

Foreword: Paris

At the time of my return to France in 1945, geometric idealism (figurative or nonfigurative) was still in the ascendant. Surrealism, automatism, nonetheless retained a subterranean influence. But around 1948 a certain change could be felt in the air. A sort of naturism (and not naturalism) haunted the minds of a few individuals. They felt a need to move away from mechanical rigidity of composition, from the obsession with volume, from overdecorative line - and also from a dream imagery tending toward academicism.

The object of the quest was to rediscover a *pictorial* vision, to assert this vision at the expense of a plasticist, constructivist, linear "reign of terror." This reconsideration of pictorial values brought about, as one looked back over the past, a more "favorable" view of Turner's last period, a closer study of Cézanne's last water colors, a fervent admiration for the *Nymphéas* which two generations had scorned, a probing of the secrets of Chinese painting (in the "crude" manner), as well as the admirable calligraphy of the Far East.

In Paris we were hardly acquainted with the new American painting. It was only rather recently, and thanks to certain specific and quite explicit exhibitions, that a number of us were able to discover a manifestation whose forceful originality and lyric exuberance carried it immediately to the foreground of attention.

To return to the climate of thought prevailing for certain French painters some ten years ago, I take the liberty of recalling that in 1949 I published my *Divagations sur l'Espace*. These essays reflected a new metamorphosis in my painting: I was beginning to believe more in the efficacy of light than of pure color, in the expansion of space and not in its compartmentalization, in instinctual movement rather than the "signification" of movement. Thus I was to return, little by little, to the automatism ("furious" or "labyrinthine") of my first Surrealist period and my American period - but on a broader basis.

André Masson