

ANGELO IPPOLITO

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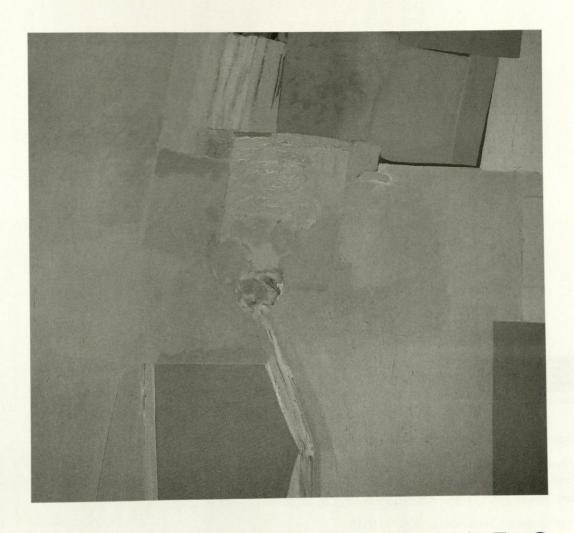
A Retrospective Exhibition

Essay by Irving Sandler Chronology by Jon Ippolito

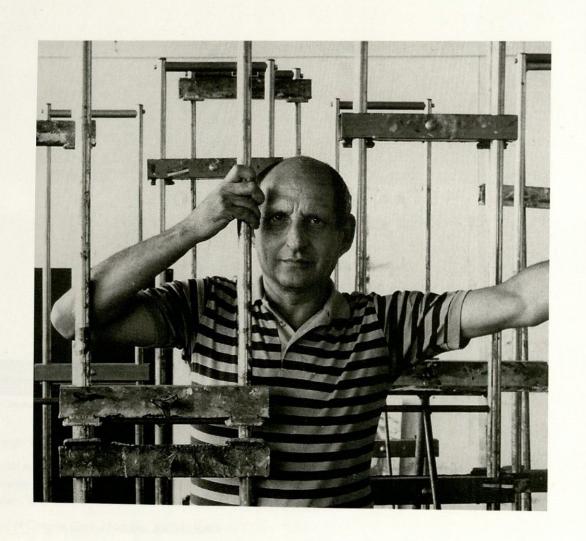
Binghamton University Art Museum

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Front Cover: Sundance, 1992. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



ANGELO IPPOLITO



Angelo Ippolito: A Retrospective

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# ANGELO IPPOLITO

An Essay by Irving Sandler



Angelo Ippolito in the painting studio at Binghamton University in the 1990s

I cannot stand aloof and deal with Angelo Ippolito's paintings in a dry art-historical manner. From the first time I saw his work, it moved me deeply. So did Angelo. We met in the early 1950s at the Moors Restaurant in Provincetown, where he was a waiter and I was the dishwasher, and we became friends. I had recently become interested in avantgarde art but knew little about it. Angelo opened my eyes to New York School painting with good humor and engaging wit. I recall asking him dumb questions, such as "Do people buy your abstract paintings?" He would answer patiently: "If people don't want to buy my work, it doesn't bother me, except it's not easy to eat, but I go on painting. They leave me alone, I leave them alone. Sometimes, when I get asked 'What does it mean?' I say, 'It may not be for you.'"

Angelo also showed me how to subsist "on air" with elegance. His live-in studio on Tenth Street, furnished with detritus found in the nearby streets, was one of the handsomest in New York. Not surprisingly, Angelo was also attractive as a person. He reminded me of Jacques-Louis David's portrait of the young Napoleon — but with a playful smile.

In 1975, I was asked to evaluate him for promotion to full professor at Binghamton University. I wrote: "No one in my crucial formative days taught me more and inspired me more. Ippolito was above all others responsible for my career as an art critic and art historian. Need I say more on his behalf?"

To begin with, some dry but pivotal facts in Ippolito's life. He was born in St. Arsenio, Italy, in 1922. When he was 9 years old, his family immigrated to the United States. He served in the United States Army from 1942 to 1945. In

1946-47, he studied at the Ozenfant School of Fine Art in New York, and in 1948, at the Brooklyn Museum of Art School, as a student of John Ferren. In 1949, Ippolito traveled to Europe, where he visited France, England, Spain and Italy. In 1950, he settled in Rome for a time; subsidized by the GI Bill, he studied at Instituto Meschini with Afro. As I will indicate, Ippolito's relation both to Italy and to the United States profoundly shaped his painting.

Ippolito was introduced to modernist painting by Ozenfant, Ferren and Afro. He returned from Italy to New York City in time to see the Ninth Street Show of 1951, the first major exhibition of New York School painting. It was organized by 61 painters and sculptors who constituted a who's-who of avant-garde art, and included most of the Abstract Expressionists who brought about the triumph of American painting.

Ippolito was inspired by the Action Painting he saw, painting that relied primarily on the process of painting. In a conversation with me in 1957, he readily acknowledged his debt to first-generation Abstract Expressionists. He said that Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, among others, had "demolished" constrained forms. Referring to Pollock's technique of pouring paint, Ippolito added with a smile: "Jackson did it as an aerial bomber and Bill, a traditional painter, as a foot-soldier."

Comparing himself and his peers to the pioneer Abstract Expressionists, Ippolito said: "Like the old guys, we believed that painting had to be direct. Like them, we got rid of preconceived ideas and instead let the image come out of the paint by brushing, pushing, throwing, dripping it and all the other things you can do with paint. We could

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not have created our images in any other way. You can't make a Guston."<sup>2</sup> Fairfield Porter recognized this in his review of Ippolito's first show in 1954: "The media become not a means to a finer end; instead the end is to be found in the means. This comes from seeing in a new way."<sup>3</sup> The younger artists also shared with their elders the desire for immediacy; that is, for painting that made a sudden impact, what Ippolito called "the quick image."<sup>4</sup>

Ippolito went on to tell me that the innovations of the Abstract Expressionists had opened up a vast realm in painting within whose boundaries he and his peers "could find room to work avoid copying, and manage to be personal." 5 Moreover, artists of his generation were free to paint new subjects culled from nature and art history, as well as variations on Abstract Expressionist styles. However, Ippolito recognized that Action Painting was different for the first generation than for the second. As he said: "Action Painting has gone on long enough to lose its risk. We know too well what can come out of it."6 Hence the mission for younger artists, as they saw it, was to "consolidate" the innovations of their elders; that is, to focus on "such old-fashioned considerations as quality of paint, durability of technique and possibilities of subtlety within painting."7 As John Ferren wrote in an article in Arts (1955), much discussed in the art world: "Consolidation is a conquest . . . Abstract Expressionism has become more refined and relaxed, fewer nerves and more gray matter back of the eyes. In a word, better painted."8 But without sacrificing spontaneity.

A critical issue for younger artists was how to reconcile spontaneity with their pre-existing knowledge of what it would yield. The solution was to try to have it both ways:

Artists would rely on momentary upsurges of the unconscious, but subject them to deliberate control in order to achieve "the intensity of the finished picture." 9

The paintings of first-generation Action Painters, such as de Kooning, Kline and Guston, seemed scarred by the psychic wounds inflicted by World War II, the atomic bombings of Japan, the revelations of the Holocaust and the inception of the Cold War. In other words, when the older artists first painted their innovative work, they were in the grip of a "crisis" mentality. The younger artists, even those who served in the army, as Ippolito had, were not as troubled by the crisis mentality as their elders. The angst that pervaded life and art in the Forties dissipated in the Fifties (even for the first generation). World War II had receded into the past. And despite the Cold War, the Korean War and the continuing threat of nuclear devastation, artists seemed to have come to terms with angst and felt free to give rein to lyrical inclinations. As Sidney Geist put it: "Ippolito demonstrated that Sturm und Drang are not the necessary and sufficient attributes of the [New York] school."10

Nonetheless, lyrical painting continued to be problematic in the New York art world. It was still widely believed that pictures were supposed to be reports from the Age of Anxiety. To call a canvas "beautiful," "handsome," "elegant" or, even worse, "tasteful" or "decorative," was to put it down. But Ippolito persisted, and he was not alone. He was one of a growing number of young artists who rejected heated and heavy Expressionism, exemplified by de Kooning and Kline, much as they admired their painting. The lyricists were even labeled Abstract Impressionists to differentiate them from the Abstract Expressionist fellow artists.11







In 1952, Ippolito joined with like-minded painters Charles Cajori, Lois Dodd, Fred Mitchell and the sculptor Bill King to form the Tanager Gallery, the first of the artist-run cooperatives. They did so because of a desire to exhibit their work, mainly to their peers. But there was also, as Ippolito recalled, the need for "mutual support and sociability." 12 The Tanager showed the way to four more cooperative galleries on Tenth Street and three in the surrounding streets. Ippolito was the leading spirit in the Tanager Gallery and a charismatic figure in downtown venues so much so that he was dubbed "Mr. Tenth Street." Although he spoke up for consolidation, Ferren was nevertheless fearful that Abstract Expressionism was becoming outworn. He wrote: "It could become an academy, but it hasn't. It is a movement, and it knows it. It does not think it is a school, because it has no one technique." Ferren was certainly not concerned about Ippolito; in fact, he wrote that he "could spend a summer in the landscape of lppolito."13 He recognized that the young painter had forged an individual style. As Sidney Geist put it succinctly: "Ippolito is his own man." 14

Ferren was moved by Ippolito's poetic references to landscape. But many other artist and art-professional devotees of abstract art looked askance at what they believed to be a backward-looking "return to nature." Indeed, the role of visual reality in art making was hotly debated at artist meeting places: Cedar Street Tavern, the Tenth Street Cooperative galleries, The Club (founded by the older Abstract Expressionists in 1949) and in artists' studios. I recall one session at The Club in 1955 at which Ad Reinhardt and Frank O'Hara debated whether painting that referred to grass or trees could "transcend" its subject matter. Reinhardt said "no" and insisted that

painting should exist for its own sake; O'Hara said "yes" and defended the artist's right to refer to "life."

Ippolito was an active participant in these debates. At a Club panel in 1956, "What Is the Role of Nature in Painting?," William Kienbusch challenged him, demanding that artists work directly from nature. Ippolito disagreed: "You don't need to get sunstroke to know about the power of the sun." Kienbusch countered: "You have to see the lily pond." "Or jump into one," replied Ippolito. "There are many ways of struggling with nature."

In response to the renewed art-world interest in nature, the Whitney Museum in 1958 organized a major exhibition, "Nature in Abstraction," in which Ippolito was included. Its curator, John I. H. Baur, wrote: "For the past 10 or 15 years, abstract art has been the dominant mode of expression in America." The tendency in the United States "has been toward kinds of abstraction which draw on observed reality to create, variously, a conscious imagery, an unconscious imagery or, at least, a kind of organic and 'natural' teleology of form." Baur concluded that this American tendency "is more marked than ever today." 17

If the new painting was about nature, it was as much about painting. Kyle Morris wrote: "This particular kind of painting does not start with nature and arrive at paint, but on the contrary, starts with paint and arrives at nature (although it be of an unexpected kind)." It was not a return to nature but a rediscovery. Ippolito's painting bears this out. In a statement in the Whitney catalog, he expressed his attitude toward nature: "I have no direct road to painting. I have to begin somewhere. I begin with an idea — say, an idea of sunshine on a hillside, yellow sunshine, [and] during the process something happens —

another color, a small change, a possibility, a discovery, a dynamic relationship — then here is reality; this is the real beginning." <sup>19</sup>

Ippolito added: "I use a landscape space." <sup>20</sup> But which landscape? In 1955, three years before the Whitney show, he wrote: "I want my paintings to shine like the hills of Italy, illuminated with sunlight, where houses sparkle like jewels, jewels built of mud and rocks and love." <sup>21</sup> Southern Italian hill towns became Ippolito's essential subject. In his work of the early and middle Fifties, he evoked them in improvised, freely brushed rectangles against color fields.

But Ippolito's abstract landscapes were not to be found on land or sea. The reason was that in large measure, he painted scenes remembered from boyhood. Fairfield Porter sensed this in 1956. In his second review of Ippolito's painting, he wrote that "Ippolito improvised [his abstract landscapes] from memory."22 However, Ippolito returned to Italy and lived there from 1948 to 1951 and from 1959 to 1960 (on a Fulbright fellowship). Hence, his boyhood recollections of the Italian landscape and his need to relive them in his painting were deepened by his sojourns in Italy. Indeed, Ippolito used Action Painting both to recall his intense memories of the Italian landscape and express his emotional response to what he actually saw. His memory of the past and his experience of the physical present seemed to run into each other, the fluidity conveyed by the painting

In 1957, Ippolito said to me: "I don't know what my shapes mean, but I can communicate with them. They are like people or objects that I know. I know where I am, the location. The space becomes a space I can live in, I can walk around in. I want order but I don't want to be too comfortable."<sup>23</sup>

An Ippolito painting was first shown in the spring of 1953 in a four-person show at the Tanager Gallery. Its quality was immediately recognized. In a review in Art Digest, Dore Ashton wrote, "Joyous lyricism hums beneath the clean surfaces of Angelo Ippolito's paintings. His Luminous City, a horizontal band of hot red and yellow abstract shapes, buoyant in its atmosphere of dazzling white, has [a] prismatic and magical clarity."24 In a related painting, Storm (1956, pl. 71), acquired by the Whitney Museum, radiant red-orange-yellow "landscape" is punctuated with three complexes of meandering, multicolored "houses" one strung across the upper center and the other two clustered in the lower corners. Pictures composed of amalgams of squarish swatches were exhibited in Ippolito's shows at the Tanager Gallery in 1954 and in 1956 at the Bertha Schaefer Gallery in New York. In them, he achieved "an incisive artistic personality," as Robert Rosenblum commented 25

Around the time of the Schaefer show, Ippolito began to receive increasing art-world recognition. In 1955, his work was included in the important "Vanguard 1955" show at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, a show in which Kyle Morris, an abstract painter, proposed to designate the young painters of the avant-garde. The Whitney Museum included Ippolito in its annual exhibition in 1956 (and again in 1957, 1958 and 1961). Also in 1956, he was invited to show in the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, in 1957 "Young America" at the Whitney Museum and, in 1958, "Nature in Abstraction," also at the Whitney.

If Ippolito's images call to mind Italian hill towns, they also refer to art. In one sense, they are sly glosses on Mondrian's geometric abstraction, which Ippolito greatly





Tanager Gallery, 90 East 10th Street, New York, in 1955



A crowded exhibition opening at Tanager Gallery

admired. However, Mondrian's images lock on the picture's surfaces into tight compositions. In contrast, Ippolito's freely brushed rectangles open up the painting. Assimilated into the spacious color field, they become beats that animate it, functioning somewhat like the vertical "zips" in Barnett Newman's abstractions. At the same time that Ippolito's work is a gloss on abstraction, it also calls to mind explicitly figurative painting; for example, the "houses" in his Mountain Village (1954) and Landscape with Yellow Sky (1955) are curiously reminiscent of Giorgio Morandi's bottles. They also anticipate Ippolito's later amalgams of landscape and still-life motifs.

As early as 1954, Fairfield Porter wrote: "Ippolito is one of a few Non-Objective painters who uses brilliant color as his material instead of something to dress the painting up with." That is precisely what Ippolito intended. He told Kenneth C. Lindsay: "When I find the color of the painting I find the form, and I find the imagery. The color . . . gives me a time and a place." By "color," Ippolito meant an all-over light and atmosphere, which he wrote were the "two elements that really matter. . . . Both these elements [light and atmosphere], which I do not draw from the outside world, are of equal importance." He did, however, draw them from his inner world. In that sense, the light and atmosphere were the signs of Ippolito's artistic identity, so personal that they could be considered autobiographical.

In 1957, Ippolito focused on the color field. As he remarked to me, "the shapes are more fluid, the space is more all-over and the emphasis is more on atmosphere." <sup>29</sup> I asked him, why the change? He replied, "I get caught up in something and explore it until I get tired of it." <sup>30</sup> In

another conversation, he said: "I want to fill up the space with air and light so that one can wander about without bumping into objects." <sup>31</sup> Ippolito had Cézanne in mind: "The air in his painting is solid; it has volume and shape." <sup>32</sup> The areas in Ippolito's Dawn, Winter Sunset, Overcast and other light-filled pictures are shimmering hints; the color, a tinted glow. These skyscapes were exhibited in his show at the Bertha Schaefer Gallery in 1958.

After 1959, Ippolito re-introduced solid forms, but varying them in shape, size and color more than before. The forms in *Departure* (1962, pl. 4) are as high-keyed as in earlier works but are dynamic and spread over the surface. The staccato, vertical swaths in *Lenox Avenue* (1962, pl. 3) evoke a crowd of hectic figures on the move. In contrast, in *Blue Door* (1964, pl. 83), a blue rectangle becomes the "door," and the image is centered; the feeling is one of containment and stasis. A hard-edge circle in *Harvest* (1968, pl. 78) is even more centered, but the broad horizontal planes in the background stretch to the canvas edges and beyond.

Increasingly Ippolito relied on intuition and dared to move wherever his spirit took him. Indeed, after 1962, he refused to be bound by notions of what his styles or manner of working were supposed to be. Or, to put it positively, he felt free to venture in any direction — figurative or abstract, painterly or hard-edge. He often mixed disparate elements, such as "expressionist" textured areas with "geometric" matte shapes. He painted non-objective pictures, abstractions that veered toward nature, abstractions from nature and realistic pictures. He depicted outdoor landscapes, interior furniture and still

lifes, often combining them all in a single canvas. However, the personal quality of colored light and atmosphere remained related to earlier works.

In 1964, during a teaching spell in the Midwest, Ippolito painted farm buildings in landscape, the American variant of his earlier Italian "houses." The American scenes are more geometric and flatter than his sensuous Italian hill towns. It was as if Ippolito thought that machine-like, exact contours and unmodulated surfaces symbolized the United States. Such symbolism is clearest in a series of hard-edge pictures of highways (1969-70), executed in automobile lacquer — the endless open road the defining American image. At the same time, the new clarity in his painting seems to partake of the classical tradition in Italian art, exemplified by Raphael and his heirs. In the end, classical repose and balance outweighed the hard-boiled starkness of the American environment.

In the paintings of the later 1960s, Ippolito increasingly introduced hard-edge elements into his gestural painting. He subsequently painted near-hard-edge pictures, figurative — e.g. Centennial Farm (1969), or abstract, e.g. Blue and Red (1970). But he also moved as far from hard-edge abstraction as he could get in Evening (1967, pl. 80), a miniscule, tender Impressionist landscape.

Ippolito's diversity of imagery and ways of handling paint and color are truly extraordinary. In Landscape with Red Table (1972), a cleanly edged matte table in the foreground is contrasted with a loosely brushed tree in the distance. Color combinations are new and nervy — for example, in Padua (1983), the combination of a medley of purples, blues and greens. In another purplish picture, Burnt Carmine (1979, pl. 105), a small vase of flowers

holds its own — but barely — against a composition of broad rectangles whose contours are irregular. In the *Regatta* series (1985-1989, pl. 109-112), Ippolito uses sailing motifs to invent buoyant hard-edge semi-abstractions.

In the 1990s, in a kind of return to his Fifties abstraction, Ippolito applied himself to painterly painting. In *Kusadasi Bazaar* (1991, pl. 114), multicolored swatches punctuate a radiant orange field. I must admit that I am partial to Ippolito's way with a high-keyed yellow-orange-red palette, as in *Sunset* (1954, pl. 73), *Storm* (1956, pl. 71), *Departure* (1962, pl. 4), *End of Summer* (1965, pl. 86), *Winter Still Life* (1974, pl. 92), *Sunday Morning* (1981, pl. 32) and *Summerscape* (1981, pl. 108), *Sunset, no.* 2 (1986, pl. 45), *Regatta, no.* 6 (1988, pl. 110), *Sundance* (1992, pl. 116), *Agropoli* (1993, pl. 117) and *Arizona* (1998-99, pl. 67).

As if his prodigious painting was not enough, Ippolito made innumerable drawings and collages. The components of one series of paste-ups, titled American Collages (1976, pl. 99-100), were cut out from turn-of-the-century magazines and mail-order catalogs that Ippolito had been collecting for two decades. Images of American types, they reveal his witty and playful side. So does a "sculpture" that Ippolito had placed in the center of the gallery, "a model bus [that] has windows filled with various photographs of the artist wearing different hats and suit, thereby acting out a number of exotic roles including explorer, cowboy, royal personage, diplomat." Other three-dimensional works include Untitled [Cubic Painting] (1975, pl. 79) whose sides are paintings, and a series of constructions, titled Tableaux Metaphysiques (1977-1998, pl. 101-102), in which quirky found objects are



Exhibition announcements from Tanager Gallery, New York



Lois Dodd's studio. (First row, from left)
Lois Dodd, Pearl Fine, Alex Katz,
Connie Wilhelm (wife of George Ortman);
(second row, from left) Joe Groell,
Philip Pearlstein, Charles Cajori,
Bill King, Sidney Geist, George Ortman,
Fred Mitchell, Angelo Ippolito



In 1956 Bertha Schaefer is seated in her gallery, the Bertha Schaefer Gallery on 57th Street in New York, during an exhibition. With her (from left) are gallery artists John Grillo, Ippolito and Will Barnet.

juxtaposed. In Victoria (1994), a queen doll is mounted on a roller skate as if it were a thoroughbred charger, and in Painting Trophy (1990, pl. 21), an arm wielding a paintbrush in a gesture of triumph emerges from a wood box.

Ippolito once said, "All my paintings are self-portraits," this despite their diversity.<sup>34</sup> What, then, characterizes his artistic identity? A predilection for certain colors and forms, yes, but above all, a quality of all-over light and atmosphere can be equated with his psychic or dream world. Ippolito strove for this quality and would not consider a picture "finished" until he had achieved it.

In the end, what counts in Ippolito's painting is the sense of rightness, the sense that every component is exactly where it has to be. Ippolito determined that intuitively, via what Kandinsky called "inner necessity," but it was also a matter of "good taste." "Good taste" has often gotten a bad rap; it was thought to be what decorators are supposed to exercise, not artists. But I use it as John Graham, an acquaintance of Ippolito, did. Graham wrote in his Russianized English: "Good taste is the ability to differentiate between forms infallible and forms approximate only, between color saturated up to a perfect pitch and color approximate only, between sentiment and sentimentality, between strength and brutality, between spontaneity and clever technique, between tenderness and weakness, [and] between precision and tightness."35 Ippolito had that kind of "good taste." ■

To categorize Angelo Ippolito is to misunderstand him. Ippolito was a full professor and a high-school dropout. He wore tailored European suits to flea markets; he listened to John Cage and Johnny Cash. He was quintessentially Italian, but American at heart. As art historian Kenneth Lindsay wrote in Ippolito's 1975 retrospective catalog: "He plays out his life like a good jazz musician who 'feels' the right point of entry and improvises a chorus within acknowledged limits of form." Lindsay further noted that Ippolito's travels across Europe and America were marked by "unexpected shifts of direction, seemingly irrational changes of pace, a skittering around corners with risk."

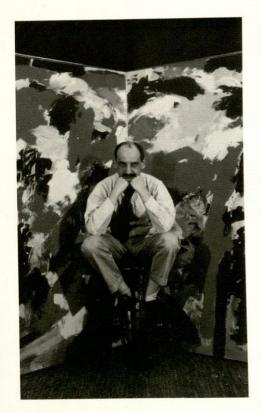
To those familiar with Ippolito's art, the task of charting its evolution can seem just as fruitless. His painting presents no relentless trajectory from representation to abstraction or from monochrome to color. Lindsay acknowledged the connection between his peripatetic life and art: "This is his timing . . . in a curious way, the 'beat' of his change of environment also describes the way he paints." If there is regularity to Ippolito's aesthetic beat, it is to be found in his alternation between periods of experimentation (with hard-edged painting, still lifes or regatta motifs) and periods of integration (as in his "color as light" and Aegean paintings [pl. 113-116]).

The chronology that follows aims to shadow the artist's geographic and stylistic movements as one might follow the lead of a nimble dancer: accepting last-minute twists and turns as the inevitable consequence of the artist's listening to his instincts — and hoping not to trample over his idiosyncratic path in our crude attempt to reproduce his footsteps.

This chronology highlights the evolution of Ippolito's oils on canvas, touching briefly on paper and sculptural works but ignoring a number of separate creative practices such as photography. Italics in a series title indicate that the artist chose it himself. ■

# CHRONOLOGY

by Jon Ippolito



### 1947-51 Early Abstractions The Cubist Impulse

Pl. 1:70

Like many artists of his generation, Ippolito went to school on the GI Bill after his return from duty in the South Pacific in 1945. Although he had never graduated from high school, he skirted formal secondary education altogether, studying art instead with painters Amédée Ozenfant and John Ferran in New York from 1946 to 1948 and with Afro in Rome in 1950.

Ippolito's earliest paintings reflect the Cubist influence of his teachers. Although his brushwork loosened in subsequent decades, Ippolito's commitment to a strong pictorial structure suggests that Cubism provided a sound foundation for his compositions, even if its fractured geometries rarely resurfaced amidst his increasingly atmospheric brushwork. ■



Pl. 1
Flowers, 1950.
Oil and pastel on board.
34 x 52 in.
Collection of Dr. Israel Rosefsky, Binghamton

### 1952-63 Action and Atmosphere The Tanager Days

Pl. 2-5; 71-74

In 1951, Ippolito returned to New York from his travels in Europe in time to catch the now-famous Ninth Street Show, highlighting the works of first-generation New York School artists such as Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline. While living on Tenth Street, Ippolito frequented the same neighborhood haunts as older Abstract Expressionists, notably the Artists' Club and Cedar Tayern.

In 1952, however, Ippolito and four of his peers established the first of the downtown cooperative galleries, the Tanager, in a move to offer an artist-centered alternative to the commercial galleries that beckoned from 57th Street. It was at the Tanager that Ippolito first exhibited a luminous series of canvases inspired by the landscape of his birthplace in southern Italy.

Calling Ippolito's inaugural exhibition at the midtown Bertha Schaefer Gallery "a notable event," critic Robert Rosenblum wrote that "his canvases present abstract analogies to a landscape vision, suggesting earth, horizon line and sky; yet the separate realms of land and air are most often fused together in a single coloristic unity of closely valued hues." Over the following decade, the fusion of earth and sky in Ippolito's canvases progressed to the point where the horizon vaporized, leaving only atmosphere.

Having relinquished the solid forms of Cubism and the landscape, Ippolito was left with color alone to anchor his airy compositions. Reviewing a later exhibition at Bertha Schaefer, fellow painter and critic Fairfield Porter wrote, "Ippolito is one of a few Non-Objective artists who uses brilliant color as his material instead of something to dress the painting up with." ■



Pl. 2

Provincetown Dunes, 1957.
Oil on canvas.
65 x 78 in.

Private collection



Pl. 3 Lenox Avenue, 1962. Oil on linen. 101 x 196 in.



Pl. 4
Departure, 1962.
Oil on linen.
78 x 68 in.
Private collection



Pl. 5 Fourth of July, 1963. Oil on linen. 45 x 48 in.

## 1961 Black and White as Color: The Berkeley Series

Pl. 6-10; 75-76

In 1961, Ippolito moved to the University of California at Berkeley for three semesters as a visiting artist. The change of landscape immediately had an impact on his work; this artist whom critic Hilton Kramer described as a colorist "first and last" was too awestruck by the intense light of the Californian sun to paint in color. Ippolito's response was a series of black-and-white collages and drawings in ink, oil and newsprint.

Despite their austere palette and contrasting tones, the Berkeley works retain the spacious composition and light touch that attracted acclaim to his large-scale New York canvases. Color in the Berkeley works, however, derives from subtle shades of ink and nuances of newsprint tint rather than primary colors squeezed from a tube.



Pl. 6 Berkeley, no. A-22, 1961. Ink on board. 10 x 10 in.



Pl. 7 Berkeley, no. A-24, 1961. Ink and collage on board. 10 x 10 in.



Pl. 8 Berkeley, no. 103, 1961. Ink and collage on board. 20 x 20 in.



Pl. 9 Berkeley, no. 40, 1961. Ink, oil and collage on board. 20 x 31 in.



Pl. 10 Berkeley, 1961. Ink and collage on board. 20 x 31 in.

## 1962-74 Shaped Space

Pl. 11; 77-79

Ippolito's approach to pictorial space underwent another shift when he visited the Midwest in the mid- to late 1960s. In 1962, he hinged two vertical panels to create Corner Landscape, an intimate expanse of light and color. Two years later, he began sewing circular or oval insets into a series of small oils on canvas. While Renaissance artists such as Michelangelo had experimented with circular paintings, in Ippolito's hands the tondo produces a new kind of spatial disjunction, suggesting a lens that reveals a close-up vision of a distant landscape.

Ippolito's experiments with the sculptural possibilities of shaped canvases reached their climax a decade later, with a 5-foottall cubic painting exhibited in his 1975 retrospective at Binghamton University. The unusual form of this work recreates the boundless Midwestern horizon, albeit in an inverted form where the viewer is outside rather than inside the landscape. ■

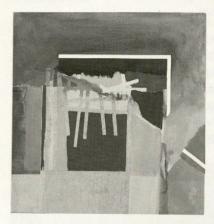


Pl. 11 Harvest, 1968. Oil on shaped canvas. 14 x 14 in.

### 1963-67 Watercolor and the Return to Landscape

Pl. 12; 80-82

A series of small watercolors painted mostly in Michigan represents Ippolito's most literal return to the landscape. Although grounded in representational subject matter, these delicate images nonetheless remain airy and weightless. Ippolito's watercolors evoke the quote by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche that reviewer Alfred Frankenstein applied to Angelo's oils from the same decade: "What is good is easy; everything divine runs on light feet."



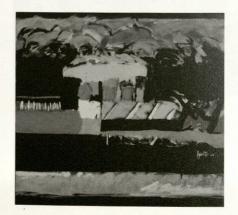
Pl. 12 Watercolor, no. 18, 1967. Watercolor on paper. 14 x 14 in.

# 1964-69 Form and Farmland Midwestern Abstractions

Pl. 13-15; 83-86

In the later 1960s, Ippolito was an artistin-residence at Michigan State University, where once again his work fell under the sway of the local landscape. As always, the artist translated his geographic inspirations into his own formal vocabulary: country roads sharpened into diagonal stripes; grain silos melted into brushy verticals; wheat fields blurred into trapezoids of ochre and amber.

Like the agrarian communities surrounding him, Ippolito's Midwestern compositions edged organic growth within geometric borders. His attempt to distill the visual patterns of America's farmlands down to their pictorial essence was not lost on city-bound critics; of Nude Landscape (pl. 85) and Paulding, Hilton Kramer wrote in The New York Times, "there is a vivid feeling for place as well as for the exigencies of design."

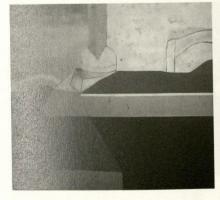


Pl. 13 Michigan Farm, 1965. Oil on canvas. 24 x 26 in.



Pl. 14

Cool Summer, 1968.
Oil on canvas.
12 x 12 in.



Pl. 15 Bedroom, 1968. Oil on canvas. 65 x 65 in.

### 1969-70 Horizons and Hard Edges

Pl. 16; 87-90

During his early years in the Midwest, even the most structured of Ippolito's canvases were animated by unruly brushstrokes bursting forth here and there amidst the hard edges. Toward the end of Ippolito's sojourn in Michigan, however, geometry temporarily gained the upper hand and squeezed gesture out of the frame altogether. In these canvases from the end of the decade, brushy trees and amorphous fields have conceded the canvas to sharp-angled buildings and impossibly tidy yards.

For a stark evocation of the human subjugation of nature, lppolito turned to Detroit for medium and imagery. Earlier painters David Alfaro Siqueiros and Jackson Pollock had turned to automobile lacquer for its quick drying time, but lppolito was more interested in its metallic color and sheen. His imagery for these lacquered works, fittingly enough, was the open road; this artist who had assiduously avoided painting a straight horizon line into his abstracted landscapes now brought that horizon directly to his viewer's feet, at times daring them to peek over its edge.



Pl. 16 Number 14, 1969. Acrylic lacquer on masonite. 20 x 20 in.

#### 1970-75 The Intimate Landscape

Pl. 17-20; 91-98

In 1971, Ippolito moved to a farmhouse on a hillside near Vestal, N.Y., to take a teaching position in the Binghamton University Studio Art Department. As soon as he relinquished the Midwestern plains for Vestal's mountainous terrain, geometry loosened its tight grip on his brushwork and compositions — as though in returning to a landscape reminiscent of his birthplace amidst the Apennines, Ippolito was exchanging the precise severity of the Midwest for an informal Mediterranean baroque.

Although Ippolito often doubled back on himself during the course of his geographic and stylistic peregrinations, he always uncovered something new, even in familiar territory. As his paintings from the 1950s built on an invisible scaffold inherited from his Cubist drawings of the 1940s, so in his return to a painterly style in 1970, Ippolito brought along a dash of the geometric precision of his hard-edged works from the 1960s.



Pl. 17 Landscape with Window, 1972. Oil on canvas. 50 x 55 in.

This geometric armature made possible spaces of great complexity, in which still-life motifs such as vases and tables share the picture plane with landscape elements such as fields and trees. If his tondi from the early 1960s signaled abrupt changes of scale or perspective with a literal hole in the canvas, now such changes blended seamlessly into a common vista.

As always, Ippolito's primary instrument for unifying disparate spaces into a single pictorial setting was color — not the facile conciliation of a politely restrained palette, but daring passages of cobalt blue, acidic yellow and vermilion. As Hilton Kramer wrote of Ippolito's still-life-inspired abstractions, "the pleasure of color remains his primary concern, and he is a virtuoso in the handling of it. Some of his finest effects, in these new paintings, are achieved when he is juggling bold areas of hot color with an almost reckless abandon."



Pl. 18
Winter Landscape, 1973.
Oil on linen
24 x 26 in.
Private collection



Pl. 19
Flowers, 1973.
Oil on linen.
35 x 30 in.
Collection of Cynthia and David Smith



Pl. 20
Two Bottles, 1974.
Oil on linen.
21 x 21 in.
Private collection

### 1976-98 Comic Relief: American Collages and Tableaux Metaphysiques

Pl. 21-25; 99-102

Ippolito's eye for striking juxtapositions wasn't confined to choices of color for his oil paintings. An avid collector of flea-market figurines, magazines and other knickknacks, Ippolito started in 1976 to mine his unusual collections as artistic material for a whimsical series of collages and assemblages.

To create his American Collages (pl. 99-100), exhibited during the United States' bicentennial year, Ippolito snipped vintage illustrations of bowler hats, children's suits, sailing ships, corsets and long-underwear ads from turn-of-the-century editions of the Saturday Evening Post and Popular Mechanics. Plucked from their original context, these castaway cultural icons seem to meet by chance on Ippolito's minimal white stage in what Hilton Kramer called "a vastly amusing carnival of dreams."

A year later, Ippolito began a three-dimensional series called Tableaux Metaphysiques (pl. 101-102), in which he juxtaposed quirky figurines from wedding cakes or bowling trophies in unlikely settings. The artist described these constructions as a way to "rescue" these creatures of kitsch — be they toy cows or salt shakers — from their throwaway fate. Both the American Collages and Tableaux Metaphysiques expose the play at the center of Ippolito's artistic process — play that may be less evident in, but is just as crucial to, the artist's painterly compositions.



Pl. 21
Painting Trophy, 1990.
Assemblage with found objects.
13 x 13 x 37 in.



Pl. 22
The Dolphin and P. G. Wodehouse, 1991.
Assemblage with found objects.
20 x 15 x 10 1/2 in.



Pl. 23 Soldiers, no. 2, 1991. Ink and found objects in 3D relief. 8 1/2 x 23 in.



Pl. 24 Fragments, 1991. Assemblage with found objects. 16 x 20 x 12 in.



Pl. 25
Tintype Palette, 1993.
Paint and found objects in 3D relief.
16 x 18 in.

### 1976-85 Color as Light The Upstate Landscapes

Pl. 26-38, 103-108

Around 1976, Ippolito's color broke free of its role in describing form and assumed center stage, spilling across the canvas into luminous clouds or shards of yelloworange and blue-violet hues.

If there is a genre to these chromatic fantasies, it is probably landscape — but it is the vertical landscape of the Appalachians rather than the horizontal landscape of the plains. At times this vertical composition recalls the cruciform structure implicit in Ippolito's works from the 1950s. Yet in these mature abstractions the palette is more precise, as though Ippolito's discursion into representation in the

intervening years recalibrated his "color pitch." The effect is gentler than the agitated canvases of the 1950s; although high-keyed yellows and oranges pervade this series, a more subtle radiance derives from a compositional strategy in which a given color vibrates in contrast with its neighboring colors but in sync with similar patches of color in other areas of the canvas.

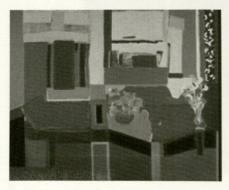
The form emerges from this game of contrasting and matching colors. As the artist told Kenneth Lindsay in 1974, "When I find the color of the painting I find the form . . . [color] gives me a time and a place." ■



Pl. 26 Sun Shower, 1977. Oil on linen. 42 x 28 in.



Pl. 27 The Day After, 1977. Oil on linen. 42 x 48 in.



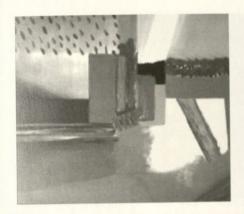
Pl. 28 Still Life Remembered, 1979. Oil on linen. 50 x 60 in.



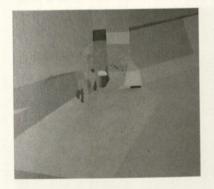
Pl. 29 Chief, 1979-80. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



Pl. 30 Lovers' Landscape, 1980. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



Pl. 31 Summer Rain, 1980. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



Pl.32 Sunday Morning, 1981. Oil on linen. 44 × 48 in.



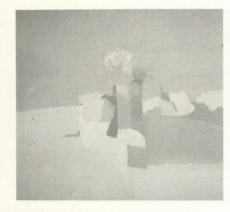
Pl. 33 Country Dance (Country), 1982. Oil on wood and masonite. 19 x 22 in.



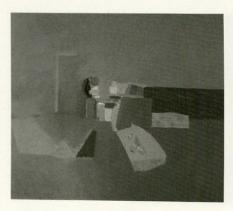
Pl. 34
Resurrection, 1982.
Oil on linen.
68 x 56 in.



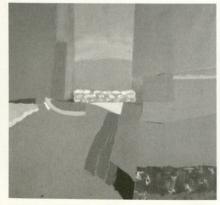
Pl. 35
Paese del Sole, 1982.
Oil on linen.
56 x 68 in.
Collection of Diane Paparo and Karl Neuroth



Pl. 37 Landscape in June, 1983. Oil on canvas. 44 x 48 in. Collection of Joseph Deluca



Pl. 36 Etruria, 1984. Oil on linen. 42 x 48 in. Collection of Mark Epstein



Pl. 38 September, 1983. Oil on linen. 25 x 30 in.

# 1984-89 The Regatta Series

Pl. 39-45; 109-112

If the "color as light" abstractions of the late 1970s and early 1980s were informed by the artist's prior excursions into landscape imagery, his Regatta series represents another intrepid cruise into uncharted pictorial waters. In the early 1980s, Ippolito's planes of color began to stand out from an increasingly monochromatic picture plane. From 1984 to 1985 these planes took on recognizable, if abstracted, shapes; pennants, sails and other nautical motifs emerged in Ippolito's abstractions, as though the very canvas he painted on were reasserting its material heritage as sailing cloth.

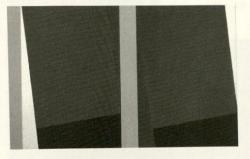
These paintings continue a trend inaugurated by the "color as light" paintings away from pictorial foci clustered near the center of the canvas. The middle of most *Regatta* paintings is vacant, with most of the action taking place at the edges of the frame or at seemingly random intersections of color



Pl. 39
Evening Landscape in Blue, 1984.
Oil on linen.
42 x 48 in.
Collection of Stephen Cozzi

planes. Compositions that seem to read as a quick gestalt turn out upon closer inspection to produce strong spatial ambiguities. Paintings such as Mare Verde (pl. 109) or Regatta, no. 7 (pl. 40) leave unresolved the question of which planes advance or recede, just as Sails (pl. 111) leaves open the question of which blue patch is sky and which is ocean.

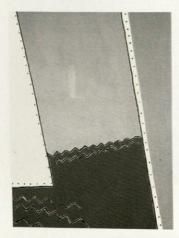
The odd angles and juxtapositions of the *Regatta* paintings suggest a photograph that is cropped so perversely that its viewer cannot tell what perspective the shot is taken from or even, what, exactly, is depicted. And yet the setting for these enigmatic canvases is unquestionably the sea; as is his wont, Ippolito has evoked a sense of place without resorting to an illustrative depiction.



Pl. 40 *Regatta, no. 7,* 1986. Oil on linen. 84 x 70 in.



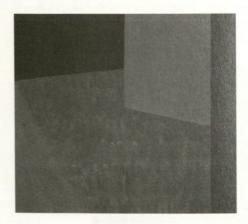
Pl. 41 Regatta, no. 9, 1986. Oil on canvas. 140 x 84 in.



Pl. 42 Gray Regatta, 1986. Oil on canvas. 51 x 40 in.



Pl. 43 Dusk, 1986. Oil on linen. 16 x 20 in.



Pl. 44 Green Regatta, 1986. Oil on linen. 40 x 45 in.



Pl. 45 Sunset, no. 2, 1986. Oil on canvas. 16 x 20 in.

## 1988-93 Aegean Atmospheres

Pl. 46-55; 113-116

In 1988, Ippolito spent the first of a series of summers teaching and making art in the Mediterranean. In the first summer, he found himself on the Greek island of Samos without his usual complement of canvases and paints, so he turned to small-scale works on paper to express the limpid air and light of the Aegean Sea outside his window.

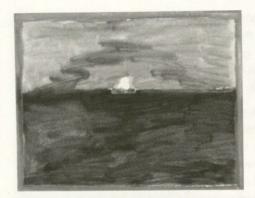
Although he had brought along an expensive set of the finest Winsor & Newton watercolor brushes, Ippolito soon abandoned them and began to paint with twigs and sponges he picked up along the seashore. Finding poetic inspiration in colored tissue, maps and hand-quilled pages from an accountant's ledger, Ippolito pasted these modest materials

into disarmingly insubstantial compositions, sometimes altering the surface with watercolor. The loose handling of material and brush in these Aegean collages gives them a freshness that belies their precious scale and decorative materials.

Upon his return to upstate New York, Ippolito embarked on a new series of oils that integrated the limpid color of his Aegean collages into his by-now-familiar atmospheric painterliness. Titles such as Aegean Night (1989-90, pl. 113) and Kusadasi Bazaar (1991, pl. 114) signal the lingering influence of the artist's summer by the sea; even such 1992 canvases as Sundance (pl. 116) and Southwest Landscape (pl. 115), while ostensibly inspired by a trip to the Arcosanti artist community in Arizona, nevertheless reveal in their vacant compositions and lucid color a debt to the limpid space and light of the Aegean. ■



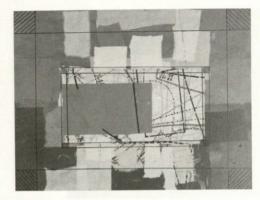
Pl. 46 Aegean, no. 16, 1988. Watercolor on paper.



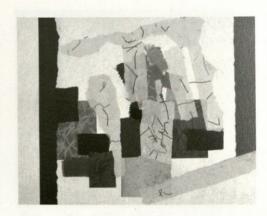
Pl. 47 Aegean, no. 42, 1988. Watercolor on paper. 17 x 21 in.



Pl. 48
Aegean, no. 75, 1988.
Collage on paper.
12 x 15 in.



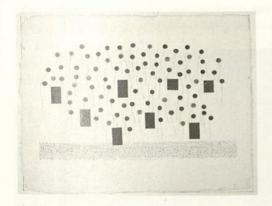
Pl. 49 Aegean, no. 62, 1988. Collage on paper. 17 x 21 in.



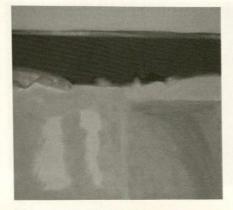
Pl. 50 Aegean, no. 67, 1988. Collage on paper. 15 x 12 in.



Pl. 51 Aegean, no. 90, 1988. Watercolor and collage on paper. 17 x 21 in.



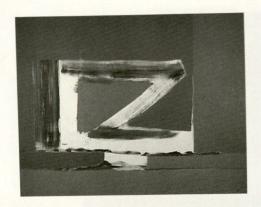
Pl. 52 Aegean, no. 115, 1988. Collage and pencil on paper. 15 x 18 in.



Pl. 53 Aegean Summer, 1989. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



Pl. 54 Bogazi, 1991. Oil on linen. 64 x 72 in.



Pl. 55 Z, 1991. Oil on linen. 69 x 84 in.

# 1992-2001 Action and Impulse

Pl. 56-69; 118-128

Angelo Ippolito was not one to sit still for very long, physically or pictorially. He ended his painting career with a decade of experimentation with new formats and a new preoccupation: jazzy, all-over compositions.

As with his Aegean canvases, inspiration for these improvisatory oils came in small packages — specifically, in a series of works created on paper during summer residencies in the Umbrian hill town of Montecastello di Vibio. Again, he turned the meager resources of his provisional studio to his advantage, using a palette knife to produce small abstractions in oil on handmade paper. Ippolito returned to Umbria in subsequent summers, producing a prolific set of paintings on paper that he dubbed

The Seasons (1992-95), a modest number of larger works on paper known as the Jazz series (1995) and a set of mid-sized oils on paper called the *Umbrian* series (ca. 1988). Ippolito produced the Siena series, consisting of 85 works on paper, in a burst of creative output during his final visit to Umbria during the summer of 2001.

If these works on paper employed a more earthy palette than the Aegean series — replacing the latter's eggshell hues with deep reds, ochres and violets — the new series of oil paintings that Ippolito produced during winters in his capacious Vestal studio pushed that palette still further, into jarring or discordant color combinations. At the same time, Ippolito upped the ante on his compositional gambits, layering stroke after stroke of contrasting colors in a flurry of painterly activity, deliberately choosing oversized brushes to prevent him from being too finicky with any individual mark.



Pl. 56 The Seasons, 1992. Oil on prepared paper. 15 x 18 in.

This impulsive, almost stochastic working method — often inspired by listening to Dixieland and bebop — produced compositional challenges beyond those Ippolito had ever set for himself in the past. The ambition the artist set for each canvas was to resolve a blizzard of brushstrokes spread across different depths of field into a coherent space — even though each brushstroke has little direct relation to its immediate neighbors.

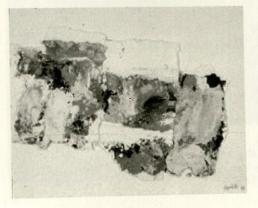
The results of this pictorial gambit are unlike any of the artist's previous compositions; when they succeed, these off-killer, vertiginous hailstorms of disconnected marks somehow, when stared at long enough, pull together into a dynamic equilibrium. Whether marked by aggressive, contrasting colors or quirky pastel hues, these canvases shouldn't work. Yet like the proverbial perpetual-motion machine, they deftly juggle contradictory movements into a sustained choreography. In this sense, they are fitting capstones for an artist whose instincts led him on a circuitous, but ultimately uniquely rewarding, journey through life and art.



Pl. 57 The Seasons, c. 1992. Oil on prepared paper. 15 x 18 in.



Pl. 58
The Seasons, no. 44, c. 1992.
Oil on prepared paper.
15 x 18 in.
Collection of Connie Cevasco, New York



Pl. 59 The Seasons, no. 52, 1994. Oil on prepared paper. 15 x 18 in.



Pl. 60 Yukon, 1994. Oil on canvas. Two panels, 84 x 132 in. total



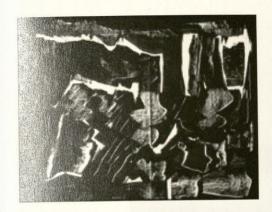
Pl. 61 *Tiger Rag,* 1995. Oil on linen. 64 x 84 in.



Pl. 62 The Seasons, no. 138, 1995. Oil on prepared paper. 15 x 18 in.



Pl. 63 October Landscape III, 1996-97. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



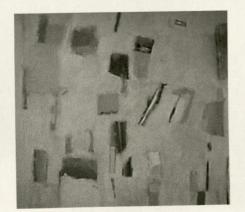
Pl. 64 *Umbrian, no. 9,* 1998. Ink on coated canvas. 16 x 20 in.



Pl. 65 *Umbrian, no. 59,* 1998. Collage on paper. 16 x 20 in.



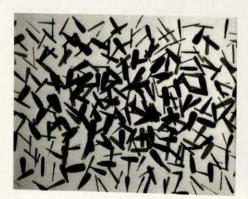
Pl. 66 *Umbrian, no.* 62, 1998. Collage on paper. 16 x 20 in.



Pl. 67 Arizona, 1998-99. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in.



Pl. 68
Tangerine, 1999.
Oil on canvas.
64 x 72 in.



Pl. 69 Siena, no. 46, 2001. Ink on paper. 12 x 16 in.



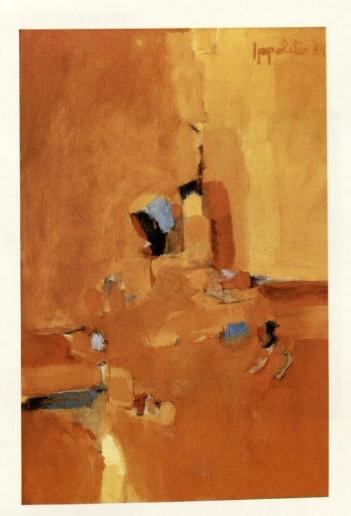
Pl. 70 Carnevale, 1949. Oil on canvas. 16-1/2 x 34-1/2 in. Collection of Ann and Charles Juhasz



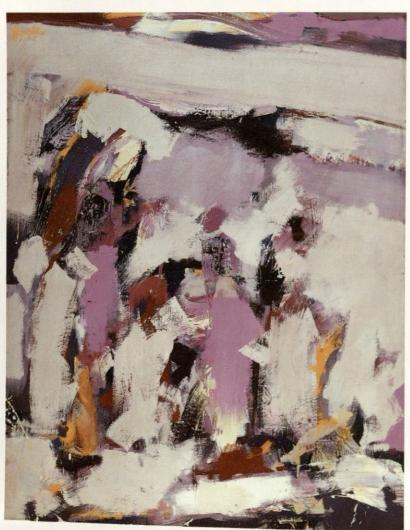
Pl. 71 Storm, 1956. Oil on linen. 48 x 54 in. Whitney Museum of American Art



Pl. 72
Yellow Landscape, 1957.
Oil on canvas.
66 x 62 in.
Collection of Cynthia Smith, Urbana



Pl. 73
Sunset, 1954.
Oil on paper, mounted on canvas.
38 x 25 in.
Collection of Dr. Steven J. Brams, New York



Pl. 74 Jon's Christmas, 1962. Oil on linen. 65 x 52 in.



Pl. 75 Berkeley, no. 37, 1961. Ink, oil and collage on board. 20 x 31 in.



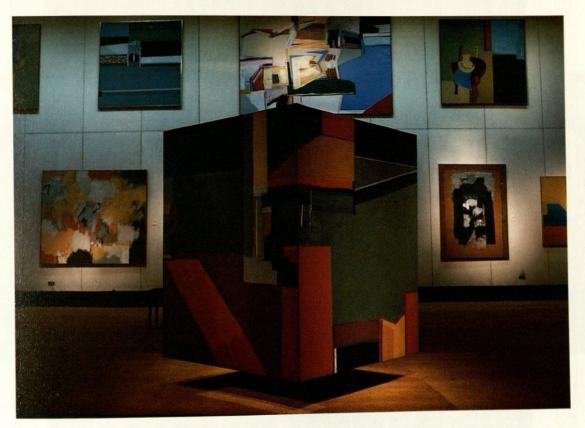
Pl. 76 Berkeley, no. 100, 1961. Ink, oil and collage on board. 20 x 20 in.



Pl. 77 Landscape with Circle, no. 1, 1964. Oil on canvas. 12 x 24 in.



Pl. 78 Harvest, 1968. Oil on shaped canvas. 14 x 14 in.



Pl. 79
Untitled [Cubic Painting], c. 1975.
Oil on shaped canvas.
Four facets, each 64 x 55 in.



Pl. 80
Evening, 1967.
Watercolor on board.
9 x 9 in.
Collection of Mrs. John C. Durfey



Pl. 81 Watercolor, no. 4, 1967. Watercolor on paper. 20 x 20 in.



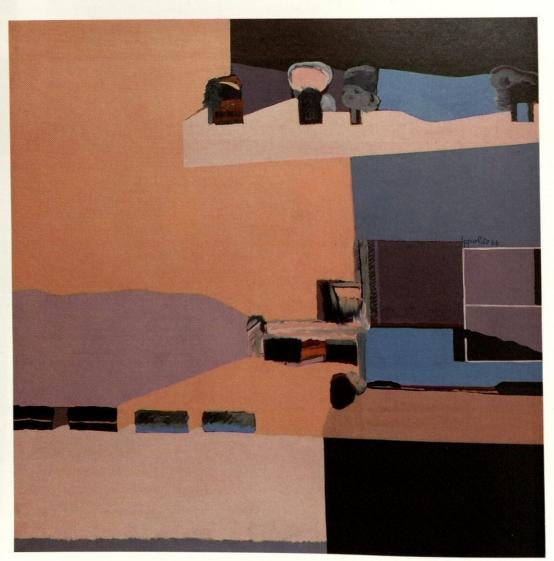
Pl. 82 Watercolor, no. 18, 1967. Watercolor on paper. 14 x 14 in.



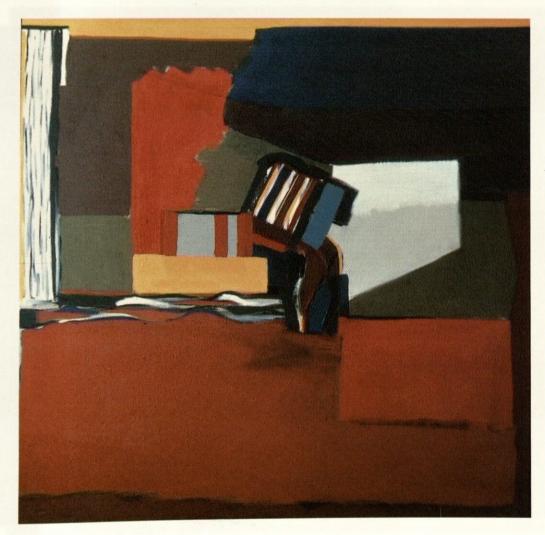
Pl. 83 Blue Door, 1964. Oil on canvas. 80 x 100 in.



Pl. 84 Outdoor Still Life, 1965. Oil on canvas. 80 x 80 in.



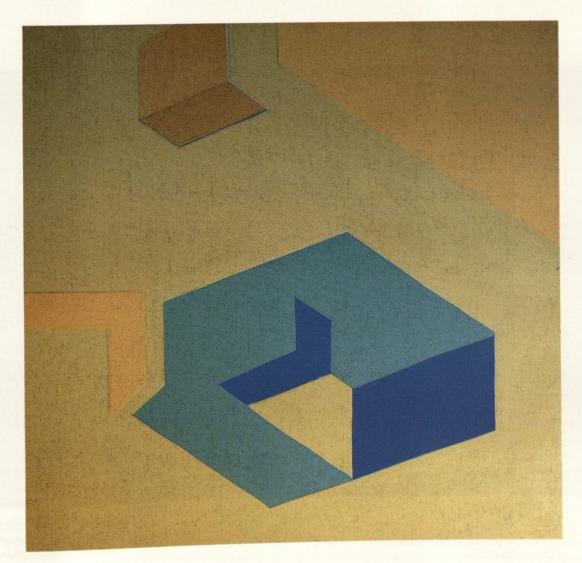
Pl. 85 Nude Landscape, 1966. Oil on canvas. 65 x 65 in.



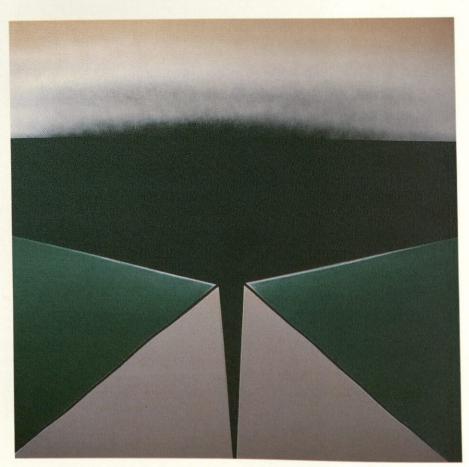
Pl. 86 End of Summer, 1965. Oil on canvas. 50 x 50 in.



Pl. 87 Red and Blue, 1969. Oil on canvas. 55 x 65 in.



Pl. 88 Flip, 1969. Oil on canvas. 50 x 50 in.



Pl. 89 Number 14, 1969. Acrylic lacquer on masonite. 20 x 20 in.



Pl. 90 Endless Landscape, 1969. Acrylic lacquer on masonite. 20 x 24 in.



Pl. 91 Cubist Still Life, 1970. Oil on linen. 65 x 65 in.



Pl. 92 Winter Still Life, 1974. Oil on linen. 50 x 54 in.



Pl. 93 Pompeian Garden, 1974. Oil on linen. 68 x 84 in.



Pl. 94 Ercolano, 1974. Oil on linen. 65 x 65 in.



Pl. 95 Paesaggio Lucido, 1974. Oil on linen. 50 x 50 in.



Pl. 96 *Giardino*, 1974. Oil on linen. 40 x 50 in.



Pl. 97
Evening Garden, 1975.
Oil on canvas.
50 x 50 in.
Private collection



Pl. 98 Fields, 1974. Oil on linen. 50 x 60 in.



Pl. 99 American Collage, 1977. Collage on archival mat board. 16 x 20 in.



Pl. 100 American Collage, no. 90, 1976. Collage on archival mat board. 17 x 21in.



Pl. 101 Men's Club, 1993. Assemblage with found objects. 14.5 x 24.5 x 16 in.



Pl. 102 Visàvis, 1990. Assemblage with found objects. 19 x 16 x 7.5 in.



Pl. 103
Paesaggio for Philip Guston, 1980.
Oil on linen.
48 x 54 in.



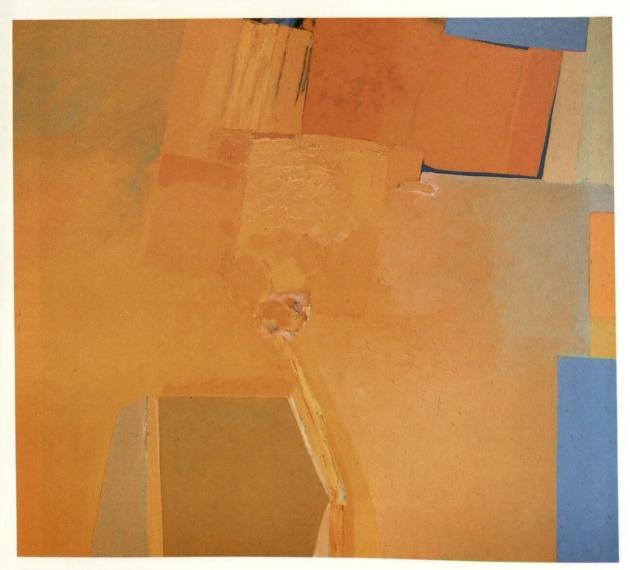
Pl. 104 East, 1981. Oil on linen. 66 x 66 in.



Pl. 105 Burnt Carmine, 1979. Oil on linen. 66 x 66 in.



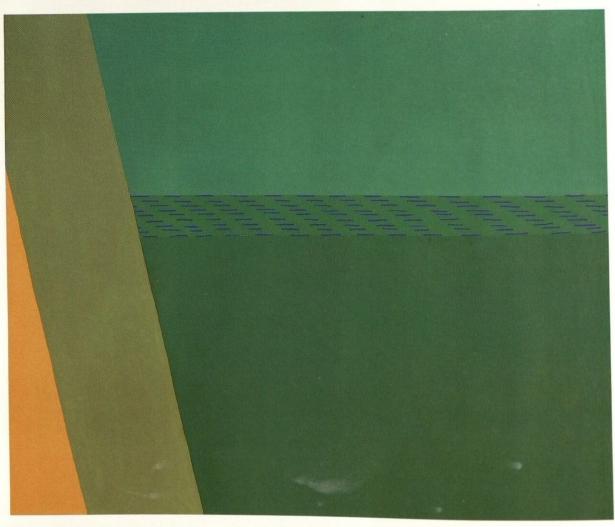
Pl. 106 May Still Life, 1979. Oil on linen. 66 x 66 in.



Pl. 107 Sunscape, 1981. Oil on linen. 44 x 54 in.



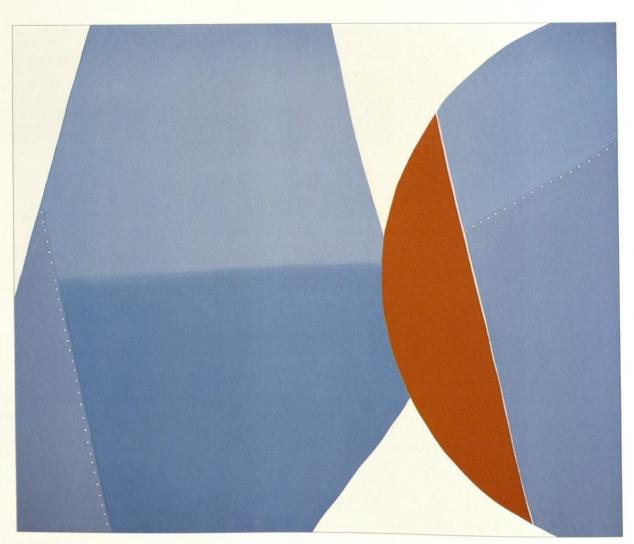
Pl. 108 Summerscape, 1981. Oil on linen. 66 x 66 in.



Pl. 109 Mare Verde, 1986. Oil on canvas. 66 x 78 in.



Pl. 110 Regatta, no. 6, 1985. Oil on canvas. 70 x 84 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Pl. 111 Sails, 1988. Oil on canvas. 66 x 78 in.



Pl. 112 Scudding/Windward, 1988. Oil on canvas. Two panels, each 48 x 54 in.



Pl. 113 Aegean Night, 1989-90. Oil on linen. 64 x 72 in.