ...226). This was the beginning of what has been described as her “calligraphic” style. Similar to Pollock’s ‘all over’ style she covers the canvas with small markings reminiscent of some form of alphabetic, or runic markings. These were not intended to be ‘read’ in a traditional sense, Curator Ann Tempkin for MOMA speaks in an interview about these works, citing that Krasner related them to moments from her childhood when she had to learn Hebrew. (Tempkin) Tempkin goes on to relate that Krasner did not intend for these to be understandable in a lingual sense, but that it was the feeling, the remembrance of the experiences she had with Hebrew as a child that inspired these works. Krasner created a large body of works of this type from 1949 through to the mid 1950’s in this style. By looking at an example from this period, (Fig. 3.2), we can see that while they are similar she did not create a repertoire of symbols that she reused and rearranged, these runic forms were created “in the moment”. In other words Krasner was creating these forms through a similar intuitive process as Pollock. By working through this intuitive process Krasner was able to tap directly into the feelings and emotions of her childhood.

Krasner, must have been influenced by Jungian psychological thought as well not only because of her marriage to Pollock, but also as an artist of the New York School. In an interview
with Dorothy Seckler, Krasner described how she and Pollock affected each other’s work and the styles in which they created those works.

Seckler: And did you mutually influence each other or did you explore certain directions together? Would you say your work was affected in a natural sense from ’45 to be very different? Krasner: Yes, our work was different. It was both – again, that word abstract – I think it was different. And I, for one, believe art comes from art and is influenced by art, just as I explained that some things very positive took place when I saw the first French paintings. Certainly a great deal happened to me when I saw the Pollock’s. Now Pollock saw my work too – I couldn’t measure what effect it had on him. We didn’t talk art – we didn’t have that kind of a relationship at all. In fact, we talked art talk only in a shop sense, but never in terms of discussions about art, so to speak. For one thing, Pollock really felt about it. When he did talk it was extremely pointed and meaningful and I understood what he meant. Naturally he was seeing my work as I certainly saw his (Seckler).

This gives us a window not only in how their artistic relationship worked but how they interacted. While not directly discussing artistic philosophy it is apparent that they drew inspiration from one another’s work. The common direction of their works’ evolution displays that their ideologies and artistic philosophies were extremely similar. While they did not directly talk about artistic philosophy their ideologies were complementary and they took obvious influence from each other’s work and concepts.

During the years that followed, her relationship with Pollock became more and more complex. Pollock was well known for being an alcoholic began to drink heavily, he was also known to womanize. These issues placed a great amount of pressure upon his and Krasner’s relationship... This had a profound effect upon her work and she began to utilize a very interesting technique "collage". Krasner would take paintings she felt were "unsuccessful" such as the muddy color field paintings she created earlier in her relationship with Pollock and she would apply cut remnants from Pollock's paintings, as well as portions cut out of her "calligraphic" works, in order to create new works. In my opinion the act of combining portions
of her works with his and applying them to the surface of paintings that she had created in the beginnings of their relationship is very telling. I feel that what she was displaying was the mingling of her emotions and experiences which stemmed from her close relationship with him. These collages were a depiction of her experiences and emotions in the midst of her complex relationship with Pollock. In her article Landau describes one example of these works, "using as a support color field paintings such as Untitled 1951, which she considered unsuccessful, from her first one-woman show at the Betty Parsons Gallery (1951), she pasted large dramatic shapes cut from her own and Pollock’s discarded canvases in works such as Milkweed (fig. 3.2)"

(Landau p 140). If we examine figure 2.3 we can see that although she is utilizing remnants from his and her works, the final product is drastically different than the work she was producing prior to this. While these works were different in form and technique, she was in essence still creating works that displayed her emotions and experiences. Fig. 3.2. The viewer can tap into her emotions via the intense use of color, and asymmetrical forms convey the emotions that Krasner must have been dealing with during this period in her life. These works were autobiographical but only on an emotional level. She wanted to communicate how she felt within the moment. Although the painting is predominantly vibrant colors, it is dominated by large swatches of black. These black dominant forms could be interpreted as oppressive dark thoughts that can pervade in a depressed mind. Many of the works that Krasner created during this period were so emotionally charged that she was actually frightened by them. Gail Levin comments on this mentioning a quote of Krasner who openly admitted her reactions to her own work. Gail Levin comments on and directly quotes Krasner’s reactions to a painting she had just finished:

“Krasner’s fear was surely related to the disquieting presence in the painting…” (Levin ... 305). Krasner stated: “…the painting disturbed me enormously…” (Levin p 305). The fact that she
utilized older works to craft these new collages means that unfortunately most of her early work was consumed in the creation of this newer group of works. Krasner’s works contain aspects of nostalgia, the prior works based upon her experiences with the Jewish alphabet, and now these works which incorporated pieces of earlier works. She would even take some of these collages and reuse them to create different works that displayed her changes in mood and emotion. Although this is unfortunate from an art historical point of view because we are unable to view much of her early work from the beginning of her artistic career it is also fascinating because the use of these older works in conjunction with portions of newer works and Pollock’s remnants is a poetic representation of her life and how she felt in that moment. The creation of these works and the manner in which they were created utilized the ideology that they would promote similar feelings in the viewer.

She moved into Pollock’s studio barn, which allowed her to work on a grander scale due to the greater space and lighting it provided. We can see in figure 2.4, Night Creatures, she moved into a style that relied heavily upon action and body movement to craft her paintings. Although this painting was made nearly a decade after his death it exemplifies how drastically her work was affected by the new venue of his studio. These works were again a way for Krasner to communicate how she was feeling in the moment, the emotions that flooded her were complex and often conflicting. As Levin states “…she painted bold and upbeat works in a series called Green Earth. Her impulse was to reach out and boldly embrace life, which had so swiftly left Pollock” (Levin p 320). It is also interesting to note that they began to craft works in a manner similar to Pollock's so called "action paintings", which must have been in part due to the increased space Pollock’s studio provided. The intense movements of her body that can be seen in the brush strokes left on the canvass, much like the deliberate drips and motions that Pollock
utilized in his works were directly influenced by her emotions. Krasner like Pollock was speaking bodily through her works. Instead of utilizing remnants and cut portions of emotions from other works she was expressing the emotions and experiences she was working through directly. These more colorful, almost fauvist works reflect the change in her emotional state, in comparison to the works she produced prior to this more colorful period. We can also understand as Levin states that it is possible the Krasner was “…relived to be free of Pollock’s debilitating behavior and the constant anxiety it created…” (Levin ... 320). The complexity of the works she created in this period are indicative of the scope of her experiences and emotions. As Krasner once stated: “My art is biographical if anyone can take the trouble to read it” (Landau p 73).

In examining the entirety of the evolution of Krasner’s work, we can see the refinement of her methods in communicating her emotions through her art. It is clear that she responded and incorporated the ideologies of the abstract expressionists from the New York School. Even in her earliest works we can see that Krasner incorporated emotion into her works. As her career progressed we can see that she quickly gravitated towards the philosophy of the American expressionists. By abandoning representational works and adopting this nonrepresentational style she was able to communicate her emotions and experiences. “Mark Patiky is the only person to photograph Krasner while she painted. Patiky watched as she became very focused, standing back from fifteen feet with her arms folded, then running up and making ‘these slashing strokes’ a very active process, applied to upstretched canvas tacked to the wall”( Levin ... 227) . This describes the intense physicality Krasner employed to create her works. By bodily throwing herself into her works, she allowed her emotions to guide her movements. Let us return to fig. 2.5 we can see the almost violent slashes of her brush, coupled with the colors she was selecting by emotional intuition. The intense saturation of the colors against the white background, the
intense reds and greens contrast sharply with each other. The viewer can truly follow the movements of Krasner’s hands as she violently attacked the canvass with her strokes. These techniques allow the viewer to experience the emotions that Krasner wished to convey. As I discussed in the earlier chapter abstract expressionists wanted to utilize the collective consciousness in order to allow the viewers to experience similar emotions and experiences as the artists. The emotions that Krasner experienced that inspired her works give a clear understanding of the many changes and nuances in her work. By examining the variations in her work we can understand how her emotions and experiences changed. These works were created to promote in the viewer an analogue of these feelings, *Milkweed* for example, the torn and applied portions of canvas, the splashes of forcefully brushed paint, these are indicative of the chaotic jumble of tribulations and sentiment she was dealing with during this period. She worked intuitively, allowing her unconscious to dictate how her works would take form.

We can see that her work and the philosophy behind it coincides with the framework that I established in the first chapter. Krasner's ideology, technique, and work all perform according to the philosophy of the abstract expressionists, even if the viewer were unaware of her biography and the issues she was facing during these varied times in her life, the abstract expressionists belief in the collective consciousness would, in their minds, allow for the viewer to feel and understand the way Krasner felt. Krasner was quoted about her process, she related that even she was not completely aware of the feelings that drove her to create the works she did. “I have no idea as to why I sometimes go from no color to a very high keyed color. I have no way of explaining it to myself…I either feel the color or I don’t…” (Levin ... 324). Krasner allowed her emotions to dictate her work down to the choice of color as well as physical action. This displays how much reliance Krasner placed upon her unconscious mind. By accessing the
unconscious in this way she could easily tap into the collective unconscious and communicate through her paintings to the viewer through this avenue.
Chapter Three: Tony Smith

In this chapter I will discuss the artist Tony Smith. Smith has been called many things: Architect, Painter, Sculptor and Minimalist. I propose to challenge one of these titles: Tony Smith is not a minimalist. Although he has been hailed as the possible father of Minimalism, and his works, without proper understanding could be labeled minimalist, he is the last of the 20th century abstract expressionists. As Robert Morgan claims, “he functioned as a bridge between the heroic internal myths of abstract expressionism and a more public directed systematic approach to sculptural form. He could be understood as a bridge between the modernist aesthetics and what came to be the post-modernist aesthetics” (Morgan ... 103). Tony Smith had a definite vision of the world and what he wanted to create to define that world. The medium and the method to accomplish that vision did not present itself to Smith until the early 1960s. His use of materials, construction processes, and use of geometric forms seem to align him neatly into the context of minimal aesthetics. What sets Smith’s work apart from the Minimalist goals and ideologies is his philosophy, his design process, and the highly charged emotional content of his sculpture. He was the product of a generation prior to the Minimalists, thus the questions he wished to answer, the influences that shaped his philosophy, the ideologies he rejected and reacted against were very different to those of the contemporary artists of the 1960’s. I propose to prove this claim through careful examination of what minimalism was and wished to accomplish, versus Abstract expressionism. Additionally I will display the varied influences that helped Tony Smith formulate his sculpture and closely examine the philosophy he utilizes as well as the processes that he uses to create his works. Ultimately these combined factors will prove my theory: Tony Smith is the last abstract expressionist and not the first minimalist. In order to prove my theory I will first examine minimalism and determine the distilled essence of
its philosophies and goals. I will delve into the life of Smith, examining the various influences that shaped his artistic understanding. Lastly I will discuss his careers as an architect, a painter, and ultimately as a sculptor, in order to show the common narrative thread that existed within all his work but gained its fullest expression within his sculptural work. As David Sylvester states, “he created sculptural forms that are minimal in format but highly eloquent and captivating” (Sylvester ... 20).

In order to better explain how Smith is not a Minimalist I would like to explain what minimalism was and what it intended to do in the realm of sculpture. Minimal as a term is defined as something that is spare, and has been reduced to its essentials. “Minimalism can be defined as an art of relatives… The material was the thing, usually in the unadulterated color of its raw state, and that in relation to its precise scale” (Prince ... 66). Minimalism began in New York in 1960. Artists began to explore simplified geometric abstraction within sculpture and painting. Minimalism was in fact a direct reaction to abstract expressionism, artists wanting to abandon “self” expression within their work wanted to explore a form of art that was simply “objective” (Pawson p 30). They desired a form of artistic expression that moved away from the heavy involvement of emotion and feelings of kinetic energy. In order to do so they began to eliminate what they considered superfluous from the forms they created. Minimalism relied upon simplified geometric forms. Arguably this movement can be traced to the Geometric abstractions of d De Stijl artists like Piet Mondrian whose paintings like Composition no.10 were simplified geometric patterning with minimal primary colors. Additionally he was influenced by the artists of the German Bauhaus generally these artists relied upon strict geometric forms, removed from any form of metaphoric meanings. They created works from industrial materials, utilizing repetition, as well of equality of components to create works that spoke more of the
tensions between the objects, and the space they are in, rather than of their surface or their
construction. The removal of emotional expression was a reaction to the former generation’s
Abstract expressionist movement; the minimalist works were intended to explore relationships
between objects and lacked any form of emotional or intuitive influences. Their works were
meticulously planned, which was a stark contrast when compared to Abstract Expressionist
works like those of Jackson Pollock. Minimalists were concerned with the interaction of their
works within the surrounding space, and not the emotional reaction of the viewer, nor with their
own emotional standing. Robert Morris, wanting to define a framework, created an essay in
1966 in which he describes one of the primary factors of Minimalist Sculpture: *Gestalt*. This
force he argues exists strongest within the simplest geometric forms creating a tension of push
and pull between them.

...certain forms do exist that, if they do negate the numerous relative sensations of
color to texture, scale, mass, etc., do not present clearly separated parts for these
kinds of relationships to be established in terms of shapes. Such are the simpler
forms that create strong gestalt sensations. Their parts are bound together in such a
way that they offer a maximum resistance to perceptual separation. In terms of
solids, or forms applicable to sculpture, these gestalts are the simpler polyhedrons
(Morris ... 225-6).

This tension between objects in space was a primary concern. Morris relates that despite the
simplicity of these forms it did not mean that the experience was not equally simple. He wished
to utilized “unitary forms” to order relationships between forms (Morris ... 228).

In contrast Abstract Expressionists had very different goals for what art was intended to
do and how it was to be created. As I’ve stated American Abstract Expressionism was an artistic
philosophy that was coined in 1946, it was a combination of heightened emotional intensity and
a denial of the aesthetics of European movements such as the Bauhaus, and Futurism (Hess ...
47). These artists desired freedom from the restrictions of representational art. Through this
freedom, they intended to explore emotional and unconscious vistas. Thus rather than distracting the viewer they believed they could communicate emotion much easier utilizing abstraction. The heightened emotions and anxieties of post war America found an outlet within Abstract Expressionist art (Levine p 22). Space was another important aspect of Abstract Expressionism. “One can read Pollock’s paintings as either webs of lines defining finite space, or alternatively opening up into infinity of space which is suggested by the bare canvas… a paradox between the frontality of the image and the feeling of moving into depth”(Levine p 22). Edward Levine within his article Abstract Expressionism: The Mystical experience describes the sensation of viewing an Expressionist work as, “A world thus created in the work …in which the individual loses himself either to the color or the movement” (Levine ... 25). He goes on to state that the conceptualization of art is not a rejection of the self but as a glorification of the mind and personality (Edward Levine ... 25). As I will discuss many of these elements impacted the philosophy of Tony Smith and played an important part in the genesis of his distinctive sculptural work. Although Abstract Expressionism can cover a diverse group of artists with an equally disparate number of stylistic choices, they all were grounded with the ideology of utilizing emotion and intuition within their work. They created works that were intended to display and express the artist’s emotion through the use of innovative abstraction. As opposed to Minimalism, the American Abstract Expressionists were concerned with creating an emotional impact with their work. They created works that would touch the viewer and elicit an emotional response. Minimalism was not concerned with emotion, but actually strove to remove emotion entirely from the process of creation through precision and reduction of form.

It is impossible to fully understand the ideology and vision of Tony Smith without discussing his life. Tony was born in 1912 in South Orange, New Jersey. His grandfather, A.
Smith created a waterworks manufacturing company. His youth was greatly tied to that factory. At a very young age he was struck with tuberculosis, this required constant care and supervision. He was placed within an isolation ward constructed in his childhood home. This disease made him very frail and highly susceptible to disease (Storr p 27). His medicine was delivered in small cardboard boxes, which he would obsessively make into small structures. Whenever he was able, he would visit his family’s factory. He was awed by the fabrication process and became obsessed with the gigantic machines of the works. Smith intimated that he became enamored of these massive powerful forms. He identified with these massive structures in a personal way, witnessing what he in his weakened state lacked (Hunter ...3). Once his health returned he studied at a Jesuit school, going on to join the Art Students League in New York in 1931 (Goossen ...25). There he studied under George Bridgman, George Grosz and Vaclav Vytacil. Smith stated “While involved in drawing and painting, I also made bas-reliefs and three dimensional structures in the manner of Vantongerloo” (Eugene Goossen ...25). An example of Georges Vantongerloo’s work can be seen in Figure 3.1, Rapports de volumes, 1919. The geometric precise sculptures of Vantongerloo were based upon precise mathematics. This evidences the beginnings of an obsession within Tony Smith. This obsession will become a formative factor in Tony Smith’s vision for sculpture. Although he studied traditional art in the Art Students League, in 1937 he entered the New Bauhaus in Chicago, with the intention to become an Architect. While there he studied under Moholy Nagy, and Alexander Archipenko. Smith stated that although he like the personalities of these men, he seriously disagreed with their ideology for art. He rankled against the philosophy of the New Bauhaus, and began to question the need to attend. After a year, he learned that Fred Keck was going to teach architecture. Figure 2.3 is an example of Keck’s Modernistic Architecture, Smith’s ideals
clashed with those of Keck. Smith growing up in and around the urban landscape of New York disagreed with the manner in which Keck taught and created architecture. Disillusioned with the Bauhaus, Smith dropped out and abandoned the idea of becoming a certified architect and said, “I was disappointed with how little benefit I derived from the school. When it was announced that Fred Keck would be in charge of the architectural program, I withdrew” (Goossen ...25). This experience placed him in a deep depression that was only elevated a few years later.

Smith became a laborer, working in construction in the Rocky Mountains, where he learned of an opportunity that would change him for the better. He learned of a labor position working for Frank Lloyd Wright on his Ardmore Experiment. Smith found a renewed fascination with architecture, the ability to shape the space around humanity. Wright’s architectural philosophy was one of harmony, creating buildings that, although geometric and methodically planned, complemented their surroundings and existing harmoniously within nature. Smith revitalized by Wright’s aesthetics and processes, strove to become as useful as possible to Wright (Goossen ...72). He eventually became a project manager working closely with Wright, and eventually creating necessary drawings. Although he agreed with much of Wright’s ideologies of architecture, except that like Keck’s ideology, Wright wished to find harmony within the natural environment rather than the urban. Smith believed that unlike Wright, the city is where the greatest harmony can be made; the island of Manhattan was in Tony’s opinion the perfect expression of the grid (Goossen ...75). Smith, being enamored of the urban landscape, soon found a muse in another great name in architecture: Le Corbusier. Smith, as can be seen even in his early sculptural interests, was obsessed with the Grid. Le Corbusier based his architecture upon what he called the ‘Module’, an idea of creating an environment that centered
on the proportions of an Ideal Human figure (Goossen ...80). Smith was so interested in
Corbusier’s work that he traveled to Paris to experience his work first hand.

However, Smith deemed that Le Corbusier too was flawed in his judgment; the Module
was based upon the form of an ‘ideal’ man.

Smith examined not only the building but the particular grid established by Le
Corbusier’s Modular system of proportions and measures, a long standing interest
that was rekindled for smith during this tri... Smith’s sketches traced out a
proportional system whose measurements derived from the meter, standers he
related to... beds and doors, rather from an ideal body (Goossen ...80).

Smith felt that this ideal man lent an unrealistic mysticism to Corbusier’s work (Goossen ...80).
While examining Le Corbusier’s work he deemed that the methodology was flawed.
Disappointed with his findings Smith became an architect in his own right. “Smith established
himself as an innovative designer in the 1940s and practiced architecture for twenty years
thereafter” (Storr ... 3). Unfortunately none of his buildings remain standing to examine. He
eventually dropped out of architecture, feeling again despondent about his inability to realize the
ideals he felt were important through architecture. I propose that the reasons he felt so
disappointed with his work during this point in his life is that, although he had a philosophy, he
was still unable to articulate that philosophy physically.

Throughout his career Smith was deep friends with prominent members of the American
Abstract Expressionists. Barnett Newman and Jackson Pollock were two of his closest friends.
While he worked as an architect he also painted, and his paintings showed that he was closely
allied with the philosophy of the Expressionists. “All the while, he drew and painted. Little
known or appreciated at the time by the art world at large, his work on paper and canvas earned
him the respect and friendship of Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman and Clifford
Still”( Storr ... 3). Despite encouragement by his contemporaries within the Expressionists he
never truly pushed himself fully into the arena of art. Many scholars state that he felt intimidated by the talents of his artist peers (Storr ... 66).

It is my opinion that he was in no way intimidated by these giants, but had yet to become satisfied with his own work and ideologies. He deeply agreed with their goals about what art should accomplish, on the surface this seems incompatible with his ideals, but we can see that even at this stage of his career attempting to combine them. Figure 3.3 and 3.4 show one of his paintings, *Untitled*-from 1960 and the modular sketch of the forms within the work. This displays a deliberate attempt to combine the aesthetics and philosophy of Abstract expressionism with his grid philosophy that he created for his architecture: “...even though Smith shared with these contemporaries a fascination with myths and symbols, his methodical way of working in the studio – palpably influenced by his architectural experience along with is parallel interest in mathematics and science” (Storr ... 3).

In 1960 Smith was struck by a revelation. Now in his late forties he would discover the missing link between his Abstract Expressionist leanings and the contrasting Mathematic ideologies he was obsessed with. “When Smith made his quantum leap into sculpture, he remained loyal to his first psychological and esthetic convictions which were formed in an atmosphere of the emerging New York School” (Hunter ... 6). While working at Hunter College, he and art historian Eugene Goosen were discussing a catalog, and he found that he became engrossed with a painted oak index card box.

[The box] loomed up on the desk between them. When Smith returned home that night, he couldn’t get the index file out of his mind. The next day he made a working drawing of it, multiplying the dimensions... (Hunter ... 4).

Once he had these drawings he commissioned a fabrication shop to recreate the box, with its new dimensions, in steel. He was struck by the impact the sculpture had upon him. The dominating
presence of the file box was now compounded by the increase in scale. He had created the sculpture that would eventually become DIE (fig. 3.5).

Smith applied his modular grid to the box by changing its proportions. The effect was dramatic; it transformed an inanimate object into a living presence. The dimensions are 6’X6’, which forces the viewer to wonder what it contains, and if that object is human. The title in my opinion is more than just a description of a die, which is also a cube, but a reference to death, like a coffin who’s proportions are 6’. This elicits an emotional response. He was questioned as to why he did not make the form larger, he stated he “was not making a monument”. Additionally he commented on why did not make the sculpture smaller stating that he “…was not making an object” (Burton ... 47). He also realized that the sculpture began to dictate upon its surrounding space. The sculpture dictates upon its surroundings bounding it and defining it with its own inherent grid and architecture. As we can see in figure 3.6 Smith began to utilize his grid to dissect the cube; his goal was to make the viewer understand that the grid that exists in space via the removal and addition of elements from the form (Goossen ... 7). “These figures… may be thought of as part of a continuous “space grid”. In the latter, voids are made up of the same components as the masses. In this light they may be seen as interruptions in an otherwise, unbroken flow of space” (Buckley ... 84).

Tony Smith began to realize that the manner in which he created his works limited them. He found that he was trapped within a two dimensional framework. He returned to a process from his youth, modeling in cardboard. He began to create a stock of modular parts of cardboard that he could use to create the models of his works.

…the modeling process would become key to the formulation of Smith’s subsequent sculptures. Smith linked the importance of modeling to the difficulty of
visualizing geometry in three dimensions; “we think” he noted “in two dimensions horizontally and vertically…” (Buckley ... 84).

It is my opinion that he was not just confounded by the geometry, this process allowed him to create intuitively. In Figure 3.7 we can see one of the models he created for the sculpture *Throwback*; this displays the process he used to formulate his sculpture. This process of intuitive creation combined with the modular grid he invented displays the synthesis he had been striving to achieve. By creating sculpture through his intuitive method he was able to combine his own ideology with the processes of creation of the Abstract Expressionists. Smith described the process as if the sculpture were growing and evolving as he modeled it. “The piece begins to dictate its own terms. But also has terms, particularly involving the emotional response…” (Goossen ... 9). He was also enabled by this process to confound the senses, as the viewer approaches the work they are presented by geometry. We can see in figures 3.8 and 3.9 the impact of these twists in visual logic. Shown are two views of *The Snake is Out*, as we can see the expectations of the form by the viewer is confounded when they look at another side of the work. The logic of the viewer creates expectations of what they will see as they walk around the sculpture. Smith defies these expectations by dramatically changing the angle and direction of the surfaces “unpredictably [toying] with ones’ optical impressions while moving around the work” (Buckley ... 85).

Here Smith resolves his sculptural works as if they were gestural paintings, like those of Jackson Pollock. He created his works to have a sense of depth, gravity and movement all their own. He did not want the consumer, or the viewer in other words, to have to contemplate his works. His aim was to have the viewer react purely on an emotional level. We can now see how the artist utilizes his artwork to evoke emotion in the viewer, the artist is unconcerned with the viewer’s intellect actively interpreting the work or its meanings. He sought to have the viewer react to the
work in the Jungian sense that I have outlined previously. The instinctual manner of the work’s creation, the gestural suggestion of its genesis, were to promote the consumer to tap into the collective experience and react accordingly.

It is impossible to examine the sculptures of Tony Smith without an understanding of their phenomenological impact upon the viewer. He utilizes psychological tensions within his works that are compounded by their use of human proportions. “It is such psychological situations everywhere around us that give us real apprehension of form. A piece may be suggestive of vertigo, it may reach out to the extent of its own physical capacity to support itself, but it never overreaches… it is self-sustaining” (Goossen p 6). Edward Goosen describes the effect upon the viewer in terms of “presences”; this in fact is how Tony Smith described his works. They “transcended their objectness”, in other words they exist as entities in their own right. These presences dictate upon the space they exist within, they create an environment in which they exist, and in which the viewer interacts with the work. “One has the sense that Smith’s… sculpture poses a challenge to the human presence, and outdoors, to any competing architectural forms” (Hunter p 9). (Fig. 3.10) These works not only seem to exist as self-sustaining beings, with an emotional charge, they also dictate upon their surroundings, as if they were architecture. This phenomenon occurs where ever they are placed, indoors, or without, urban or rural. [Fig. 3.11 & 3.12]

It is also becomes apparent when understanding the contexts of Smith’s life why he titles his works with such seemingly innocuous names. Tony Smith was heavily involved in the culture of the Abstract Expressionists, he and his good friends, including Jackson Pollock drank and smoked heavily. Knowing this it is not surprising to realize that he named his work euphemisms for that life style. Titles like Elevens are Up and The Snake is Out (fig. 3.8 and 3.9),
are all slang terms for being wildly intoxicated. *Cigarette* and *Smoke* are obvious, as is the title *Grasshopper* a name for a powerful alcoholic beverage (Sylvester p 20).

The inclusion of personal emotions, the use of intuitive construction, and the intense emotive content of his work demands that he no longer be described as a Minimalist artist. Through my research all of the scholars who claim that he was a Minimalist, focus upon the sculpture that best fits that description, *DIE*. By understanding the reasoning behind his work, the crux of his ideology is a combination of architectural mathematics, and the ideology and processes of the abstract expressionism. His works are not objects, nor are they studies in geometric gestalt. “The big painterly gesture of Pollock thus found its unexpected equivalent in Smith’s space dominating, space framing sculptures, [which are filled with] the welter of masculine emotion… in Smith’s restless but firmly rooted ‘presences’…” (Storr p 67). As we can see Smith’s work also fits well within the frame work I have established, although he was creating abstract expressionist works years after the movement was considered by many historians to have ended. This movement as we will see in the following chapters continues on into the 21st century.
Chapter Four: Etsuko Ichikawa

In this chapter I will discuss Etsuko Ichikawa, who like Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner creates two-dimensional works that convey the artist’s unconscious thoughts and feelings. As I did in the previous chapters I will examine the artist’s works and their ideology comparing them not only to the framework that I have established but also with the artists of the 20th century form of abstract expressionism in order to display the clear similarities between them. Ichikawa is a Seattle based artist who creates what she calls “pyrographs” I will display how the works she is creating and the philosophy she ascribes to these works identifies her as a 21st century abstract expressionist. As I did with the previous artists I will examine the artist’s biography, their artistic philosophy and finally her artwork itself.

Ichikawa was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. Even at a very young age she was attracted to art and artists. Her father was a successful tailor and she would often sit and watch him create cloths from what was only patterns, measurements, and cloth. She was also exposed to many local artists and craftsmen who hired her father to create clothing for them. Often she would accompany her father when he would go to many of these artist’s studios. Throughout her early education she studied art, through her junior high school and on into her college career. She attended the Tokyo Zokei University of Art graduating in 1986 with a BFA in Painting.

The Tokyo Zokei University, or TZU, was founded by Yoko Kuwasawa, an Art educator, fashion designer, and journalist who stated the Philosophy behind the school: “The idea was interdisciplinary. At the same time, I had a strong desire to elucidate the essence of modern Zokei by pursing the connection between Zokei and pure art. Zokei is a concept of art, design, and education. Within the university’s introduction it gives an in-depth explanation of the word and its use concerning the school:
We express our thought and strong will toward education and research, which is focused on positively accepting the new consciousness of the society which is heading toward the historical changes of art-style in the act of expression and broadening the boundary of expression. The word "Zokei" does not only refer to the visual form or an expression, as is generally understood, but it also indicates the standpoint to acknowledge "art" and "design" as a whole: Going beyond the boundary of synthesizing "art" and "design", "Zokei" is based on the viewpoint that we acknowledge all kinds of executions and expressions as a part of social performance (TZU website).

While there must exist some cultural differences within the Japanese definition of ‘expressive art’, there exist a great number similarities to their definition and that of “western” expressionism which is evident when we examine Ichikawa’s work.

The concept of expression and communicating personal expression is even more focused within the University’s school of painting. There the focus upon individual expression, especially personal expression is emphasized. Ichikawa having learned to hone her art and philosophy was undoubtedly affected by the school’s heavy emphasis upon expressionistic thought and ideology. The Painting department of the TZU states that their aim for their students was to “…seek for the new style of Zokei (art and design) and the potentials of artistic expression, each student identifies himself/herself as an expressionist of the time, and tries to establish his/her own world of expression” (TZU website). Her fascination with her father’s work resurfaced while attending school as she began to incorporate swatches of fabric into her paintings making her two dimensional works into three dimensional reliefs. (Schnoor p 33) She was fascinated by the aesthetics of ancient letter writing she would cut fabric into shapes similar to Arabic letters, and incorporating them into her “quilt-like” paintings. (Schnoor p 33)

For several years after her graduation Ichikawa made little to no art work. During this period she felt unsure of herself and her artwork, doubting that art could express her feelings accurately. But in 1991 she travelled to the small island of Noto Japan, which is known for its
handy crafts including glassmaking. She studied this art form from the local artisans learning the ancient techniques of glass blowing from the area. She soon found that glassmaking was an extremely attractive medium and began to pursue learning as much as she could about the art form. She eventually began to take classes at the Tokyo Glass Art Institute. In her fervor for learning glassmaking and blowing she turned her attention to the United States and the Pilchuck Glass School at Washington State University. Although she was only selected as an alternate, she decided that her future lay in America and quickly moved to Seattle in 1993. She was eventually fully accepted to the school and attended courses there for seven years. While studying there she was able to work alongside the school’s founder Dale Chihuly. This was a one of the major turning points for her and her work. As Christopher Schnoor states in his article, this…”opened the door to a series of aesthetic innovations on Ichikawa’s part” (Schnoor p 34). Chihuly was and is an extremely well established artist who creates massive sculptures from blown glass. In figure 4.1 we can see one of his large scale installations, this massive sculpture is comprised on a large number of individual blown glass forms. Interestingly, each portion of these glass sculptures is created with an amazingly intuitive process. Chihuly and his team of artists create each portion of the sculpture through a process of traditional glassmaking techniques, while at the same time allowing each piece to form fluidly. This grants gravity and natural temperature changes to assist in dictating the final outcome of each piece. These individual pieces are then carefully arranged into the larger composition.

Tina Oldknow in her book “Chihuly: Persians” she comments on the inspirations of his methodology. She relates how he was Influenced by the Murano glassblowing tradition Chihuly experimented with a team approach to glassblowing. By working with a team of assistants and master glassblowers he has been able to produce glass art on a scale that would normally be
inconceivable working alone or with only one assistant. (Tina Oldknow p 2). We can see an example of his work in figure 4.1. In my opinion this process is similar to that of the way Tony Smith created his sculptures, allowing his intuition to guide the final outcome of the work. This intuitive process must have resonated with her in light of her educational background.

She worked for several years in Chihuly’s studio as a studio assistant. This enabled her to refine her abilities with glass, and she worked closely with Chihuly. As a studio assistant she would have created many of the glass forms that would eventually make up portions of the many sculptures Chihuly created during her tenure. Eventually she went on to be a gallery coordinator for Chihuly in Asia. Studying with Pilchuck founder Dale Chihuly opened the door to a series of aesthetic innovations on Ichikawa’s part, including her chance discovery of the image making potential of molten glass coming in contact with non-glass surfaces. It was during her time as a gallery assistant an accident with a piece she was making from molten glass would be the revelation that inspired her current works. Her epiphany came when she accidentally dropped the work-in-progress on the hot-shop floor and noticed the mark it left behind. The charred mark the molten glass made on the floor fascinated her. She began to wonder about the potential for glass to be used as a tool rather than as the direct medium. She eventually left Chihuly’s studio in order to pursue her own art utilizing molten glass as a mark making tool. Over the next for years she began to experiment with a wide variety of surfaces that would burn and char from the heat of the glass, but still remain relatively intact. Through trial and error she eventually found the perfect weight paper, a kind of heavy grade French paper, Lanaqurelle. This paper was heavy enough to withstand the massive temperatures from contact with the glass [2100 degrees Fahrenheit], as well as its availability in huge reams, which allows her to work in a wide variety of sizes and shapes. She named these burned works, Pyrographs, the traditional definition of this
word is the act of utilizing a superheated implement to create marks through charring of another material.

In her series entitled Deai, a different technique of her pyrography was utilized. Christopher Schnoor describes his impressions and feeling in regarding these works: “In her encounters Ichikawa creates impressions by blowing into the [glass blowing] pipe to create a thin super-hot globe of glass that she sets directly down on the paper. The process results in one or two dark brown, irregularly round images, mysterious and emblematic. These works have a particularly powerful presence, like visual haikus contained, poetic, direct, and authentic”.(Schnoor p 33) It is interesting to note that the manner in which she creates her works is remarkably similar to the way Jackson Pollock created his works. We can see in figures 4.2 through 4.4, Ichikawa literally paints with streamers of molten glass taken directly from the hot crucible, dripping and sliding it across the paper placed on the floor. She moves fluidly, allowing her body movements to dictate where the glass falls on the paper. If we compare these images to figures 4.5 and 4.6, we can see Pollock painting utilizing his well know action painting technique. It is in my opinion that the similarities of these two artists crafting styles is not just a physical one. The intuitive and contemplative manner that Pollock created his works, Ichikawa allows her intuition to dictate the movement and flow of the markings left on the paper. The markings that Pollock, and as I mentioned earlier much of the work of Krasner, were captured motions of their body. Ichikawa has often created her works as a performance, creating her works in front of small audiences as a kind of ephemeral art.

Ichikawa is by her own admission fascinated by the ephemeral, she describes her work as what lies in between ‘ephemeral and eternal’. This is an interesting statement, since what she is implying is that her work is the capturing of a moment in time, something that should be fleeting,
but through the medium of the charred paper it has become permanent. Much like the many abstract expressionist that preceded her, the motions of her body is captured on the paper through the medium interacting with its surface. I posit that Ichikawa is capturing not only a moment of time, but all of the emotions and experiences of that moment.

She has been quoted as stating that her work is inspired by “moment and memory, absorption and evaporation, light and shadow” that inspire me and relate to my work. My “glass pyrographs” are made by drawing hot molten glass, which is one way to capture and eternalize the immediacy of a moment, while my floating installations and time-based work are about ever-changing states of mind (Schnoor p 35).

The works she creates display what she calls a ‘moment’. In other words she is attempting to relate to the viewer her experiences within a specific point or “moment” in time. In doing so Ichikawa taps directly into her unconscious, allowing the emotions she feels to dictate the movements of her body, and in doing so the marks left on the paper. Her life has been, as Schnoor states, “…influenced by a mixture of fire and water” (Schnoor p 35). The places that she has called home, either in Japan or in the Pacific-northwest, were all surrounded by water, she has been quoted as taking a great amount of inspiration from the ebb and flow of the water. She was especially affected by the many sacred sites in japan, specifically Kumano, which has a massive and striking waterfall. In figure 4.7 *Trace* we can see the influence her obsession with water has had upon her work. In addition to the pyrographs she also creates works she calls aquagraphs. These aquagraphs are initially created by ‘drawing’ Sanskrit letters on heavy gauge paper, she then through the use of soot emanating from the smoke of candle flames creates distinctive marks on the paper. Much like Krasner, Ichikawa is fascinated by writing, and the aesthetic appearance of written pictographic languages. We can see an image of one such work in figure 4.8 entitled *Echo 2413*. In an interview with Ichikawa she was quoted as stating about her aquagraphs that an “aquagraph is between [those two aspects]. Two unexpected materials
come together: fire and paper, water and paper. Using water to draw [with] is unexpected, as it is invisible. Fire is ever changing, will never be the same. These two things come together and then materialize. When they meet, they are eternalized and it will stay” (Schnoor p 35). While the water has been applied in a very deliberate fashion, the application of the soot filled smoke and its interaction with the water is much more intuitive and allows for a greater allowance for chance.

In a show of her aquagraphs for the Davidson gallery the gallery catalog describes these works, “…the basic design of the nine works derives from Sanskrit letters, each representing a different meaning, “drawn” on paper with tiny lines of water. The paper is then passed wet side down over burning candles whose smoke and heat stain the outlined areas” (Schnoor p 35). The ghost of the water droplets remains frozen on the paper, outlined by the smoke and heat of the flames. Here we can see that she is again expressing a moment in time, these images communicate to the viewer a gamut of emotions. Much like her pyrographs, Ichikawa’s body and movements do much to dictate the way that the flames and water interact on the surface of the paper. Additionally like her other works these works are not planned with deliberation, she allows her intuition and unconscious to dictate her movements and ultimately the way the work will appear (Schnoor p 36).

If we compare Ichikawa’s work and philosophy to the abstract expressionists of the 20th century we can see a great number of parallels. Her twentieth century counterparts were concerned with creating works that enabled a form of communication between the work and the viewer, one that would elicit a response that would resonate within the shared experiential reservoir that was espoused by Jungian Psychology. In doing so the viewer would be able to ‘feel’ similar emotions an experiences to that of the artist. These artists as I have mentioned in
my earlier chapters created works through processes that tapped directly into their unconscious. I have termed this process “intuitive”, if we compare that to the manner in which Ichikawa utilizes to craft her work, it is apparent that they are the same. The curvilinear and amorphous forms that are create through both of her major mark-making processes, promote within the viewer definite emotions. We can see in the previous examples of her pyrographs (fig. 4.2-4.4), that the motions of her body are captured directly through the medium. Ellen Landau, in her book, *Reading abstract expressionism*, quotes Gottlieb who stated that the “… purpose of [abstract expressionist] art … is to re-establish a lost contact with the unconscious… and to keep and develop this contact in order to bring the conscious mind the throbbing events of the unconscious mind” (Landau p 125). Ichikawa’s philosophy concerning her work aligns with this explanation of the aims of expressionist art. Her works capture the emotions and unconscious memories she was feeling during the creation of her works. The expressive movements the viewer can see carbonized on the paper allow the viewer to tap into these feelings. In her article describing Ichikawa’s work in a recent show art critic Rachel Chambers describes her experience with the works displayed. “In these works Ichikawa creates a visual reenactment of something that we are continually trying to do –to retain something that is fleeting. Instead of taking photographs of a moment, which always seems to have a frozen quality, her pyrographs retain their breath, their life. We will never be able to hold onto an exact moment-to keep a wave upon the sand—but Ichikawa’s images show us what it might look like if we could”(Schnoor ... 35). Feelings and emotions within a given moment are indeed fleeting, what many expressionists, including Ichikawa attempt is to create a means of capturing and communicating them through their works.
Chapter Five: Beth Cavener Stichter:

In my final chapter I will be discussing the ceramicist and sculpture Beth Cavener Stichter. Much like the sculptor Tony Smith, who I discussed earlier, Stichter utilizes her works with abstract expressionist aims, to promote and communicate her emotions and experiences to the viewer. Although most of the artists I have focused upon have utilized abstraction to communicate their expressionist goals, Stichter’s works, while representational, are identifiable as 21st century expressionist. As I have discussed in my prior chapters the aims of expressionist art both in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been to communicate the unconscious minds experiences and feelings by generating imagery that the viewer will respond to on. Rather than using abstraction, Stichter accomplishes this via the use of anthropomorphic sculptures that display intense human emotions. Stichter states that, “…there are primitive animal instincts lurking in our own depths, waiting for the chance to slide past a conscious moment. The sculptures I create focus on human psychology, stripped of context and rationalization, and articulated through animal and human forms. On the surface, these figures are simply feral and domestic individuals suspended in a moment of tension. Beneath the surface they embody the impacts of aggression, territorial desires, isolation, and pack mentality”. (Brown p 22) Within all people exist strong irrational emotions, ones that can dictate our behavior in spite of the conscious understanding and logic that would normally prevent these actions. Stichter creates sculptures that display as well as promote an empathic reading of these heightened emotions. Although her sculptures are not abstract forms like those of the 20th century expressionists, there is a gestural aspect to her works forms, and the viewer can clearly see evidence of the artist’s movements in the surface texture of the works. I intend to display that her work embodies
perfectly the ideals and philosophy of the 20th and 21st century expressionists, to communicate the innermost feelings and experiences that we all share and can relate to via her art.

Stichter was heavily influenced by her parents, her mother also was a ceramicist, and her father was a molecular biologist. Stichter remarked that “…the connections between art and science have always been at the heart of my work. She has been described as utilizing a very clinical scientific approach to her work, dissecting and crafting emotions and states that are often difficult to dwell upon (Brown p 26). Both of her parents heavily influenced her artistic career as well as the processes she uses within her work. In Glen Brown’s article Stichter commented on her relationship with her Mother and Father. “My Mother, a ceramicist, and my Father, a molecular biologist, raised me with an appreciation for the world on its most minute and grandiose scale. From my mother I learned the language of clay and the power of ideas passed through hands. My father and I spent hours staring at the night sky while he stretched the seams of my imagination with tales of recombinant DNA and evolutionary battles on the microscopic scale. Every moment of my memory has been spent investigating the natural world around me” (Brown p 23). She was so influenced by her father that she decided to follow in his footsteps in her education. She attended Haverford University in Pennsylvania where she had initially intended to study physics and biology, but in her final year of her undergraduate career she changed her major and went on to receive a BA in ceramics. Her art education within the art department at Haverford College had been heavily based in the classical atelier style, where she gained a deep appreciation to classical methodology. She went on to study in the Cecil Academy of Art in Florence, Italy, this expanded her basis in classical artistic training as the Academy’s focus is strictly on the return to classical art. Eventually went on to an apprenticeship with sculptor, Alan LeQuire in Nashville, who opened for Stichter the possibilities of allowing the
material to dictate the ultimate outcome of the work. LeQuire utilizes an intuitive process in creating his sculptures, allowing his emotions and unconscious to dictate the results of his sculpture. After her time with LeQuire, she soon found that she was drawn to the ideology of the surrealist movement of the 1920s. Much like the expressionists of the 20th century the psychological ideology of these artists becomes an important bridge into her mature philosophy. She also became fascinated by works and ideologies of several contemporary narrative artists, such as Francis Bacon and Odd Nerdrum. (Papas ...27) The works of these are two contemporary surrealist artists who have entrenched their works in the realm of emotion, the unconscious mind and the realm of dreams. She then entered the Graduate School at The Ohio State University, where she received her MA in ceramic sculpture. In her thesis exhibition, *Tremble Shiver*, she had abandoned working with the human figure to favor using human-scaled anthropomorphic forms in order to express human psychological and emotional portraits. (Oliver p 1) Stichter then worked two years as a resident artist within the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts. She also worked in a guest artist residency at The Clay Studio in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Throughout this period she began to develop and ultimately perfect the processes and imagery that she now utilizes within her mature work (Pappas p 25).

The process that Stichter uses to create her works is just as important as that of the artists I have discussed in the previous chapters, and just like these previous artists she allows the movements of her body, specifically her hands can be seen within the surface of the work. This causes a heightening of the emotional content, as well as giving a much more personal experience as the viewer can almost envision the gestures and movements of her hands on the surface of the clay. She first, much like Tony Smith, she creates a smaller maquette of the work by hand, intuitively carving the small model into a form that communicates the emotions she
wishes to promote. Once the model is finalized the massive works begin as huge blocks of solid clay that are supported upon heavy steel armatures. She carefully begins to add and carve away at the blocks in order to create the final work. We can clearly see in figures 5.1 through 5.3 the process she utilizes to carve these sculptures. Through the use of tools and her fingers she forms the blocks of wet clay into the final form of the work. Once she has finished the full sculpture she slices the work carefully into sections, which she then carves into hollow forms. These large hollow sections are then placed into a kiln and fired until the clay molecules have hardened into glass. She then rejoins the individual pieces with glue. She most often utilizes flat interior latex paint to finish the surface of the works. This is an unusual choice, but Stichter has found that it enables her to not only retain much of the carefully crafted surface texture, but it also enables her to fill in and disguise the seams left from the construction process. If we look at figure 5.4 we can see the finished product of the above example. The surface has not been smoothed out, nor has it been carved into a realistic representation of fur. The gestural strokes that imply the fur of the animal clearly show the marks left by the tools and fingers of the artist. Much like Krasner and Ichikawa, the motion of the artist’s body is revealed through the materials of the work. These obvious finger and hand marks in the clay not only give a fluidity to the fur of the animals, but they also have the ability to bring the artist closer to the viewer. These finger marks are a remnant of the artist, which makes the imagery she depicts in these sculptures all the more personal.

Glen Brown in his article, *Animal Unrest*, described the impact of Stichter’s emotional work. “Adopting a disturbingly human posture, a hare constricts itself into a hieroglyph of anguish. Choking and gasping, a jackal succumbs to a muscle-locking spasm. Grimacing in ghastly blend of snarl and plaintive cry, a disheveled possum limps peevishly away. In Beth
Cavener Stichter’s angst ridden menagerie, deep seated fears of vulnerability and victimization often surface in a symbolism of cringing and cowering… involuntary animalistic contractions of the body that betray ingrained habits of anticipating physical or emotional pain”(Brown p 24). This visceral reaction to Stichter’s work is brought about through several psychological factors. The foremost is the anthropomorphic nature of these animals, not only are they in positions that in most sculptures would be torturous to animals, but their reactions and expressions are intensely human. The sculpture *I am no one*, shown in Figure 5.4, is an image of an oversized hare in a crouched position. The body posture, facial expression, all speak of intense emotional pain. The hare is not posed in a way that suggests physical pain, or abuse, postures that could be seen on real animals, this is the pose of a person feeling the depths of pain that comes from depression. This is something that can be understood even without the prompting of the title. The surface treatment, with its raw coloration, and smooth almost fleshless appearance only heighten impact of the posture of this animal. Stichter’s body of work is comprised of animals functioning as symbolic replacements for the human form. By replacing the human form with animals Stichter is able to present the viewer with images that, if she had used a human would be harder for the viewer to regard. She utilizes our natural inclination to be drawn and empathize with animals to confront the viewer with imagery that would normally be almost unpalatable. In an article for her gallery show *On Tender Hooks* from 2010, Stichter expands upon this concept.

What really drives the work is the attempt to lure others into confronting these same issues. This is the main reason that I shifted from using the human form to the animal figure. In my experience, I found that most people empathized more readily with animals than humans. There is an assumed moral and emotional innocence that we associate with the animal image which allows me to delve into territory which we normally find too uncomfortable to dwell on. I want to create images that address some tough questions, while at the same time addressing why we find these questions uncomfortable (Brown ... 26).
By using animal forms the emotions and subjects that Stichter presents to the viewer are in effect heightened because they are placed in a context that we normally would be able to ignore in humans, but because they are ascribed to animals it makes them all the harder to dismiss, and causes the viewer to empathize on a greater scale with the emotions presented. In his article Brown goes on to comment that “only some of Stichter’s emotionally charged sculptures are conceived as literal self-portraits, but they all embody her intimate reflections on the desires and fears that drive the human psyche”(Brown p 20). Much like Tony Smith, Stichter’s works are often created in direct reaction to feelings and events of the artist. Although Stichter has not gone into biographical specifics, she has been quoted stating that she has had two physical and psychological traumas that have shape her adult life as well as her work (Brown p 24). *I am no one* for example is a work which seems to speak quite loudly about those kinds of traumas. The viewer is presented with a figure of a hare, whose skin has the appearance of flayed muscle, sitting in a posture of submissive pain. Stichter is in my opinion uses these anthropomorphic body positions and mannerisms as queues for the collective unconscious to react to. The viewer recognizes these queues from their unconscious collective repertoire and reacts accordingly.

Color is also a tool that Stichter utilizes, while her treatment of colors, usually monochromatic in a gradient, adds depth and dimension to her sculptures it also functions on a psychological level. *I am no one* (Figure 5.4) for example with its raw, meat like coloration further implies possible violent connotations. Another example can be seen in Figure 5.5 titled *The Choleric*, here we see a wolf in a contorted stance, clutching at a leather ball possessively in its jaws and with its paws. The pose of the figure is almost as if the action of the wolf were captured just after it leapt protectively on top of the ball. The face has been crafted with its eyes narrowed and it seems to have an almost suspicions grimace. The work seems to emanate
suspicion and fear, as if the viewer were a threat to the ownership of the ball. This is reaction has been enhanced by her use of yellow on the surface of the figure. Yellow resonates within the human mind with specific psychological reactions. The ideology of the psychology of color is a fairly accepted premise. It consists of several basic principles which have been outlined within a monograph, by T. Whitfield, and T. Wiltshire, in their paper *Color Psychology*. The first color can have specific meanings to the viewer. These meanings can be based in learned behavior or through a biological predisposition. The reaction and assessment is automatic when the viewer sees the color. This assessment of the color triggers a behavior or reaction. This reaction is usually automatic. Lastly the meaning assigned to the color is influenced by the experiences and contexts of the viewer. (Whitfield and Wiltshire pp 116-4, and 387.) This was also an ideology that was espoused by Carl Jung who as we have discussed earlier was especially influential in the ideology of expressionism. Jung’s ideology on color in essence stated that the color a person gravitates towards gives a window into their Psyche. IE, red means love or rage, or yellow meaning jealousy or happiness (Whitfield and Wiltshire pp 116-4, and 387). By taking this into consideration, we can now understand that the choice of yellow was not arbitrary. Stichter was utilizing the learned and biological color responses that the viewer would bring with them when examining the figure. Yellow is a slang term for being fearful, it is also utilized by most cultures to signify caution and danger. This coupled with the possessive and fearful posture of the wolf creates a range of sensory input that allows the viewer to come away with a sense of dread and possessiveness. *The Choleric* is part of a larger collection of works in which Stichter focused upon the outmoded medical concept of the four Humors. These were four ‘fluids’ that were in a delicate balance within the body an imbalance in one caused disease or mental abnormalities. The colors she chose for each figure assisted in depicting the different fluids that are imbalance
within the figures. *The Choleric* displays an excess of yellow bile which is indicative of bitterness, and hostility.

In Figure 5.6 we can see *In Bocca al Lupo*, she utilizes to color to enhance the effect of the sculpture’s already disturbing imagery. Here we can see a wolf, body tensed in regurgitation as a pink mass flows organically from its mouth. The gradient of black to near white on the body of the wolf is starkly contrasted by the intense electric pink of the vomit. The surprising contrast between the wolf and the saturated pink of the ropey forms create a startling image. The Pink objects that make up the regurgitation are made of various found and manufactured items. Silk ribbons, Swarovski crystals, wire, and silicone rubber to name just a few examples. Each of these objects have a distinct feminine implication, lace crystals and silicon for example, can possibly be referential to lingerie. The color pink in modern western culture is commonly associated with the female gender. The contrasts in materials, the soft, delicate substances that make up the mass, the hard stoneware of the ceramic, as well as the contrast in color are all keyed to access the unconscious of the viewer. If we examine another of her works we can see all of the above mentioned elements to create a work that speaks in a multiplicity of ways to the unconscious of the audience. In figure 5.7 titled *Sanguine* Stichter presents us with another striking image that again relies upon Jungian queues to make several statements within the viewer’s mind. Here we are confronted with an anthropomorphized rabbit, the body posture, like the previous sculptures, depicts a physical representation of an emotion. The rabbit tightly clutches a leather heart, its head bent and mouth pressed into the leather of the heart a detail image of this can be seen in 5.8. While the body is coiled around the heart, the legs of the rabbit are stretched to their utmost with its toes spread to their limit as well. The fur of the rabbit is again crafted in such a way that it suggests exposed muscle as well as fur. The coloring of the sculpture again enhances this with its
deep crimson hues. The body posture can be suggestive of several emotions, a desperate clinging to something lost, or perhaps an excessive clinging to something loved to an obsessive degree. The way the body is crafted suggests almost physical pain, the way the fingers appear to be gripping is almost desperate. The title again like Tony Smith is revealing to the content of the sculpture. Sanguine is a word that also resonates psychologically within the observer. Not only can it be a reference to the color of the sculpture as well as the heart with its direct connotations to blood, but the primary definition of the word is to retain a positive attitude while within grim circumstances. This presents the observer with a complex set of stimuli, both implied and stated that directs the observer’s unconscious as well as their conscious mind. Sanguine is also from the *Four Humors* collection, as its name implies it is inspired by the presence of excess blood. Stichter comments that, “I began the working on the cast of characters with the idea for the portrait of the Sanguine personality- those who are afflicted with an excess of blood and characterized by intense passion and impulsiveness… The phrase ‘a rush of blood to the head’ was also used as a legal defense to describe ‘a crime of passion’ for which the person could not be held accountable. It made me think about the desire to ascribe anything other than ‘accepted normal behavior’ as a fault of one’s own irrational body…” (Oliver p 1). This concept of being ruled by one’s emotions is a one that is familiar to everyone, when your emotions cloud your logic and cause irrational behavior, like the desperate clinging lust of passion, or the irrational bitterness caused by fear.

As I discussed Stichter’s ideology fits within the Framework that I have established in my previous chapter, she utilizes the same methodologies for creating her works much like the other expressionist artists I have discussed. Like Ishikawa, It is my contention that Stichter uses her art to capture an emotional state, through the use of Jungian psychological means transmits this into
the unconscious of the viewer. She capitalizes upon recognizable emotional queues, gestural sculpting techniques, and color psychology. Additionally, the utilization of anthropomorphized animals within Stichter’s sculptures foster this communication. She dissects emotive positions and displays them in a manner which allows the viewer to empathically respond. This, and her artistic philosophy, entrenches her neatly within my definition of 21st century expressionism.
Conclusion

Art History is not a straight line, nor is it a list of static insular moments and movements. It is as ever changing and evolving as all of human culture. 21st century expressionism is a movement within art that like many other movements is built upon the same ideology and philosophies of 20th century Expressionism. Krasner and Smith exemplify the artists who formed and perfected the concept of 20th century expressionism. Their works were the synthesis of psychological examination, abstraction and experimentation with their medium. They combined the philosophies of contemporary psychological thought and artistic movements of the day to perfect a new form of artistic communication. Unlike artists like the Surrealists, they were not concerned with the dream world. Nor did they want to create works that recreated images from their surroundings, they wanted to form an artistic language that spoke directly to the viewer’s unconscious mind to promote a reaction. Though techniques taken from Jungian psychology and methodologies similar to those used by the surrealists they tapped into their unconscious as well as the collective unconscious to create avenues these avenues of communication.

The artists of the 21st century, which I have exemplified with Ichikawa and Stichter, have built upon the same framework to accomplish the same goals as the former artists. As we have seen extremely similar methodology is employed to create the works, these artists also employ a spontaneous, and intuitive method of crafting. In addition to that their philosophies are closely aligned with those of the 20th century expressionists. They too wish to make art that promotes a form of emotional dialogue between the viewer, the work and the artist who created it. The methodology that these artists use is nearly parallel to those of the 20th century. By experimenting and allowing their emotions to guide them-not only in the meaning behind the works but also in the physical process of creating the work. They allow their body’s physical
movement to not only dictate the look of the work, but to promote the connection between the artist and the viewer. The viewer can almost feel and see the sweep of the hands and arms of the artist as they manipulated the medium. The importance of connecting with the, both consciously and unconsciously is part of the prime goal for expressionist artists from both time frames. What I intended to display is that there is no definable difference between the artists of the 20th and 21st century versions of this movement. While the culture that they live within may have caused variations in the overall look or approach to the philosophy of expressionism the core ideology and thrust of what their work is to accomplish remains the same.

Although these artists have not been labeled 21st century expressionist, it is my belief that they are the contemporary incarnation of the movement that began in the 20th century. These movements continue and evolve adapting to the surrounding culture to better survive. The artists I have described as 21st century expressionists have been labeled many things, contemporary, post-modern, abstract or representational. These are inadequate labels that further muddy the waters of art history.

These artists focus upon creating works that not only represent emotions, but allow for transmission of these emotions. They employ the concepts of Jungian psychology, which holds to the theory that there exists the concept of a collective unconscious. This collective as I have discussed would allow for the viewer to feel similar emotions to those that essentially created the works they were regarding. Expressionist art in both its forms are concerned with promoting this phenomenological response. These artists are concerned with the realm of emotions, they display their surrounding world via their reactions to that world. Ichikawa’s works are the creations of spontaneous moments, and the reactions to those moments. Stichter’s works display the deep and often disturbing psychology of the contemporary culture. Her works delve into the often
disturbing world that we often try to ignore. While these two artist's approach to expressionism differ, they none the less perfectly represent the current incarnation of this movement in the same way Krasner and Smith exemplify their version.
Appendices:

Figures:

Figure 1.1 Jackson Pollock, *No. 5, 1948* 1950, Oil on fiberboard 2.4 m × 1.2 m (8 ft × 4 ft)
Figure 2.1 Lee Krasner, *Untitled*, 1930, Oil on Canvas
Figure 2.2 Lee Krasner, *Composition*, 1949 Oil on Canvas
Figure 2.3 Lee Krasner, *Milkweed*, 1955, Oil On canvas
Figure 2.4 Lee Krasner, *Night Creatures*, 1965, Acrylic on paper.

Figure 2.5 Krasner painting Portrait in Green 1989 Photograph by Mark Patiky.
Figure 3.1 Georges Vantongerloo, *Rapports de volumes*, 1919

Figure 3.2 George Fred Keck, *The House of Tomorrow* 1933
Figure 3.3 Tony Smith, *Untitled*, 1960

Figure 3.4 Tony Smith Sketches for Untitled, 1960
Figure 3.5 Tony Smith, *DIE*, 1960

Figure 3.6 Tony Smith Sketches, 1960-3
Figure 3.7 Tony Smith Model for *Throwback*, 1976

Figure 3.8 Tony Smith, *The Snake is Out*, 1962
Figure 3.9 Tony Smith, *The Snake is Out*, 1962
Figure 3.10 Tony Smith, *Grasshopper*, 1962/72
Figure 3.11 Tony Smith, *Smoke*, 1967
Figure 3.12 Tony Smith, *Stinger* 1962

Figure 4.1 Dale Chihuly, *Ikebana Boat*, 2009 Blown glass and Wood
Figure 4.2 Ichikawa, Process Photograph 2008 pyrograph on paper, molten glass

Figure 4.3 Ichikawa, Process photograph, 2008 Molten Glass on paper.
Figure 4.4 Ichikawa, Process photograph, 2008, Pyrograph, Molten glass on paper

Figure 4.5 Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock process photo, Photograph
Figure 4.6 Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock process photo, Photograph

Figure 4.7 Ichikawa, Trace, Pyrograph on paper, 2008
Figure 4.8 Ichikawa, *Echo 2413*, 2004-2008. Glass pyrograph on paper
Figure 5.1 Stichter, Armature for sculpture, Steel and Wood 2009

Figure 5.2 Stichter, Process Photo, Clay Wood and steel. 2009
Figure 5.3 Stichter, Process photo, Clay, Steel and Wood, 2009

Figure 5.4 Stichter, *i am no one*, stoneware 2006
Figure 5.5 Stichter, *The Choleric*, Stone ware and leather, 2010

Figure 5.6 Stichter, *In Bocca al Lupo*, Stoneware wire silk latex, ribbon, glass, Swarovski crystals. 2009
Figure 5.7 Stichter, *The Sanguine*, Stoneware and leather, 2010

Figure 5.8 Stichter, *The Sanguine*, Detail photo, stoneware and leather, 2010
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