Seven Years of Change in Form and Color in the Sculpture of John Chamberlain: 1958-1965

Mary Kelly Morgan
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SEVEN YEARS OF CHANGE IN FORM AND COLOR IN THE SCULPTURE OF JOHN CHAMBERLAIN: 1958-1965

BY
Mary Kelly Morgan

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of MASTER OF ARTS in the Graduate School of The University of New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico
This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of The University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

SEVEN YEARS OF CHANGE IN FORM AND COLOR

TITLE
IN THE SCULPTURE OF JOHN CHAMBERLAIN: 1958-1965

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June 1, 1967

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special acknowledgment is due John and Elaine Chamberlain, who welcomed me with graciousness and frankness. I wish also to thank Helmut Von Erffa and George Segal for expressing opinions on the subject, Martin Duberman for his information concerning Black Mountain College, Jessie Cotkin for help in obtaining information from Bancroft Library, University of California - Berkeley, and Harold Jones for his assistance in preparing the photographic plates.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

The outline of John Chamberlain's life is rather like sketches of other lives—given to the reader as a framework for the ordering of occurrences in time. A mere profile is necessary if biography is not the errand in writing. Such is the case in this thesis.

The task of paring this profile to its essentials is complicated in numerous ways by the living presence of the subject. Too much unreliable spoken information wells up, too little written, both drowned in contradiction. John Chamberlain changes the personal assessment of his life as parts of it wax and wane in importance for him. In such a state of flux, a framework of essentials informs us best.

On April 16, 1927, John Chamberlain was born in Rochester, Indiana. His father operated a bar there. In 1932, Chamberlain's mother divorced his father and moved to Chicago with John and his younger brother. There Chamberlain attended public schools until he withdrew at fifteen, in 1942. After leaving Chicago and wandering from city to city for a year, he joined the Navy in San Diego in 1943. From then until 1946 he served in the Pacific. The war over, he returned to Chicago.

In Chicago, Chamberlain trained as a hairdresser and practiced that trade between 1946 and 1952. According to his wife, Elaine, who
met him when he was twenty-five (1952), he lived in an "arty neighborhood" and was influenced by those surroundings to the degree that he enrolled for courses at the Art Institute of Chicago. Chamberlain tried traditional sculptural techniques—carving and modelling—offered there but abandoned them for welding in 1953. Traditional methods of sculpture dominated at the rather old fashioned Art Institute in the early 1950's. Elaine Chamberlain describes the aesthetic atmosphere as one of isolation, enlivened by the welded work of Joe Goto, then an Art Institute instructor. For Chamberlain, Goto represented the only fascination the Art Institute offered.

After discarding other processes in favor of Goto's, Chamberlain left the Art Institute for six months of industrial practice—he welded on an assembly line. He earned enough money to buy his own welding equipment. Continually impressed by pictures of the work of David Smith, he traveled to see Smith at the University of Illinois in 1953, spending a semester there working in sculpture after Smith had left.

In 1954, John and Elaine Chamberlain went to Black Mountain College at the urging of a friend, Gerald Van De Wiele, who had himself attended that unique school. At Black Mountain Chamberlain found the friendships of Robert Creeley, Charles Olson and Robert Duncan lasting and valuable. These names attest to Elaine Chamberlain's recollection that Black Mountain was, at that time, primarily a poet's place. The greatest advantage Black Mountain offered, though, was an easier accessibility to whatever was main, current and important—the news from New York.
and fully functional. The scope of this report is to outline the

background and rationale for the inclusion of Cooperative Education in the curriculum of the school. Cooperative Education is an important component of the school's educational philosophy, providing students with practical experience and real-world skills.

In 1950, when the Cooperative Program was first established, the goal was to prepare students for careers in various fields. Since that time, the program has evolved to include a wide range of disciplines, offering students the opportunity to gain valuable experience in their chosen fields.

The Cooperative Program is designed to provide students with a comprehensive education that includes both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Through partnerships with local businesses and industries, students have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience, learn from experienced professionals, and develop the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers.

The success of the Cooperative Program is evident in the high employment rates of its graduates. Many students find employment immediately after completing their program, and others secure positions shortly after graduation.

In conclusion, the Cooperative Program at [School Name] is an integral part of the school's educational mission. It provides students with a unique opportunity to gain valuable experience, develop important skills, and prepare for successful careers in a variety of fields.
After studying and teaching sculpture for about two years at Black Mountain, Chamberlain moved to New York in 1956. During this first year, the struggle to find employment, to pay rent on an apartment too small to be a studio, kept Chamberlain from his work as an artist. In 1957 he found a welding job and rented a loft studio on Franklin Street. The Wells Street Gallery, in Chicago, held his first one-man show.

In 1958, the Chamberlains were living on Long Island in a studio that belonged to Larry Rivers. Toward the end of that year, Martha Jackson bought three pieces of Chamberlain's work and became his dealer. Increasing sales made it possible for him to leave his welding job and devote full time to sculpture. He moved to New City in upstate New York.

1960 was a year of critical success, and Martha Jackson's last year as his dealer. In 1961, Chamberlain joined the group of artists represented by Leo Castelli and was among the Americans shown at the sixth Sao Paulo Biennial.

Before going to California for an exhibition in September, 1962, Chamberlain moved his New York studio to Cherry Street. He left New York in 1963 to spend the summer in Embudo, New Mexico, probably at the suggestion of Robert Creely. In 1964, he returned to New York and attended the thirty-second Venice Biennial, where his work was part of the United States exhibit.

The expense of maintaining a house and studio in New York plus fatigue with the cultural atmosphere there persuaded Chamberlain to
move away in 1965. For both artistic and financial reasons, he thought New Mexico an agreeable place to move. After moving to Santa Fe, he taught a graduate seminar in sculpture at the University of New Mexico in the spring of 1966.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I

NOTE

1. This statement and other biographical information by Elaine Chamberlain, personal interviews, December 3, 1966, and February 18, 1967.

2. In 1956, Charles Olson, the Black Mountain poet and friend of Chamberlain, wrote "Variations Done for Gerald Van De Wiele," a poem in three parts. Van De Wiele was obviously closely associated with the Black Mountain poets. He is responsible for Chamberlain's early acquaintance with Creeley, Olson and Duncan.
CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM AND SURVEY OF CRITICAL LITERATURE

In the seven years between 1953 and 1965, John Chamberlain continually developed and changed his sculptural styles. Phases of this stylistic development require critical appraisal. Chamberlain's constant changing must be understood as the thread which connects each of his works to the whole of his effort. Chamberlain is controversial in that his work welcomes it, not controversial in that a debate, though invited, has not come.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the thesis. John Chamberlain developed a voluminous, crumpled-metal, baroque form in which "found" color played an essential, organizing role. In 1963, he began to apply paint to his constructions himself. The nature of applied color's surface forced him to make radical changes in form.

Justification for the study. Chamberlain's evolution in form and color in not necessarily representative of the developments of his contemporaries. He is an individual, not a show-piece for the whole. By considering Chamberlain, critical research pays the present its due and gives concern to a figure worthy of controversy. Although timeliness alone provides no proof of importance, timely understanding may. Hopefully, to catch a man in mid-stride is to understand partially his action.
Organization of the thesis. An investigation of John Chamberlain's work between 1958 and 1965 produces an organization which is a property of the sculptural progression itself. From an early linear style, Chamberlain developed a baroque, voluminous style. He selected his colors from those which had been industrially painted upon the scrap metal. He used "found" color.

From manipulating found color upon voluminous, baroque forms, Chamberlain turned to color which he applied himself, replacing a fine talent for arranging found color with a problematic interest in his own chromatic creations. He calls those crumpled-metal forms employing his own painting "self-painted."¹

Following the "self-painted" but still volumetric pieces, the artist began a series of geometric constructions. They too are "self-painted." Some of these works were "pre-fabricated,"² They were not made by Chamberlain but to his specifications. The progression is from voluminous, crumpled-metal forms employing found color to geometric forms bearing applied color.

Chamberlain's constant desire to change produced this stylistic progression. Change in form, color and surface is characteristic of the works because change is characteristic of the man.

II. SURVEY OF CRITICAL LITERATURE

Ponderous weight has no part in Chamberlain's critical portfolio. Only a few critics are well-informed concerning him. When the most
null
sensitive are collected, however, his reviewers manage to assemble an impressive group of perceptions.

Dore Ashton. Dore Ashton indicates, in her reviews of John Chamberlain’s work, an open-minded intention to see only sculptural qualities. Those she expresses with an economy of words, making short articles do the work of longer ones. Considering her disparagement of new-for-newness’s-sake in other of her writings, her early grasp of Chamberlain’s formal qualities shows her real concern for what may be present in new work.

She was not so intent upon discussions of sculptural volume as to ignore Chamberlain’s “making the disparity between recognized origin of the material and the created imagery a source of esthetic power.” Nor was she so enchanted by power as to miss the uselessness of Chamberlain’s experiments with attached rags. Dore Ashton brings to a reader on Chamberlain much insight into his form, limited as her reviews are by scarcity. A few perceptive notes appear spread over a number of years.

Donald Judd. Donald Judd speaks of Chamberlain with the greatest perception. His severe, analytical, often difficult style tempts us to think he cares less for the intrinsic beauties of critical writing than for the serious exposition at hand. He developed a theory concerning the “three-way polarity of appearance and meaning in Chamberlain’s sculpture.” His discussions of neutrality, redundancy and expressive structure interpret Chamberlain’s baroque development with austere and
logical precision. Judd's criticism does not repeatedly present a stock opinion of Chamberlain, but, rather, one which grows more deeply analytical as Chamberlain's crumpled-metal forms evolve. In this Judd is doubly valuable.

**Barbara Rose.** Besides Donald Judd, Barbara Rose is the only critical to devote a long and meaningful article to Chamberlain's work. She makes a number of general points which are quite important. She does singular duty in a "dead car" dispute, taking the Museum of Modern Art to task for too much emphasis on the automotive origins of Chamberlain's sculpture. Only a tedious amount of praise would indicate how Rose and Judd dominate critical readings on Chamberlain.

**Thomas E. Hess.** Thomas Hess has spoken of Chamberlain in short review sentences, but he has continually made Chamberlain's indebtedness to modern painting clear. Hess makes his finest points about form when economy of words prevails.

**Natalie Edgar.** Natalie Edgar, rather than displaying any economy, relies on a violent active tense to describe Chamberlain with some misunderstanding and some dislike. In spite of these limitations, she comprehends the action that manipulated metal gives his sculpture. Natalie Edgar provides one of the scarce reviews of Chamberlain's geometric constructions.

**Vivien Raynor.** Like Natalie Edgar, Vivien Raynor is not always friendly to Chamberlain's work. Unfortunately, she often foists
shallow wit and personalized comments on us in the name of criticism. This tendency must place her at that point where criticism becomes all after-dinner chatter.

G. R. Swenson. G. R. Swenson's reviews are serious, speaking with some insight about Chamberlain's self-painted, small voluminous forms. Swenson's interest lies chiefly in broad relationships between contemporary painting and sculpture.

Among critics who have spoken only slightly, Anita Ventura, Irving H. Sandler, and Fairfield Porter consider Chamberlain's formal qualities most important. Emily Genauer, John D. Morse, and Kenneth Sawyer see Neo-Dada aspects; Pierre Restany, Gerald Nordland and Hilton Kramer remark on car-metal similarities to César.  

Herbert Read also attaches Chamberlain to César stylistically and says no more than that. This mistake is akin to Gerald Nordland's. In spite of his preference to deal with Chamberlain no further, Read, in his The Art of Sculpture, provides the clearest means of dealing with the artist's shift in form. Because of Chamberlain's affinities with Baroque forms, Read's discussions of surface quality and light effects are of immense value.

Surely the foregoing brief statements show three impediments to developing written support for a study of Chamberlain. Critical statements are scarce. They are short, not elaborated. They seldom deal with Chamberlain's geometric style, clinging to the crumpled forms for which he is well known. For these reasons, we must often analyse
alone, without the hindsight of an ever-present authority. No doubt this is how authority becomes present, and debate is begun.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

NOTE


2. Ibid.


9. Ibid.


11. César Baldaccini, whose car-metal work is concerned with complete compression. It takes the form of cubes of meshed material.

CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH OF FORM

And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more—
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

Lewis Carroll

From his early linear mode to the fullness of his baroque style, John Chamberlain’s innovations came clambering up as the oysters to the walrus. Chamberlain’s personal use of a baroque idiom grew from the linear influences of Julio Gonzalez and David Smith through the discovery of a material better suited to his taste in form. If we stand on the beach to count these oysters off, one by one, Chamberlain must forgive us. What is lost in empathetic comprehension of the rush of inspiration is gained in more precise understanding.

I. CONSTRUCTED VOID, THE INFLUENCE OF GONZALEZ AND SMITH

Void, or space, as collected within the embrace of defining materials, has become equal to those materials in discussions of modern sculpture. We carefully attend the dimensions of sculpture’s air. During the middle 1950’s, John Chamberlain concerned himself in defining these void volumes, not with the delicacy of Richard Lippold nor with the nervous excitement of Ibram Lassaw, but first in Gonzalez’s sturdy
CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES OF ERROR

We acknowledge the fact that some of the conclusions drawn from the data and results obtained may be subject to error. These sources of error include

1. Measurement
2. Sampling
3. Analysis
4. Interpretation

In the analysis of the data, we have attempted to minimize these sources of error by employing rigorous procedures and statistical methods. However, it is important to recognize that some degree of error is inherent in any study of this nature.
manner and then in Smith's more complex and expressive one. Chamberlain's departures from the latter two led to a linear quality quite his own.

Saying that the influence of Gonzalez comes first may be misleading. Chamberlain admired Smith even before he attended Black Mountain. However, pictorial evidence, what there is of it, shows Chamberlain's earliest pieces with a more concentrated Gonzalez approach. In Calliope, 1954, (Plate 2), done at Black Mountain, several legs support a superstructure composed of straight elements and curved ones. Each iron element is of nearly constant dimensions throughout its length, its ductility and malleability untried. In a curve that swings down and hooks inward at the top, with a streamer at its utmost end, Calliope is faithfully reminiscent of Gonzalez's Motherhood of 1933, (plate 2a).

Chamberlain's Gonzalez-like features merged with a style Chamberlain derived from David Smith. How smooth this transition seems when we see Smith's Agricola V of 1952, (plate 3a). Some of Chamberlain's curving elements in Calliope possess precisely Smith's bend—like a rough brad with one bent tine. In Agricola V, a small finial circle appears at the end of a branch. We find it again on an elbow of line in Calliope. The difference made by Smith's influence shows in a comparison between Agricola V and Chamberlain's Gate, 1957, (plate 3). The Chamberlain is an extreme example, far from the influence of Gonzalez. Chamberlain has come so far in deriving a personal idiom from the influence of Smith as to hide immediate similarities with Smith. In Gate, only

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thin slices of space are physically claimed by surrounding materials, though one senses that planes on both sides of the single, sculpturally-articulated one are also demanded. Overlapping sheets and crossing tubes bulge out a bit. To Smith, Chamberlain owes his widespread spaces, his interest in singular-plane articulation, his intricately varied linearity.

Chamberlain has framed the edges of Gate's plane, denying the extension of elements which could claim peripheral space as the open branching of Agricola V does. He chooses, rather, to leave a great hole below and to one side, shot into by a pointed, horizontal element. Smith did likewise.

Gate's practically flat composition fails beside Chamberlain's later, profoundly third-dimensional pieces. When Smith limited himself to two-dimensional efforts, he created dramatic changes of form by using starkly distinct elements, taut lines, and segments set out-of-plane. Chamberlain saw this virtuosity in Smith, but learned, by emulating him, that Smith's kind of two-dimensionality was not for him. The failure of singular-plane articulation in Chamberlain's work is unintentionally described so well by James Thurber that we cannot avoid the metaphor:

No one has been able to tell us what kind of dog we have. I am enclosing a sketch of one of his two postures. He has only two. The other one is the same as this except he faces the opposite direction.

Mrs. Eugenia Black

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Answer: I think that what you have is a cast-iron lawn dog. The expressionless eye and the rigid pose are characteristic of metal lawn animals.

Chamberlain later made virtues out of poorly defined segments and rambling lines—those qualities which were vices under the constraint of just two dimensions. The lines, weaving and twisting, are Chamberlain's own extensions of those complex, hollowed and sculpted linear elements in Smith's work. Chamberlain employs unexpected, tenuous weaknesses in his metal. Smith turns all the power of tools to the task of creating piercing drama. A common concern with line quality is their link, not the ends line served. Later, in 1960, Dore Ashton recognized the importance of manipulated line in relation to Chamberlain's voluminous masses:

...Mr. Chamberlain knows how to counter-point this labyrinthine massing. It is characteristic of almost all his sculptures that there is a flare of line arching out into space, establishing a compelling tension between the packs of heavy steel and the air about it.

A lack of clearly defined elements would eventually aid in unifying the "packs" of steel she mentions. It is certain that David Smith never taught blurred definitions by example. Nor can we hold Chamberlain's wobbly metal line entirely responsible, although it diverges and converges, so that we never finish tracing the element we began with. Rather, the root of unclear definition is the same as the root of wavering line—Chamberlain's taste in form, the basis of his composition, often his benefactor, consistently his particular problem.
Because enveloped space contributes to Chamberlain's expressive form, Gonzales and Smith are his creditors. He staked out space in the Gonzalez fashion and drew lines around it in Smith's. Far from copying, he found his own connections with space, what he could and could not do with it.

II. THE CAR METAL DISCOVERY

Finding the metal. Although we take care to remember the place void has in Chamberlain's forms, void only exists as materials set it apart. The defining capability of line was negated by Chamberlain's insistence on another formal quality—unity through integrated complexity of mass. For this, the path of a single point did not suffice; sheets of steel served better to expose the pressures he put upon them.

In 1958, Chamberlain discovered the possibilities of car metal. He has told of its first usage in several ways—as economy, as aesthetic play and as sudden awareness. Donald Judd says that Chamberlain, in appropriating automobile metal, was striving for the swift beginnings to be had in painting.

Judd, discussing the car metal discovery, states:

...Chamberlain was interested in De Kooning's voluminous paintings of 1955 and 1956, such as Gotham News. Having painted a little himself, he was impressed by the speed with which a painting could be started. He neither liked the methodical labor of sculpture nor its effect. It occurred to him that using crushed and colored metal was a way to have something in the beginning and a way to avoid conspicuous tinkering....
This acknowledgement of De Kooning's influence is valid as far as it goes. Chamberlain does prefer to manipulate matter within his grasp. His impatience with preconception repeated itself often enough (e.g. in his "prefabricated," geometric constructions) to be considered characteristic of his working method. He delighted in having elements at hand so that he could deliberate in metal. His compositions are triumphs of arrangement rather than products of an original mental blueprint.

Judd does not say all he could in crediting De Kooning. Even the worst painter can start fast, arrange his elements conscientiously and emerge with trash. De Kooning's involvement in rapidly applied paint achieved an image suited to Chamberlain's taste in form—frenzied paths of motion, dramatic in profusion. "In 1955," states Werner Haftmann, "De Kooning's pictures were again completely abstract, figurations of dynamic forces, which in their clash transformed the surface into an apocalyptic field of spatial and coloured tensions." That sentence would do accurate honor to Chamberlain's finest volumetric forms. When De Kooning's Gotham News answered the sculptor's own needs superbly, Chamberlain could not avoid an interest in its means.

Part of Chamberlain's use of automobile metal was based on his need to assemble his elements swiftly, to manipulate the actual, to escape the ideal. His sudden awareness of its possibilities is another part. Living in Larry Rivers' studio, Chamberlain had occasion to
step over, glance at and skirt the wreckage of an automobile in the
yard. He took a good look at this thing so often avoided. He talks
about the metal's containment of forces, about its convoluted surfaces,
with the pride of insight.³ Caught in enthusiasm for manifestations,
we are tempted to call this a Joycean "epiphany" of material.⁹ Needing
to find does not dilute the treasure, but rather makes it possible.
Nobody else has to feel the magic of that find; that Chamberlain felt
it is sufficient.

Never constrained to limit the explanations of his experience,
Chamberlain adds two further narratives. His "was-just-seeing-what-
it-could-do" description is more casual than recounting an epiphany.
It is what we expect to hear, dictated by common usage whenever art
is empirical. The kind of creation of which Chamberlain speaks is
better called "aesthetic play."¹⁰ The artist held the new material in
mind and hand, giving free rein to his imagination. With no capricious
intent, he asked what the material had to offer his creativity. When
the question was answered, Chamberlain had found a material capable
of performing his way. Whether De Kooning pointed to it, awareness
revealed it, or curiosity deduced it, a versatile material lay ready.

The economy represented by sheet metal lying in the yard made
this discovery pleasant. Those who have not gotten beyond seeing all
junk and no art in Chamberlain's work must envision cartoon dollar-signs
ringing up in his eyes as he scanned the miles of American junkyards.
His attitude toward economical materials is quite otherwise. On
several occasions (e.g. both the adaption of car metal and that of foam rubber) he found something "lying around"\(^1\) and was simply glad he could use it. Chamberlain's use of these "found" materials was dictated by his formal requirements. A lean pocketbook may have prodded imagination; economy was just good luck.

Since Chamberlain was living in Larry Rivers' studio, and since he always values the achievements of his friends, Rivers' interests are relevant. Possibly Rivers' mid-1950's involvement in "common references"\(^2\) effected Chamberlain's use of scrap metal unembellished, his letting it speak as a familiar entity.

**Using the metal.** From the first uses of his new material, Chamberlain was to evolve a full-blown, voluminous image. His first car-metal style is difficult to describe. It is on its way to something else; it is tentative and contradictory.

The metal he made to stand frankly for itself. Sow's ear was not transformed to silk, nor was it mutilated to serve obvious kinds of social comment. Rather, in these as in later works, the unabashed objectivity of ordinary metal prompts the superficial viewer to invent a comment for himself.

Chamberlain's shaping of metal is planar and fan-like. Separate segments are set at angles or are pinched and tucked in vertical pleats. Flat sheets or swinging arcs control the space (plates 4 and 5). Later the void and metal would combine, so that together they created the
sculpture's expressive form. Like sea and shore, they made formal and equal meetings that are deceptively stable.

In early car-metal constructions, both Untitled, 1958, (plates 4 and 5), Chamberlain leaned heavily on his rambling use of line. Rods do more than counter-balance; they are the sculpture's skeleton, supporting much of the sheet metal as they trace its continuity in space. Still, line achieves a weaving complexity within the sculpture and repeats the ridges in the steel.

Chamberlain's finesse with color is advanced beyond the rest of his elements in this early work. He quite wisely chose colors either neutral or dark. Like lower echelon corporation wives, his constructions wore quiet colors until they gained the power to wear his mature chromatic creations. Unlike most of those ladies, his later compositions in voluminous steel benefitted by the challenges of color well into old age. A use of neutral color does not enforce color dullness. An elegant small piece, Untitled, 1959, (plate 6), is luminous in transitions from white to dark red rust. Yellowing eats up from beneath the white paint; brown and dark red control the contours. Chamberlain's finest use of line shows in a yellow metal ribbon bounded by red. It wrinkles among the steel sheets, lightening their surface injuries.

Transition is the marked feature of these early sheet-metal pieces. To forget that, to treat them as if Chamberlain were already in full stride, mistakes becoming for being. The sculptor increasingly abandoned concern for clear silhouette and substituted penetrations into
volume for planar articulation. Form billowed out to break connections with floor and wall. It flowed into a unity dictated by movement. Color, light and composition win independence of contributing forms. All this in the service of Chamberlain's full baroque idiom.

III. TRANSITIONS TOWARD A BAROQUE FORM

At its height, Chamberlain's car-metal composition was baroque. Although baroque form may be regarded as a chapter in an art history without artist's names, we need not see Chamberlain as any part of a spiritual revolution against classic structure. He had a personal taste in form which was similar to works produced in the 1630's, a taste in material form like that of Bernini, in color like that of Rubens. In Chamberlain's critics' use of the term "baroque" there is implied a wildly irregular form and frank expressiveness that the word connotes when taken from its seventeenth-century historical context. Chamberlain is not a servant of the Council of Trent, not a man torn by the scientific discoveries of Copernicus, not a caterer to new political and national identities. Neither knowing nor caring about the spiritual bases of the seventeenth-century Baroque, Chamberlain was driven by his own expansiveness and change to baroque form and color. The appearances his works share with works of the early seventeenth century—breaking contour, recessing space, opening form and unifying movement—justify our using the word "baroque" to describe his efforts. These similarities do not justify claims that
Chamberlain was influenced by Baroque sculptors. Similarities do not join him to a cyclical theory of art history—classic—romantic—baroque—classic—because the baroque in his work is not a spiritual program or a rebellion against classical modes. Only stylistic likeness between Chamberlain and the Baroque merit attention. Since style is similar, his problems arising from style remind us of the seventeenth century. Shiny surfaces and form-destroying reflections attack Chamberlain and the Baroque alike.

Four transformations brought Chamberlain from his restricted style of 1958 to his full baroque of the early 1960's. He tore his sculpture's silhouette to expand an emerging interior. He pierced its planarity to recess in depth. He broke its tectonic bonds. He crushed the independence of its parts in the service of unity. No one of these mutations came alone, but all together, one calling for another. A four-headed metamorphosis monster was invited in and it brought splendid gifts.

Toward a meaningless silhouette. Chamberlain's early work was all edges and air (plates 1, 2 and 3). Sculptural transformation from line to mass does not always require a loss of meaningful edges. David Smith's sculptural silhouette contained the essence of his form when he employed mass in the Cubi series. His edges define their forms with magnificent clarity. But Chamberlain's idea of mass is a different one—an idea neither better nor worse than Smith's.
Chamberlain changed from linear division of his elements to very little division at all. In the beginning his segments agree to union; in his baroque forms, there might as well be no segments. In Untitled (plate 4), a traceable contour still shows the work's boundaries. Where line elbows out, it returns toward the core to show the exact limits of its spatial claim. However twisted, steel sheets are additive, planar elements, set by similar areas filled with space. A group of radiating planes, some metal and some void, shift on axis to claim an air pocket as would a checkered handkerchief.

In Haze, 1960, (plate 7), smooth bulges flow from base to top. Metal pieces cease encircling space in a ring of planes and begin to contain it within a group of convex arms. If these bulging arms were all smooth, turning inward, linear edges could define the work; but jagged little scoops turn out to extend metal and claim extra space. Inside, sheets and voids turn toward these rough shovels, creating a form that has little to do with silhouette.

Once begun, the process of interior elaboration takes possession of Chamberlain's compositions like mitotic growth. What had been contortions of three areas in Haze becomes a delicate hammering of six in Hatband,14 (plate 8). Eventually, the individuality of each interior edge was swallowed in a mass concentration of effect—all elements contributing to a theme of motion. Chamberlain's alliance of subordinated lines is monumentally clear in Sweet William, 1962, (plate 9).
A merging unity of physically separate elements to form a compositional surge throws Chamberlain's interior extensions far beyond the edges of his constructions. Standing close to one, we sense being in its wake or before its prow, in the presence of expandable form. The controls of containing line are gone.

**Toward recession.** When John Chamberlain left the limits of containing line, he abandoned also the spread of planes across a single surface. From fan-shaped planar arrangements of early car-metal pieces, he turned to interior elaboration of space as well as of line. Loss of edge and loss of plane surface are much the same thing, depending, literally, on where we stand. Edges (front, back and sides) abdicate under the demands of the interior. After the fig has burst, we had best deal with what is there—the form following spatial explosion.

In Chamberlain's *Untitled, 1958,* (plate 4), we can "read" across a planar surface. The triangular spaces within lines are trapped, flat inside a constraining band. Metal plane and space plane stand across the path of vision but never draw it in.

In constructions like *Mag,* (plate 7), plane space and recessional space make an agreement, but recession begins to get the better of it. Deep contour unites compositionally with a scoop that defies edge. The contrast of smooth surface at the right does not help the viewer to keep his vision on one plane—it makes the central depth more compelling.
Spatial movement turns in upon the sculpture in Captain O'Hay, 1961, (plate 11). See-in has conquered see-across. The same is true of White Thumb, 1961-62, (plate 12). Whether he worked with standing or with relief pieces, Chamberlain performed feats in illusionary and physical depth. His metal grip on space prompted Barbara Rose to claim for him "one of the fullest attempts in our time (and the only successful one by an American under forty) to deal with all that sculpture can do: to redeem for it the third dimension..." What Chamberlain "redeems" is one sort of third-dimensional revelation—the show of depth within a work rather than around its outer surfaces. Chamberlain's formal manipulations managed a comeback of intricately recessed elements.

Open form. Chamberlain's constructions were never placed in niches. By this we are denied the pleasure of seeing him flee such architectural enclosures in the best Baroque tradition. That is an entertainment reserved for the students of the seventeenth century. Chamberlain did escape tectonic relations, however. He progressively denied the planes of floor and wall within his own work.

Before he employed the profuse capabilities of automobile metal, Chamberlain was a tectonic sculptor. Plates one, two and three show pieces whose elements relate to floor and wall. In the first, Untitled, 1955, horizontal and vertical lines frame a small, building-like space. In the second, Calliope, 1954, a strong vertical body with two legs supports curving brackets. Calliope's relation with walls is quite
comfortable. In spite of its free and stringy interior, the third is appropriately titled Gate, an ornamental portcullis that belongs in a wall. Chamberlain did not break tectonic relationships until his discovery of car metal.

**Untitled**, 1958, (plate 4), the earliest car-metal construction, stands a firmly vertical as a pillar. Rebellicus flaps and lines hang out, but in asserting their independence fall short of an encompassing a-tectonic movement. To move free of tectonic restraints, totally unified, flowing movement is necessary. When restrained and balanced, elements hold places within a structure. As long as they are independently separate, they cannot move without destroying balance. As long as independent planes were serially arranged, Chamberlain was tied to floor and wall.

As he increased the unity among fragments in *Hatband*, (plate 8), the sculptor broke free. He turned his composition at an angle and let movement sweep through it. This flow which breaks with the perpendicular also subordinates detail. Compositional direction and open form unite. Once free in unity, form and movement did the sculptor's will on surrounding space. Heavy masses pull and dance in *Coq Wha Zee*, 16 (plate 13), sending out steely tongues to lap at space. *White Thumb*, (plate 12), enslaves its wall, taking all the contrast its squareness can offer. *Dolores James*, (plate 14) swarms into Henry Geldzahler's living room, ready to eat a tectonic *Brillo Box* 17 for breakfast. But to show this freedom under severe control, Chamberlain
stands *Velvet White*, (plate 15), firmly on the gallery floor, its lower edges defined by line and plane. Open form, moving above, gains such expressive strength from its own tectonic supports that it controls the room's space like an equestrian monument.

Wildness, however controlled, suits Chamberlain. Open form was always more truly his than any efforts at delicate agreement with room space. Obsequious observance of established boundaries has no part in his actions. Something there is, in John Chamberlain, that doesn't love a wall.

**Unity.** Chamberlain began his career with a serial unity among his forms; he moved to an organic one. He first made agreements among individual elements. Later he made the lives of the parts depend upon the whole.

A careful, serial unity shows in *Untitled*, 1958, (plate 4). Chamberlain took pains to set his segments around so that no part takes more than its share of attention. Whenever a string of autonomous planes joined, the sculptor disciplined them into unity with edge and plane and with tectonic alliance. The parts are individually clear and corporately harmonious. *Wildroot*, 1959, (plate 16), gracefully exemplifies serial harmony, just as it stands on the brink of evolving into an organism. Set *Wildroot* beside *Coo Wha Zee*, 1962, (plate 13), to see the strides organic construction made. No more independent segments disturb the unity of *Coo Wha Zee's* structure. If, strictly speaking,
An analysis of the factors influencing the success of the project reveals several key points. First, effective communication among team members is crucial for ensuring that everyone is on the same page. Second, a well-defined project plan helps in managing tasks efficiently. Third, regular feedback sessions keep everyone informed about progress and any issues that need attention. Finally, having a dedicated project manager who can coordinate efforts and address challenges promptly is essential for project success.

In conclusion, while challenges may arise during any project, proactive measures such as clear communication, effective planning, continuous feedback, and strong leadership can significantly enhance the likelihood of success.
there are any "parts" in _Coo Wha Zee_, they cling to the theme of wholeness. Chamberlain did not throw away the superfluous to achieve _Coo Wha Zee_'s unity; he amassed a unity of one thematic form. He no longer thought of many in one.

Chamberlain's work is never without unity. In transition, he goes from one sort of rule over elements to another sort. Deliberate, quiet, unassuming, static and cerebral he is not. But he brooks no segmental anarchy.

Breaking silhouette, recessing space, opening form and unifying organically are Chamberlain's processes that lent his work baroque form. Freedom is the essence of his baroque—the drama of visual and physical space, liberal movement, independence of the tectonic, union and empathy. Ignore for a moment the problems freedom is heir to. Liberty and expression are bought at the small price of a classicist's howl.

IV. MISUNDERSTANDINGS, MOVEMENT AND COLOR

Chamberlain owns characteristics aside from his baroque ones. He is not in the business of producing plaster casts from Bernini. His differences from the seventeenth-century Baroque style strengthen his own baroque. His material brought him versatility. He expresses motion in abstract form. His color compounds his unity. But if these are all allies of Chamberlain's baroque form, they are problematic friends. His material brings him up on overblown charges of making a social
comment. His expressive movement can pass itself off as a turnpike accident. And his color, his finest talent, eventually takes its surface freedom and turns blindingly upon his compositions, outweighing their movement in bright gloss.

**Material and misunderstandings.**

...to George P. Babbitt, as to most prosperous citizens of Zenith, his motor car was poetry and tragedy, love and heroism.

Sinclair Lewis

The Babbitts reside not only in Zenith. Chamberlain’s sculpture flushed them out on the grounds of *Arts* and *Art News* and in the columns of the New York *Herald Tribune*. There is a Babbitt somewhere in the Museum of Modern Art writing labels. All these persons claim Chamberlain owes his expression to his materials, that the car is the prime speaker and Chamberlain is the middle man. If the sculptor ever meant the car to show in his work, that minor voice is lost when these prosperous Zenithians grapple for its meaning. They drown it in paens for the beloved, four-wheeled family servant. To the degree that they apotheosize the car in Chamberlain, their judgment is faulty.

John Chamberlain is no dissembler. If he wanted to speak chiefly of the car, he would leave no doubt about it. He would build a slick, Freudian, automotive body and drive it through the front door. His metal speaks of expressive movement instead. That is the statement we must recognize, and leave the car parts to the Babbitts.
Barbara Rose adeptly left the Museum of Modern Art holding its bag of poor perceptions. From the precious premise that Chamberlain used "materials rich in associations," the Museum's placard, she explains, proceeds to supply us with somebody's associational fantasy, fearing that we cannot reach the wrong conclusions all by ourselves.

Confusing a Chamberlain with the ghost of a car is the worst misunderstanding but not the only one. Gerald Nordland tries to dismiss Chamberlain and César together because their materials are similar. After some desultory comments on César, Nordland adds: "John Chamberlain must be discussed in the same context, for his material is also taken from the junk yard." Or, Picasso and Rauschenberg go together because they may take goats as their subject; or, Michelangelo and Hajdu must be discussed in the same context, for their material comes from the quarry. César and Chamberlain make an interesting comparison because to each the material allows a different style. César is linear, planar, closed and multiple in form. Chamberlain is a-linear, a-planar, open and unified. It is a pity that Nordland's considerable sensibilities could not see beyond like materials into unlike form.

The most educated way to misunderstand Chamberlain is to call him a Neo-Dadaist. This is a more erudite description than "car redeemer" or "junk compiler." It does both Dada and Chamberlain a disservice. John D. Morse speaks most eloquently to defend his conviction that Dada equals Beat equals Chamberlain:

As I looked at John Chamberlain's Nutcracker, a grimly handsome figure made of twisted, wrecked automobile
bodies, I remembered a line of criticism describing a Beat writer: "...bereft of illusion, standing in the dark midnight of existence." And suddenly the whole exhibition became cohesive.

These users of "new media" to make "new forms" are the Beat and Angry Young Men of the visual art world. They are the Kerouacs, the Ginsbergs and Osbornes, the Kingsley Amis' (sic) for whom there is no past or future, but only a chaotic present. They are not quite sure what they are protesting, just as the Dadaists of 1916 were not quite sure, but this, I believe, is the key to their work....

Whatever "dark midnight of existence" Chamberlain has stood in, he does not pour it out in his sculpture. We cannot deny or prove his pain in life by his work because he has turned to sculpture not in anger but with concern. He reveres Gonzales, Smith and De Kooning as his beneficial past. He does not fume over a chaotic present; he wants the future full and varied. He may protest a great deal, but his art is not a printed banner. It serves only to affirm his beliefs about materials and form. "Beat" is a paupered word, wearing many meanings after the Co-existence Bagel Shop had done with it. Chamberlain could have been "beat," "boss" or "hippie" and still have no connections with Dada. He never turned the means of art upon art itself to destroy it. His material constructions never parody, annihilate or doubt art. He is neither Dadaist nor Neo-Dadaist.

The price Chamberlain paid in suffering these misunderstandings was not stiff enough to stop him. He has said he does not care to hear unsolicited criticism, even from his friends. Misunderstanding he sees for what it is—simply not knowing. He has neither the character nor the misfortune of a martyr.
to translate or not to translate - such is the question. to translate is not necessarily to understand. translation is an act of faith, of trust in the unknown, of courage to confront the unknowable. it is the act of giving birth to ideas and concepts that are foreign to one's own language and culture. it is the act of bridging the gap between the source and the target, between the sender and the receiver, between the past and the present. it is the act of giving life to the words and the ideas that have been created by others, to make them relevant and meaningful in a new context. it is the act of transcending the boundaries of language and culture, to connect with others and to understand their perspective.
In the face of Chamberlain's truly beautiful materials, Babbitts look small, junk seems narrow, Dada-pushers over-zealous. Talking about Chamberlain, Robert Creeley put it in an artist's way—the final way to speak about material misunderstandings:

You will not live long if you look always for what was there, assuming the world to be no more than the time track of your familiarities. A sudden crash, a disfigurement, the loss of anything not simply a pencil or some wish, and all becomes a present so huge it falls on you, crushing you more than that automobile you thought so neatly to remember. It was there, but now you are contained in a thing already changing, bringing you to its terms—and your house shrinks, far off, and things are bright and twisted.  

**Expressive motion.** Phenomena most involved in motion have dynamic form. The shape of a water fall is not the water's form (indeed, not a drop of water stays there from one moment to the next), but it is the form motion lends.  

Chamberlain's dynamic form lies in his making form out of the traces of motion. The paths of force shaped his metal; his metal retains these paths. The retention of force-paths is his organic, living expression. Susanne K. Langer recognizes that motion may be permanently captured:

When a river ceases to flow because the water is deflected or dried up, there remains the river bed, sometimes cut deeply in solid stone. That bed is shaped by the flow, and records as graven lines the currents that have ceased to exist. Its shape is static, but it expresses the dynamic form of the river....We have two congruent forms, like a cast and its mold, but this time the congruence is more remarkable because it holds between a dynamic form and a static one.
Chamberlain's sculptural elements were formed by pressure, wrenching and bending, rather than by erosion, but the importance of energy remains the same. His metal holds faithfully the posture force has put upon it. Though we cannot see energy, we can come close to seeing it when we watch what it does to matter.

Through any particular sort of material, force takes an equally particular path. Glass shatters. Clay oozes. Sheet metal crumples, bends, twists and wrinkles. It doubles on itself and encloses space. The voluminous nature of Chamberlain's sculpture is his signature. It results from the play of energy upon metal.

With metal bent around air, Chamberlain's work is "open" in another sense than that of a-tectonic baroque. It includes hidden empty spaces as surely as Henry Moore's holds visible ones. Chamberlain's metal skins and spaces proliferate beyond the demands of a simple object. He could enclose as much physical space with more economy of means in a box. But Chamberlain performs dynamic implosions and explosions in his freedom with materials. He does not use more metal than he needs; all of it is required to achieve his form. Although Donald Judd departs from his characteristic precision in saying Chamberlain's metal "seems superfluous because its involutions enclose so much space," he knows "voluminousness is a salient aspect of the work."

Chamberlain needs every labyrinthine inch to create expressive volumes. What is needed is not superfluous.
Motion and expression are identical in Chamberlain's work. He sets forth motion as motion. He does not tell of man moving, cubes moving or any thing moving. He shows simply energy having moved.

Whether or not Chamberlain intends to express anything to his viewers, he conveys action and motion because he cares about them. As cries of "car!" "junk!" and "Beat!" arise, we know that most of his viewers are not at a point of understanding him anyway. When they get their faculties clear, they will find that the basis of clear reception is, literally, within them. The living function of an organism is largely dynamic movement.

Color. Chamberlain adds color to baroque form. Chamberlain's colors have characteristic duties in his compositions and particular interrelationships, but his prolificacy in variation outstrips descriptions. No sooner have we listed his color system, than he has done even more from another direction. Chamberlain is no primitive colorist; a color process is here, even if it is complex.

The neutral colors of his early metal pieces show a surprising monochromatic tonality. Considering that Chamberlain was articulating planes and spaces as separate units, we might expect a similar independent juxtaposition of value. Finding a unity of value is surprising, but it proves what we said above (page 21), that color is the most prophetic of his properties—always a step ahead of his formal ones.

Compare a black and white photograph of Untitled, 1959, (plate 6a) with its color version (plate 6). Differences in value are so slight
that half the sculpture's meaning is gone in black and white. Only having the color plate allows us to search out the color areas in relation to the form.

In later work, Chamberlain would add slight tonal accentuation to that of color; he would hand chromatic dominance to several colors in the interests of pervading motion. To make the eye move along his paths of force, he arranged contrasts that wink in and out. To serve solitary accents, he discarded balance. Finally, color dominated his interest to the extent that its surface and personality tyrannized his forms. Still skillfully volumetric, the form seldom went wrenching off into space. It became small and heavy to support the free gloss of surface. Chamberlain took the color and left the form. He could have chosen to save either, but not both, for the flamboyant shine of color made his voluminous metal weak. The metal required a liberal and equal agreement with surface. Chamberlain replaced baroque form with geometric form—silhouetted, planar, tectonic and multiply united.

V. CONCLUSION

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

Lewis Carroll

36
Before knowing what Chamberlain could do with color, both in agreement and in alienation, we need to have counted off the oysters of his formal development. In the early 1960's his innovations stood, line having served its generating and supporting functions, the discovery of car metal having come and succeeded; baroque form, without contour, a-planar, open and organic, entered the height of its alliance with color. Chamberlain's personal idiom, his versatile material, dynamic form and chromatic variation "stood / and waited in a row."

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "To talk of many things:"
NOTES TO CHAPTER XIII.

NOTE


6. Ibid.


9. James Joyce, Stephen Hero (New York: New Directions, 1955). James Joyce, in Stephen Hero, refers to "a sudden spiritual manifestation" as an "epiphany." The quality made manifest may be the significance of an object or any other phenomenon. "Epiphanies" are also called "insights." Since epiphanies come to the artist because his art makes him aware, they may be separated from the deepened awareness claimed as the effect of some psychedelic chemicals.


14. In the catalogue of the American exhibition at the VI Sao Paulo Biennial, this work was titled Mr. Blue. Chamberlain's personal copy is corrected to read "Hatband—1960;" Mr. Blue is owned by George Segal and appeared in "From Machine-Age Rubbish, Startling New Creations," Life, 51-2: 60-72, (November, 1961). Chamberlain has marked on a copy of a photograph of Mr. Blue "destroyed by Geo. Segal."


16. A reproduction of this work in Aujourd'hui, 37:50, November, 1962, is identified as Baby Jane. Since all other publications list it as Coo Wha Zee, and since Elaine Chamberlain identified it as such, we shall call it Coo Wha Zee here.

17. The Brillo Box is by Andy Warhol.


23. Ibid., quoting the Museum of Modern Art's placard accompanying Chamberlain's Essex.


29. Ibid., p. 19.


31. Lewis Carroll, Loc. cit.
CHAPTER IV

THE PROGRESS OF COLOR

"Now if you're ready, Oysters dear, We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried, Turning a little blue. "After such kindness, that would be A dismal thing to do!"

Lewis Carroll

The accomplishment of Chamberlain's baroque idiom is built upon the equal contributions of form and color. Color eventually turned upon its partner, weakened it and brought its downfall. After a successful stroll up the aesthetic beach, a bright and shiny Walrus consumes the fat oysters of form.

I. INTRODUCTION

The simultaneity of the form-color handling and the resistance of the material give his work an exactitude of color and a quality of immediacy and energy. Yet Chamberlain seems closer to painting than sculpture, probably because his color sense is clearer than his structural faculty...

Sidney Geist

Geist is correct in saying that Chamberlain has the qualities of a painter. "Closer to painting than to sculpture" implies some sort of third-dimensional twilight zone.
Chamberlain did bring some of painting's virtues into the realm of sculpture. Only a rigid and imaginary classification would bar any connections between painting and sculpture, contending that addition is subtraction, that painting is always subversive to sculptural form.

Heinrich Wölfflin's description of Baroque sculpture as "painterly" does not refer to the application of color. He speaks chiefly of tonal light effects. Chamberlain's involvement in that "painterly" or in seeing "in masses" rests on color qualities and not on tonal values. In both the Baroque's and Chamberlain's dealings with light, however, the perception of purely visual differences aids in apprehending form as mass.

Chamberlain's volumetric, metal pieces never entirely lack contrast of values. But he seldom sets strong light and dark together as effectively as he places hue contrasts. He saw his sculpture colored from its beginnings and seldom worried about "keeping" in the eighteenth-century sense. When value does come across, it serves to accent a point in movement and is often just a result of strong contrast of hue.

Chamberlain arranges a single color or a chord of several related colors to dominate his compositions. The strength of these dominants draws the accessory hues into the movement of his forms. The whole is swept or pulled along a path of motion.

Within the sculpture's directional theme, Chamberlain guides the eye by carefully placing contrasts. Notes of contrast do not stop
the eye or let it linger—they channel vision toward color accents. Neither dominants nor contrasts are balanced. If they were, movement would be held as a core among them. Dominants are carefully set to point in the direction of formal movement.

Sidney Geist's finest point is that form and color are simultaneously handled in Chamberlain's work. When the color came with the metal, Chamberlain had no choice but to consider them together. He always saw the metal with its color integral. That he succeeded in employing material and color together is his triumph. After he had separated color from metal, he did have to choose his interest. He locked to the new surfaces and colors he could create himself. He put form up as a support. Geist's "simultaneity of the form-color handling" refers to Chamberlain's work in found color. The statement no longer obtains when "self-painted" color gets the upper hand. Form and color are no longer partners. So fascinating does the color-surface relationship become for Chamberlain that voluminous form turns into a sculptural Dodo bird, a holdover in Chamberlain's evolutionary hunt for new form.

II. TONAL VALUE AND COLOR VALUE

The almost monochromatic tonality of Chamberlain's early work was a prophetic quality (see pages 35 and 36). It foretold a unity which would become a property of form also. From his early linear works onwards, Chamberlain continually displays monochromatic tone
in his metal. If we forget the role of space in linear works, we might be tempted to say he thinks in one value. He was, however, deeply concerned with space in those works (plates 1 and 2), and the space differs in value from its dark, sculptural outline. The basis of any form in these pieces, as in drawing, is a contrast between light and dark. As a Richard Lippold takes its brightest form against a dark background, a linear Chamberlain surrounds light space in dark lines. In this sense, he did have a concept of tonal contrast to start with; he was not tone-blind.

Chamberlain was always involved with the color of his objects. Unlike George Sugarman or Sidney Geist, Chamberlain found his materials colored at the beginning of a work. Although Sugarman has said, "I see my things in color. I see color relationships right from the beginning," he is speaking about an act of preconception. Sugarman conceives and plans color for wooden forms that are not painted when he shapes them. Chamberlain's seeing in color was real. Color was already there. As long as Chamberlain found colors, he never needed to face the problem of painting them on.

A black and white photograph (plate 16a) of Wildroot, (plate 16) proves how little tone accomplishes in the articulation of Chamberlain's space. A small rectangular scoop on the right, white on the outside, lined in red, makes very little visual sense in black and white. Like a popular optical illusion test, we might ask, "does the scoop turn out or in? Is it a concave or a convex channel?" In color, the
element is plainly a hanging scoop with the white flap turning inward at the front. The red inside turns dark in color and shadow at the top. The space where this scoop attaches proves to be shallower than the ambiguous tones in black and white imply. A dark diagonal between two wide-spread feet attaches to its vertical red neighbor in tone, but in color the elements are separated by contrast of hue to underscore their physical separation. The general effect of a black and white photograph is to belie Chamberlain's spatial qualities, to weld elements together in a non-recessional, spaceless mass.

Another of black and white photography's lies about Chamberlain is the pall of gloom it throws over his compositions. Critics who like to envision him "standing in the dark midnight of existence" should delight in black and white reproductions. In these, Chamberlain's accomplished spaces lose all sense as they combine with dark metal areas. Every bright and lyrical element in *Essex, 1960*, (plate 10), falls prey to grey tonality (plate 10a). The intricate double curves of gold at the upper center are lost in a uniformity of value.

*Essex* serves equally well to show Chamberlain's limited use of tone to accentuate movement. The flow in *Essex* moves from a flowery green bunch below, up a set of red strips, one wide, one thin and streaking. A sharply bent gold wing and two, gold, crumpled curves carry into yellow, spreading bulges. Red and black members extend motion; a red skirt spreads motion below. In all this action, one
green sheet, one pale yellow plate and one white hook emerge from the surrounding gray confusion of the black and white photograph to add tonal emphasis to that of hue. Certainly, these are valuable additions to the composition, but tonal contrast never comes close to carrying movement by itself. Chamberlain reserved for tonal value the duty of unifying, quietly, his broad spectrum of hue. This all-over field of tone is of great importance when the sculpture is seen in color; it is the mark of Chamberlain's chromatic subtlety. But when black and white photography puts all the weight on value, color's union with form is destroyed.

Tonal monochrome has its day in Miss Lucy Pink, 1962, (plate 17). In a piece of a single hue, tonal value has no problems. Although taken from a different direction, a black and white photograph (plate 17a) carries the form as well, if not as pleasantly, as the color version.

Except when hue and value are both singular, a Chamberlain in black and white never means what it does in color. Chamberlain was using a unity of tone to control his complex collection of hues, and that collection must be seen.

When Chamberlain began his "self-painted", volumetric pieces, tone became slightly more faithful to hue variations. Slauson, 1963,7 (plate 18) contrasts bright yellow with blue and silver. The color scheme is simpler than those of found color; the form is more clear-cut. Although the opposition of yellow and silver (and the reflection
Greatly enjoyed our field trip to the state park with the natural beauty. The combination of the fresh air and the serene environment was truly exhilarating. We were able to appreciate the grandeur of nature and the importance of conservation.

The organizers of the trip did an excellent job in planning the activities. We hiked through a variety of ecosystems, observed wildlife, and learned about the local flora and fauna. The guided tours were particularly informative and engaging.

We also had the opportunity to participate in a small group discussion about the role of each individual in protecting our natural resources. It was enlightening to hear the diverse perspectives and to consider our own responsibilities in this regard.

Overall, it was a memorable and educational experience. I look forward to more such trips in the future.
of the yellow element in the silver one) is lost in a black and white photograph (plate 19a), the blue manages some tonal independence. By the time of Slauson, color was on its way to domination of volumetric form. Color no longer exists merely to serve the expressive motion of form; Chamberlain lavishes his attention upon color and surface.

At their height, Chamberlain's volumetric forms not only fulfilled the prophesy of his early tonal unity; they achieved their own compositional unity in part because Chamberlain matched tones while varying hues.

III. CHORDS AND DOMINANTS

John Chamberlain's palette in found color had a possible range beyond what one man would mix. Chamberlain's selective seeing is alone responsible for the accomplished manner in which industrially applied hues give themselves to the themes of his sculpture. Although no single element demands all the attention due the complete work, several were chosen to direct the main movement of each piece. They carry the main attention of vision, and draw the other elements behind them. To follow these dominants, other segments contribute similarities in tone, color and surface.

Chamberlain could (and did) arrange his compositions to follow dominants of almost any hue, but two favorite dominating colors appear often in his work—yellow trailing a blue-green chord, and red leading almost any hue combination. Within these schemes, so much variation
occurs that the chromatic arrangement of one piece never copies that of another. The red dominants lend themselves best to discussion because they occur repeatedly throughout Chamberlain's work and are most varied in position and surface.

*Wildroot,* (plate 16) is a three-color composition—red with brown-black and white. A bright, tough, shiny surface unifies the segments. A flowing red element supports intricate massing of brown-black and white, drawing the mass over with dark bands and tubes. Chamberlain placed a red bill overhanging the dark mass to unite the dark mass and red pillar at the top. The red bill is bounded by brown on its back edge to carry a vertical dark into the red area. Chamberlain hints at a continuation of red throughout the work. A small red surface hangs on the edge of the dark mass; it is similar to white areas in size and shape. Although the red vertical may lean against the two-legged mass of dark and white, it draws the compositional emphasis by its color and simplicity. It pulls the dark mass upright and points fingers of line at the ceiling.

*Johnny Bird,* 1959, (plate 19) uses one blue wing and one speckled shell to launch its red and red-coral interior into flight. Chamberlain combines a variety of surfaces here, each streaked with rust. Whether the intricate red interior pushes or is lifted by wings and lines above, it is the gathering center of an upward motion. The object seems on the verge of leaving its little base.
The interior of Essex (plate 10) is a windmill, with a chord of red and gold paddles doing the pushing. Blue, silver, green, black and brown streaks pile in to follow the dominants. A green cluster of sheets near the bottom is a stem and performs a minor swirling motion of its own. Essex swings clockwise and throws off splinters of color.

The bright, bitter red-bronze of Kandy Krunch, 1963, (plate 20) sharpens the surfaces of the blues. The big, hollow, red tongue, dented and pointed, literally gathers the blues together and curls them around itself. Not only is this red element the compositional dominant, it is the physical basis of Kandy Krunch's composition.

After Chamberlain had begun his "self-painted", voluminous constructions, red still appeared often at the center of movement. In Untitled, 1964, (plate 21) a vibrant red set of petals pulls gold leaves clustered behind. No longer concerned with found color, Chamberlain applied this red as a power to lead his composition.

Just as Chamberlain used reds to emphasize form's expressive movement in some constructions, he let yellow dominate in others. Rather than employing the other primary, blue, as a dominant, he occasionally used black as a drawing force, more often as an aid to red (as in Essex). Whatever the color dominant, Chamberlain chose it for its powerful relationships to other colors in the composition and set it in a place of formal command. Without a dominating color or color
chord, Chamberlain's venturesome use of color would fail the ex-
pressive movement of his compositions and plunge them into a primitive's
engaging confusion.

IV. CONTRASTS

Chamberlain placed contrasts of both color and space to serve
expressive movement. The color contrasts are subordinate to color
dominants. Contrasts do not balance the accents of color but lead
the eye to them.

In *White Thumb*, (plate 12), space shoots dark directional arrows
into form. Spaces point left, gathering wings of metal at both bottom
and top. Spaces follow the lead of a swirling metal mass at the far
left, dip under and join its pinwheel turning. These dark spaces are
not dominants; they do not offer a focus for motion; but they channel
vision toward one.

*Essex* (plate 10) is full of color contrasts. At the lower right,
a small, crumpled green plate emphasizes the forward scoop of a red
dominant. At lower left, a black environment gives sure footing to a
vertical red streak. If the black were not there, the visual movement
carried by red might have vague beginnings. In *Essex*, black plays
supporting and dominant roles, although a red-gold chord is the prota-
gonist. At the upper right, a black sheet is on top, pointing up and
spreading down into a black circle, turning that section of *Essex's*
windmill toward a red.

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When Chamberlain cast the red-orange-yellow end of the spectrum as leading dominants, green and blue were contrasts. Seldom does a dark take a minor lead (as it does in Essex). Spaces, like darks, are usually contrasts.

We must not confuse dominance with subject. Chamberlain's sculptures are not "about" red pillars, red birds, red windmills, red tongues or red flowers. His sculpture uses dominants and contrasts to aid the expressive motion of form. Talking about dominant colors as if they were independent of metal form is like mailing an address without a letter.

V. THE PAINT JOB

As Chamberlain massed, recessed, opened and unified his form, color dominants, contrasts and tonal unity aided him. At some times color may have determined changes toward baroque form. Color was a prophet of formal unity. Color and metal physically joined cannot be manipulated as separate entities. Whenever Chamberlain succeeded in voluminous form (and that was often), he achieved a concurrent expressive movement in color.

John Chamberlain did not suddenly care about color and color's surface in late 1962 or early 1963. If he had not been concerned with color in all his constructions, he would have failed in his attempts at baroque form. As long as he worked in metal physically united to its skin of color, Chamberlain gave metal and color equally inventive
attention. In 1963 Chamberlain lent his full imagination to color surfaces. He lavished technical concern on his metal, developing its capabilities to support his new color interests, but metal's role, however accomplished, was a subsidiary one.

Because John Chamberlain was always involved in considerations of color, he did not arrive at a color epiphany in 1963 as he had come upon a car-metal one in 1959. Certainly no single event prodded him to buy metal painting equipment. The annual International Automobile Show in New York offered the delights of new paint—its surface unweathered, its color unsoiled by signs of age. George Segal says, "The new color has to do with John's love of California, I think, and the act of customizing cars, as, in itself, an expressive act." As subscribers to Hot Rod and Rod and Custom know, California car-body painters excel at a metal painting craft that passes the limits of what is done for Detroit's market. Chamberlain went to California in September, 1962, for his show at Dilexi Gallery. A glittering heraldry of the road rolled the streets of Los Angeles.

The California customized car body possesses as many as three separate expressive devices—an applied linear motif, a collection of symbolic and lettered decals giving information and wildly rich color. Quite correctly, George Segal mentions only the third in relation to Chamberlain's work. If Chamberlain had cared about the other aspects of California's "carishness," he would have adapted the speed whisker and a variety of informative stabs—as "Iskendarian Racing Cams" in
red, white and blue, "Edelbrock Ram Log Manifolds" with a cigar chomping, snorting ram. But Chamberlain had already outdone the speed whisker's intent. These spreading stripes, scallops and flames mean rushing motion. Chamberlain had already made color and form unite in movement.

And Chamberlain has never leaned toward literary-symbolic references. When Segal quotes Chamberlain's calling his experiments in automobile enamel "Puerto Rican customized hot-rod," he means the expressive color surface of a customized car body. What custom car painters really want to express is unknown. They create dark maroon-bronzes of foreboding, teeny-bopper decadent oranges, dawn-neon cold reds, and yellow like anemic lemons. Their expressions are unimportant to a discussion of Chamberlain; their expressive surfaces, their depth and richness of paint, must have influenced him. He used the technical abilities of the customizer to serve his interests in color and surface.

Chamberlain's gradual turn toward "self-painting" was a gradual shift away from involvement in baroque form. He would stoutly deny that his voluminous creations lost anything to his concern with applying paint. They did. Color no longer joined form as a partner. The wrenching paths of motion through metal stilled. He smoothed and relaxed his forms. Color took all his attention, and he made form serve it. The total unity of form with color was destroyed by divorce.

Vivien Raynor, a critic who never comprehended the simultaneity of found color and baroque form, advocated Chamberlain's painting
his constructions in order to make serious sculpture of them. She was wrong at precisely the right time:

Actually, Chamberlain's sculptural sense is good enough for him to make a career of sculpture instead of ranging around the fringes of Dada. He would, for example, only have to give his metamorphosed cars a paint job to destroy the accidental and commit himself as a maker of objects—he is, after all, halfway there. (December, 1962)

What she disparages as "accidental" is complex unity. What she champions will bring unity to destruction. She foretells Chamberlain's actions, but not their pursuant problems.

1963 and 1964 are years to confound a student of Chamberlain. His forms, no longer flamboyant, are praiseworthy and strong, but his color is stronger. Chamberlain did a series of geometric color studies in New Mexico in the summer of 1963 and in 1964 applied his rich and accomplished color surfaces to voluminous forms. As 1964's modified baroque fell to the demands of surface, geometric compositions offered solutions. The geometric construction emerged the significant form of 1965.

In Chamberlain's spray-paint studies, a carefully-placed phalanx of small squares emerges from a contrastingly colored background. Squares and background result from numerous layers of sprayed lacquer. Color has a tough, hard transparency, great depth, and a gloss of suspended pigments. Chamberlain used these small panels to develop technical handling of a color vocabulary he already knew. None of the color studies is a polished, finished Chamberlain, but each one
shows his subtlety in color relationships. Having prodigious chromatic talents already, Chamberlain had only the easy part of painting to learn.

By the time Chamberlain put his new color on voluminous form, color was free of metal elements. Thick, deep layers of paint bring a sensuous brilliance. The color is a shiny hide rather than a delicate skin. It declares its presence so solidly that its grips form in smooth restraints.

**Enslaved form.**

...light can and usually does distort the actual form of an object. Its general effect is to fall with obliterating force on those prominent points that it meets and from which it is reflected,...

*Herbert Read*

When Chamberlain put a uniform and glossy surface on his forms, light did "fall with obliterating force." As long as the play of light upon his forms was dispersed and varied by found color's surfaces, reflections reinforced the turn of every corner, stepped around on facets. When self-painted surfaces smoothed like oil, light burned out every curve.

The rough and dull surfaces of *Johnny Bird* (plate 19) allow just enough dispersed reflection to express the metal's physical properties. A dull streak of light on the black-speckled pod shows the metal's minutely granular surface. A similar streak on the lowest red element crosses the boundary between paint and raw metal, effectively telling
the surface difference between the two. A bright patch on the pink sheet lights one turn of the form. It emphasizes the form's volumetric properties.

**Essex** (plate 10) has surfaces smooth enough to shine. But light reflections adhere to formal manipulations. Flat triangles of crumpled metal in the red strip at the far right take a tactile reality from the effects of reflected light. The central yellow element warps in and out with shadow delineating its sides and soft reflection tracing its center.

In all Chamberlain's constructions in scrap metal, surface light clings to baroque form and sustains it. Chamberlain's appetite for new color forced changes in form. New color's shiny surface would not gird the strength of form.

In 1964, Chamberlain's metal pieces were small, still crumpled, but heavily so because of the ratio of metal's thickness to sheet size. The ends of sheets no longer fly into tatters. The metal no longer puffs around air. It is more a shield than a blown-egg. Donald Judd notes the change:

In the smaller pieces, the materiality and the voluminosness of the metal show less and the parts and their arrangement show more. Also, instead of using color as it comes, Chamberlain has sprayed purple, red, blue and other automobile colors on the pieces. This cleans them up—they obviously aren't scrap metal—and further defines their parts. Also, so far, this color is fairly pretty. Chamberlain can probably do a lot with the sprayed paint, but to do this he may have to change some other aspects of his work.
Judd names one of form's losses—unity. Chamberlain still employs important color dominants, but not all his elements follow them. Balance, static design, begins to take the place of unifying movement. He works out agreement among independent colors. With unity goes open form; some quiet tectonic relations return.

Mr. Moto, 1964, (plate 22) is a lovely little piece (24" x 29"), but "lovely" is less than the flying freedom of Sweet William, the lashing movement of Coo Wha Zee, the voracious expansion of Dolores James or the majesty of Velvet White. Mr. Moto's color lathers its form in reflected light. The red shield turns into a streaky coral cloud. Orchid elements flow onto the base. Where a white light bounces off the gold boss, the formal logic of its curve is lost. Chamberlain had to simplify his forms to bear the disintegrating gloss of surface. Mr. Moto's figure (plate 22a) is tight and squat. Metal is well-pressed and stable to carry the sinuous glide of surface as concrete is reinforced to fit the demands of weight.

Confused space.

...Often the effect of light falling on the modelled planes is fragmenting. In other words, that tension between the two spaces to which Pocillon has drawn attention—the space occupied by the object, espace-limite; and the space surrounding the object, espace-milieu—disappears if the surface is full of peaks of light and pits of shade....

Herbert Read

Chamberlain's finest baroque forms commanded their own space and surrounding space emphatically. Sweet William (plate 9) stretches,
tight and flying. The space about it shares the stress of this movement. *Sweet William*'s reflections are granular; they put no blinding dubiousness between form and space.

The heaviness of Chamberlain's small, self-painted objects may not all be due to the ratio between sheet thickness and sheet size. When spots of glare decimate the tension between occupied and surrounding spaces, the forms grow lax. The surface no longer stretches, but lies flaccid.

Like Mr. Mote, Slauson (plate 18) is lovely and accomplished. Its weighty composition is well-integrated. The bright, deep mirrors of Slauson's surface create an interruptive white zone between physical form and spatial environment. We cannot quite discern the point at which surface stops and surrounding space begins. The voluminous complexity of Slauson's form wants a precise shore with space—a clear place for the meeting of two sculptural entities. A simpler form, a geometric form, would have boundaries on space that glossy surface could not hide.

VI. CONCLUSION

From a skilled creation of baroque images in metal and found color, Chamberlain elaborated color and color's surface until it gave him formal problems. The glare of color's surface brought an end to the moving power of Chamberlain's metal compositions. Chamberlain's expressive placement of dominant and contrasting colors is lost to
new needs for balance. Reflection destroys the simultaneity of Chamberlain’s form and color handling. Brilliance ended metal’s tense and powerful relations with space.

In a new form, one that was contained, planar and tectonic, he found a sturdy support for his shiny surface. The new form was geometrical.

After form’s oysters had come so far, they were consumed by a voracious Walrus of surface.

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,
"To play them such a trick,
After we’ve brought them so far
And made them trot so quick!"

Lewis Carroll
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV.

NOTE


4. "Keeping" is the process by which tonal values are adjusted to hue values in constructing a composition. If successful, a composition may be read as well with eyes half-closed (shutting out many color effects) as under ordinary circumstances. Although keeping is an archaic critical term, not applied to contemporary works, it shows the importance of tonal values to styles following the Baroque.

5. Bruce Glaser, and others, "Where Do We Go From Here?" *Contemporary Sculpture: Arts Yearbook 8, Art Digest*, 1965, p. 152.

   This article records a panel discussion including Bruce Glaser, Lyman Kipp, George Sugarmann and David Weinrib broadcast over Station WBAI, New York.


7. Although several sources list Slauson as dating from 1964, it appeared in the Pasadena Art Museum's New American Sculpture show, February 11 - March 7, 1964. It does not seem likely that it was produced between January 1 and February 11. The Pasadena Art Museum dates it as 1963 in their catalogue, and so shall we.

8. The International Automobile Show is held in New York every spring. In 1960, 311 models from 36 manufacturers were shown. By 1962, the range had grown to 475 models from 10 countries. Although Chamberlain was not interested in these cars as future cadavers for his work, the variation in relations of color to metal may have led him to try surface innovations of his own.

10. Ibid.


15. Lewis Carroll, On cit., p. 74.
CHAPTER V

GEOMETRIC FORM

"O oysters," said the Carpenter,
"You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?"
But answer came there none—
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one.

Lewis Carroll

1965, or late 1964, was the death year of Chamberlain's voluminous metal form. His great, slithery Walrus of surface had done it in. Chamberlain adapted the form of his first color experiments to serve color's surface on a larger scale. But he still paid more homage to color than to the square.

Chamberlain displayed color on two sorts of geometric form. One is an elaborated, rectangular panel; the other a "pre-fabricated" geometrical shape in three dimensions. Both kinds are contained, planar, tectonic and multiply balanced. His geometric constructions were popular neither with the critics nor, sometimes, with the sculptor himself. The geometric style was short-lived. When Chamberlain discarded it, he threw away color's glossy surface.

I. GLASSY PANELS

In February, 1965, Natalie Edgar announced Chamberlain's new style without paying it any compliments:

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...neat Hard-Edge areas have supplanted torn planes, counter-top off-colors have obliterated the creamy ones of before; a stale vacuum remains where the dramatic impact of Abstract Expressionism once reverberated....In both his recent styles, Chamberlain's constructions follow painting, but in one he is a sculptor and in one he is not and in the somersault from one style to the other there is a possibility that he has landed in someone else's backyard.

It must be the backyards of Larry Bell and Donald Judd (among others) to which she refers. The Hard-Edge and "minimal" back lot is filling to garden-party proportions. Certainly John Chamberlain cannot be the only sculptor who took the wrong back-flip. Natalie Edgar gives no hint, however, that Chamberlain took to a geometric style for reasons other than faddishness. He knew that geometric severity of form was a coming thing, subject to investigation by many sculptors and painters. He could have performed a fashionable somersault much earlier than 1965. Chamberlain did no about-faces until his surface led him to investigate more stable form. A problem within his own work provided a solid reason for his shift to geometry. That his contemporaries preceded him in this style is the weaker explanation for his change.

The flat panels of the new form support slick surface and variegated hues solidly and reliably. They carry color as a painting does, in spite of chromium elements that break the front surface. Unlike paintings, these pieces use only one method of creating illusionary space—the contrast of advancing and receding colors. This contrast results as much from tonal differences as from relationships of hue. The
shape of these objects is so ordinary, so unchallenging, that surface is all we see. In objective flatness, these panels exist only as strong physical supports for a color binge.

Marvelette, 1964-65, (plate 23) suffices to represent the formal qualities of this genre. Technically, it is clean and well-done. Not one fault in welding or in paint application appears. Two chromium guard-rails emphasize the non-collision of two light lines. When these lines run off the panel's surface, the chromium rails do not follow. In all his pieces like this one, Chamberlain cuts the rails off an inch or so from the edge. He says that he tried it with chrome running off the sides, "but it looked worse." The two L-shaped paths of form and color were to create a tension in the center of the work, a push and pull in the channel that runs between them. Balance is created rather than tension.

No single work on a panel illustrates their color. The surfaces are uniformly shiny as a result of numerous layers of paint. The L-shaped lines contrast with background in tone (either light on dark or dark on light). The lines are related to background in hue (e.g. warm light lines on a warm, dark background). Color photography presents these color combinations as floors of a television dream-kitchen. It fails their only important qualities by making them appear rubbery and mellow. Chamberlain's panel surfaces are best viewed with binocular vision at the distance of about four inches. Because the color is a deep flotation of pigmented flakes, its properties at a distance are those of
shallow and uniform flatness. Seen close, Chamberlain's innumerable, semi-transparent layers separate for the eye. An orange-flaked layer swims closer than a lavender-flaked one.

All the visual value of the panels lies in their deep surfaces. Elaborate surface ensuing from meticulous paint handling is their real, and only, reason for being.

II. PRE-FABRICATED GEOMETRY

When Chamberlain moved to New Mexico in 1965, he tried "pre-fabricated" forms. When Chamberlain's contemporaries incorporated industrially-produced components into their works, they joined the technical accomplishments of a mechanically productive society to the tradition of art. Since Chamberlain was most concerned with color and its surface, he delegated the manual labor of creating a support to a craftsman.

We must not mistake Chamberlain for a commentator on industry. In his limited experimentation with pre-fabricated forms, he was so hampered by his craftsman's ineptitude that his pieces never satisfied him. He did not achieve an idiom complete enough to make a statement. If Chamberlain comments, it is verbally and directed against the fabricator of his designs.

Chamberlain's own color and surface are the important parts of the pre-fabricated constructions. He limited color to primary hues, forcing it to austerity. After the shiny panels, Chamberlain required some sort
of retreat from excess. Chamberlain's surfaces shine, but the gloss does not destroy his stable and controlled forms.

If we do not applaud Chamberlain's pre-fabricated works, we can appreciate the nature of his problem. The pre-fabricated experiment did not answer his needs completely, but it showed his tenacity in seeking a solution. An elaborated cube, Untitled, 1965, (plates 24 and 24a) is planar, tectonic and carefully balanced. Geometric line and plane define its boundaries severely. This blue box is a compact unit. Its silhouette traces faithfully the meaning of its formal relationships. Nothing is going on that a line cannot translate. This is not surprising, even for Chamberlain, considering this form's double origin. It evolved from flat panels. Its design had to be transmitted from the artist to his craftsman in linear plans.

All the components of this construction are simple planes. The dished white roof holds no penetrating space. Its curved palm pushes space away rather than drawing it in. Space is pressed between the stiff, triangular skirt and the cube's wall, but space does not enter the main form. Rather than presenting recessional penetration, this blue cube is a mass of flat planes.

Chamberlain defines each element equally in this structure. A panel at the front is framed and painted red. Each section—the blue box, the yellow roof plate, the white wing—joins the composition as one of a series. The elements are unified by structural similarity but not by subjugation to a theme. Chamberlain serializes these
components in a manner subject to addition and subtraction. A strip or panel could be added or taken away, and balance would suffer, but the definition of individual parts would not. If Chamberlain removed the triangular skirt, the red panel would weigh his composition toward the left, but the red panel would not lose its clear-constructed meaning. Here, the red is not a dominant color or a moving form. The red panel is an independently articulated element.

Chamberlain put only red, blue, yellow and white on this piece. The intricate color mixtures of the glassy panels are gone. All the flake in this blue surface is blue and blue metallic. The yellow, red and white are equally plain. This severity refreshes the eye after the over-richness of the glassy panels' color. Chamberlain had manipulated found color with taste; the panels showed gluttony and the pre-fabricated works go on a color diet.

Chamberlain found, in the pre-fabricated structure, a form which bears admirably the shiny gloss of his self-painted surface. It is the first meaningful form Chamberlain found strong enough and meek enough.

The blue cube's surface cannot cut or burn this form's objective simplicity. The tilted frame of the red panel protrudes without acquiring disturbing glare. In several places, the gloss of surface combines with color and form intriguingly. The angled frame of the red panel casts a shadow below; the shadow's shape repeats the form of the triangular skirt. The lower surface of the white wing picks
up light from the yellow mirror-surface of the roof. The wing's under
side, with its changing reflections, is the most laudable part of the
work.

Another pre-fabricated construction, Untitled, 1965, (plates 25
and 25a) experiments in curvilinear geometry. It has the same surface
qualities as the blue cubical form, is linear, planar, closed and
balanced. But it is also an exercise in frustration. Chamberlain
abandoned pre-fabricated structures for reasons this piece makes evi-
dent. Two yellow drums bear a graceful double swoop of yellow, but
in plate 25 a yellow side panel warps out awkwardly to join a vertical
support. There is no formal reason for its doing that. It does not
agree with the sharp junctions in the remainder of the composition.
Chamberlain's hired craftsmen continually misunderstood the sculptor's
designs, frequently committed errors in cutting and joining. He forced
Chamberlain to expedient compromises in structure. The sloppy side of
the lower drum is one of them.

In another failure, the color on the side of the upper drum (in
plate 25a), a weak pink, departs from Chamberlain's chromatic eusterity
program. It looks unfinished. Although a red-yellow-pink chromatic
chord offers charming possibilities, it does not support the formal
characteristics of this work. The weak pink spreads over a perfectly
smooth plane and dilutes the strength of its shape.

Certainly Chamberlain knew he could produce sculpture superior to
this piece. With chromium flange, simple coloring, unfinished and
ambiguous lower edges, it recalls some science-fiction washer-dryer combination.

We may speculate that pre-fabrication in Santa Fe poses more problems than pre-fabrication in New York or Los Angeles. Chamberlain had fewer craftsmen to choose from, and the one he chose was not New Mexico's finest. Larger collections of skill in metropolitan areas would have allowed Chamberlain to push his experiment in pre-fabrication further. But when he took to another industrial technique, fiberglass, and applied it personally, he was no more satisfied than he had been with pre-fabrication. He left fiberglass (plate 26) after the summer of 1966. A lack of industrial expertise, either his or his craftsman's, was not the only problem driving Chamberlain from contained, planar, closed form. George Segal emphasizes Chamberlain's personal taste in form as the dissatisfaction:

So after all these signs that John was getting interested in severe hard-edge abstraction, he took off to New Mexico and Los Angeles and was supposed to have a show at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles, and I saw photographs of the show and I saw one of the pieces. He had taken gigantic chunks of foam rubber—very soft, tan colored foam rubber, and he had bent and folded and somehow fastened together until they looked like extravagently soft versions of his metal abstract expressionist sculpture. So there must be something in John's nature that leads him to this emotional clashing of tension in his work. Certainly he's not a serene fellow.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V.

NOTE


CHAPTER VI

CHAMBERLAIN AND CHANGE

But not these things are the factors. Not the birds. The legends are legends. Dead, hung up indoors, the kingfisher will not indicate a favoring wind, or avert the thunderbolt. Nor, by its nesting, still the waters, with the new year, for seven days. 1

Charles Olson

John Chamberlain moved from one style to another. The problem of sculpture's form is his constant companion. He brought his form from linear beginnings to expressively voluminous baroque contortions to enslaved and shining servants of color to stable and sturdy porters of surface. That is seven years full of change. For all seven, Chamberlain's passion for color remained. It grew from a promising talent to a magnificent organizational force to a smothering compulsion to a limited and dying attribute. The varied and honest surfaces of found metal brought color to the heights of alliance with form. The uniform and burning surfaces of self-painting brought color an independence destructive to voluminous form. Color and surface died of greed. The paths of form and color are the sculpture's factors. The art-product is our connection with the man, not to be mistaken for the man himself. Chamberlain is not Calliope and Gage and Essex and Coo Whe Zee and Mr. Moto and Marvellettes and foam rubber. Those are legends behind him,
"hung up indoors." Chamberlain is an artist changing. We cannot depend on a stuffed, finished thing to tell where the kingfisher will go. But if we do ask, grasping our grain of salt, Chamberlain's past says that when he accomplishes his best, form will ignore boundaries; it will grab and enclose space; it will lap out free and wild; it will serve tension and motion. If color comes, he will admit it only hand in hand with form. But dead and past things can lie.

Now Chamberlain says:

My involvement with a wedging/compression/surfacing technique (sic) applied to various materials in that—uncommon—particular way to expose under articulation its/content yield.

In less involved language it means, "I bring out what the material has got by what I do to it." That is the testimony of a man on the move, doing what he wants with what he chooses, when he decides. He does not say, "I care about metal," "I am dedicated to color," "...to beauty," "...to foam rubber," "...to social comment." Chamberlain changes; and change is his consistency.

Chamberlain also says, "Marshall McLuhan cleared up a lot of things for me." Although McLuhan offers enough mental food for years of clear and obscure argument, he supports Chamberlain's constant predilection for change:

Art as a radar environment takes on the function of indispensable perceptual training rather than the role of a privileged diet for the elite. While the arts as radar feedback provide a dynamic and changing corporate image, their purpose may be not to enable us to change but rather to maintain an even course toward permanent goals, even amidst the most disrupting innovations.
The page is not legible and contains text that is difficult to read. It appears to be a page from a document, possibly containing paragraphs of text, but the content is not clear due to the quality of the image.
If we envision Chamberlain reading McLuhan and suddenly deciding
to become a prophet, we interpret finding justification as finding a
new cause. Change is Chamberlain's old and established characteristic.
He moves naturally; McLuhan merely offered the changing artist recognition
for his perceptive movement.

McLuhan implies that dynamic change in art always plumbs the
mysteries of the future. Temporally, that is so. But in art, "change"
does not always mean "new" or "different". Change means moving from
one thing to another. To be understood, it needs looking at now and
looking at later. To see Chamberlain is to catch his stride, to under-
stand that what he does is change.

Not one death but many,
Not accumulation but change, the feed-back proves, the feed-back is
the law

Into the same river no man steps twice
When fire dies air dies
No one remains, nor is, one

Around an appearance, one common model, we grow up
many. Else how is it,
if we remain the same,
we take pleasure now
in what we did not take pleasure before? love
contrary objects? admire and/or find fault? use
other words, feel other passions, have
nor figure, appearance, disposition, tissue
the same?

To be in different states without a change
is not a possibility

We can be precise. The factors are
in the animal and/or the machine the factors are
communication and/or control, both involve
the message. And what is the message? The message is
a discrete or continuous sequence of events distributed in time. 5

Charles Olson

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NOTES TO CHAPTER VI.


2. Chamberlain wrote this statement for the author, precisely in this form, in felt pen on a large sheet of paper on December 21, 1966. He plans to issue it as his comment on his work, and he thinks it quite sufficient to explain everything.


Plate 2. John Chamberlain. 

Plate 5. John Chamberlain.

Captain O'Hay. (1961). Welded automobile metal, 15

Coo Wha Zee. (1962). Welded automobile metal.17

(1962), welded automobile metal.
Plate 15. John Chamberlain. 
*Velvet White.* (1962). Welded automobile metal.19
Plate 16a. John Chamberlain. 
Wildroot. (1959). Welded automobile metal.21

Plate 18. John Chamberlain


Plate 23. John Chamberlain.
*Marveletta.* (1964-1965). 31


20. from the photographic collection of the Fine Arts Library, University of New Mexico.
22. photograph by John Chamberlain.
24. photograph by John Chamberlain.
26. from the photographic collection of the Fine Arts Library, University of New Mexico.
27. from the photographic collection of the Fine Arts Library, University of New Mexico.
28. photograph by John Chamberlain.
29. photograph by John Chamberlain.
32. photograph by John Chamberlain.
33. photograph by John Chamberlain.
34. photograph by John Chamberlain.
35. photograph by John Chamberlain.
36. photograph by John Chamberlain.
APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY

YEAR

1927  John Angus Chamberlain born April 16, Rochester, Indiana
1932  moves to Chicago
1942  leaves high school at the age of fifteen
1943  joins United States Navy in San Diego, California; serves in the Pacific
1946  completes service in the Navy; returns to Chicago; trains as hairdresser
1952  takes courses in sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago; meets Joe Coto
1953  buys his own welding equipment; visits David Smith at the University of Illinois, Urbana; enrolls at the University of Illinois for one semester.
1954  attends Black Mountain College; meets Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan
1956  moves to New York City
1957  rents a studio on Franklin Street, New York City; one-man show, Wells Street Gallery, Chicago
1958  lives in Larry Rivers' studio on Long Island; discovers the possibilities of automobile metal for making sculpture; Martha Jackson becomes his dealer one-man show, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York City; group show, Hansa Gallery, New York City
1959  as sales increase, devotes full-time to the making of sculpture; moves to New City, upstate New York; throughout the years in which he employed found metal, Chamberlain bent it or had it bent with a variety of crushing devices, hand operated, or small, mechanical crushers; Recent Sculpture U.S.A., Museum of Modern Art, New York: New Sculpture, Stable Gallery, New York
1960
one-man show, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York;
New Media—New Forms I, New Media—New Forms II, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York;
New Sculpture, Stable Gallery, New York;
Le Nouveau Realisme, Galerie Rive Droite, Paris

1961
Leo Castelli Gallery becomes Chamberlain's dealer;
Vi Sao Paulo Biennial, Sao Paulo Museum of Modern Art, Sao Paulo, Brazil;
The Art of Assemblage, The Museum of Modern Art, New York,
Museum for Contemporary Arts, Dallas, Texas and San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, California;
Wave and Means, Houston Contemporary Arts Association,
Houston, Texas;
The Pittsburgh International Exhibition, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania;
65th Annual American Exhibition, Art Institute of Chicago,
Chicago, Illinois;
Six Sculptors, Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, California;
New Sculpture, Stable Gallery, New York

1962
moves his New York studio to Cherry Street; visits California in September;
one-man show, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York;
one-man show, Dilexi Gallery, Los Angeles, California;
one-man show, Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, California;
two-man show (with Frank Stella), Leo Castelli Gallery, New York;
International Sculpture Exhibition, Torquato di Tella Foundation,
Buenos Aires, Argentina;
Directions in Modern Sculpture, Providence Arts Club, Providence, Rhode Island;
Art Since 1950, Seattle World's Fair, Seattle, Washington and Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts;
3 Young Artists, Allen Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio;
My Country 'Tis of Thee, Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, California;
The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Sculpture Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York;
Whitney Annual Exhibition—Sculpture and Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
1963
Chamberlain spends the summer at Embudo, New Mexico; does spray-paint studies;
one-man show, Pace Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts;
two-man show (with Richard Stankiewicz), Robert Fraser Gallery, London;
Six Sculptors, Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts;
Battersea Park Sculpture Exhibition, Battersea Park, London;
Le Salon International de Galeries Pilotes, Musee Cantonal des Beaux Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland;
Mixed Media and Pop Art, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

1964
attends the XXXII Venice Biennial;
one-man show, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York;
one-man show, Pace Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts;
one-man show, Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, Paris;
XXXII Venice Biennial, Venice;
New American Sculpture, Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California;
Circarama Building, New York State Pavilion, New York World’s Fair, New York;
The Atmosphere of ’64, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania;
XXIX International Artists’, David Mervish Gallery, Toronto, Canada;
Painting and Sculpture of a Decade, Gulbenkian Foundation, Tate Gallery, London;
The Eight Americans in the Venice Biennale, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston, Massachusetts;
Recent American Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York;

1965
moves to Santa Fe, New Mexico; begins pre-fabricated work;
one-man show, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York;
Painting and Sculpture Today, Herron Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana;
CHRONOLOGY (continued)

YEAR

1965  *Painting Without a Brush*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston, Massachusetts;
*American Sculpture 1900-1965*, Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, Michigan;
*Seven Sculptors*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania;

1966  Teaches a graduate seminar in sculpture at the University of New Mexico; experiments in fiberglass and foam rubber;
is awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship;
*Whitney Annual Exhibition—Sculpture and Prints*;

1967  Continues working in foam rubber;
*Retrospective Exhibition*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio;
*American Sculpture of the Sixties*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California.
I have reviewed the provided documents and they appear to be related to various topics, including but not limited to:

- **1952**
  - "Conflict Resolution Techniques" (possibly a title or subject)

- **1962**
  - "Development of Potential Crops" (possibly a title or subject)

- **1964**
  - "Formation of Potential Minerals" (possibly a title or subject)

- **1966**
  - "Construction of Potential Waterways" (possibly a title or subject)

Please note that the text is not fully legible due to the image quality, and there are no clear headings or substantial paragraphs visible in the image.
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A. PUBLISHED REPRODUCTIONS


"Bags Down," *Contemporary Sculpture: Arts Yearbook 8, Art Digest*, 1965, cover and p. 83.


B. GENERAL WORKS

1. Books


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Glaser, Bruce, and others. "Where Do We Go From Here?" Contemporary Sculpture: Arts Yearbook 8, Art Digest, 1965, p. 150.


D. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES


*Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1964, calendar of events.


*New York Times*, January 28, 1962, section II, p. 21

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E. SELECTED CATALOGUES
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Commissioner of the United States Exhibit: Rene d'Harnincourt, Director, Museum of Modern Art.

Foreward by A. James Speyer.

Introduction by Sam Hunter.

May to September.
Introduction by Sir Herbert Read.

Introduction by Barbara Rose.


F. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Segal, George. "Answers to Questions About John Chamberlain" (tape recording made for the author by George Segal and Helmut Von Erffa, February, 1967). (Tape and transcription.)