Transcript of Revised Edit: 5/9/89

Footage of Atomic Explosions.

Michael Wood stands in the Nevada desert.

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
The events of World War II cast a shadow over the rest of the century, and perhaps over the rest of history, and inevitably they changed the course of Western art. In Europe, the unbelievable scale of the Nazi genocide against the Jews left Europeans with the task not only of restoring their broken cities, but of repairing their shattered culture. And in America the explosion of the first Atom bomb out here in the deserts of the Southwest meant that for the first time, the fears of Medieval man might come true, that the entire world might be destroyed in a single terrifying apocalypse. It was against this background that the post-War artists created their art.
MICHAEW WOOD
While Europeans couldn't forget their past, in America artists turned their backs on what they thought of as the public and political dimension of art. The Abstract Expressionists, centered in New York, escaped to an interior world where the subjective landscape and the struggle with brushwork and pigment became the goal of painting.

MICHAEL WOOD
For the first time, Europe looked to New York.

CLEMENT GREENBERG
Abstract Expressionism, abstract art, is part of Western tradition. It evolves out of it, it is part of it, it remains part of it. It's not Oriental, it's not a new tradition.
MICHAEL WOOD
Clement Greenberg, critic and promoter of the New York School, became their spokesman—and a friend of the leading Abstract Expressionist, Jackson Pollock.

CLEMENT GREENBERG
(VO) I first met Jackson Pollock in '42; came down the sidewalk and there was Lee Krasner whom I'd known of old, and she was with a very respectable-looking gentleman. (OC) And I saw this rather nice-looking guy. Lee said to me, "This fellow going to be a great painter." Well... OK.

Still of Pollock and Lee Krasner.

Pollock Mural, 1943

GREENBERG (VO)
What finally hit me in Pollock's art was the portable mural he did for the apartment house in which Peggy Guggenheim lived.

CLEMENT GREENBERG
(OC) That hit me... It was the first time I saw him go "all over." Repeat, repeat, this way. I thought that was a great painting, and I began to follow Pollock assiduously, you could say, after that.
Footage of Pollock painting

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Raised in the American Southwest, Jackson Pollock was influenced by Indian sand painting and, in a sense, his works internalized the desert landscape. In New York he studied the works of modern European masters, especially Miro and Picasso.

CLEMENT GREENBERG (VO)
I think he had his best run in '47, '48, '49, '50. The "all over." What I called the "all over," when he spattered, or dripped, or whatever. About his art, Pollock knew what he was about. He trusted his spontaneity in, let's say, what they call automatic painting. But he was in control. He'd stop from time to time to see what he'd done. And then when the picture was finished, he'd go back and edit now and then.

Jackson Pollock's painting, Number 27.

GREENBERG (VO)
When it comes to abstract art there's no subject matter, but there is content, and the two have to be distinguished—subject matter and content.

On Pollock's Number 27.

MICHAEL WOOD:
In other words, the presence or absence of a recognizable image has nothing to do with value in art. It doesn't have to be about anything.
Pollock's Lavendar Mist (#1)

CLEMENT GREENBERG: (VO)
I gave it the title, Lavendar Mist. Well, I saw it, and I flipped for it and then I knew... well, its predominant color is lavendar. That kind of violet, and it was sort of a little misty, and so I suggested that to Jackson, and he said—"Sure."

GREENBERG (VO)
He wasn't this wild, heedless genius—no, he wasn't that. He looked, he looked hard, and he was very sophisticated about painting.

GERMANO CELANT
The gesture of Pollock created an arena for a personal drama. It is not a document of an historical and social tragedy. Instead in Europe, the artist couldn't forget the trauma of the war, and each painting, each sculpture is full of scars, is full of pain, is full of blood. (VO) It carries on the memory of death.

Fautrier's It's How You Feel

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
The painting, It's How You Feel, by the French artist Fautrier suggests the look of broken flesh, its blemishes and craters.

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
The Italian artist Fontana literally attacked the clay, ripping its surface open.
Fontana's Concept Spatial—Attese

He used scissors to stab these holes into the canvas.

European Abstract Expressionism was more controlled, more finished...

The American art had a different look.

**GREENBERG: (VO)**
I'd say that we had looser surfaces—let's call it that. You felt a freshness, and a kind of emphasis. I don't want to say violence—that word's been misused in this connection.

**MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)**
Franz Kline drew inspiration for Cubism...

Willem De Kooning's Woman and Bicycle

Willem De Kooning did portraits that became highly charged responses to the women who were his models.

**GREENBERG: (VO)**
The Abstract Expressionists wanted to paint on the same level of quality as the old masters or as, let's say, the best of the school of Paris: Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian. They were striving for excellence and they found that they did better work when they went abstract.

**MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)**
Mark Rothko chose a path to pure expression by using only gradations of color.
Helen Frankenthaler's Mountains and Sea

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Pollock's vision and Greenberg's theory were explored by a second generation. Many acknowledged that Helen Frankenthaler adapted Pollock's technique in a way that made him more accessible. She stained her canvas with highly diluted paint to achieve these haunting effects in Mountains and Sea. The Abstract Expressionist movement dominated the New York art world for over a decade.

Footage of Times Square

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
By the mid-Fifties they were established, only to be succeeded by a new avant-garde.
Michael Wood in Times Square (OC)

WOOD:
The post-War world is characterized by an acceleration of speed. Speed of travel, of information, of communication, indeed, speed of change itself, and a style which in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance took decades to work itself out could now run its course in a year of even less. And in such a culture, saturated with objects, with advertising, packaging and TV, it was inevitable that art itself should not merely reflect this, but in a sense, become the object. For if the content mattered so little in comparison with the packaging, then why not use a Coke bottle or a soup tin? The young generation then taught that not only was art unheroic, it was anywhere and could be anything.

Robert Rauschenberg's Coca Cola Plan
Rauschenberg's Monogram

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
Robert Rauschenberg's use of a coke bottle, a spare tire, a goat shocked his audience. "If this is art," said one Abstract Expressionist, "then I quit."

ROSALIND KRAUSS: (VO)
What's very curious in the history of art is that often the moment where . . .
Rosalind Krauss ON CAMERA

ROSALIND KRAUSS

ROsalind Krauss: "...something really decisive happens to change that history, those moments are not terribly perceptible to their contemporaries and only become perceptible in retrospect. And I think that one of those moments occurred, at least for our modern sensibilities, with the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns."

Rauschenberg's Trophy III

ROSALIND KRAUSS: (VO CONTIN'D)

This is a Rauschenberg called "Trophy III." What Rauschenberg does is to insist that the surface of the canvas is no longer a window into which we look, or through which we look, a window that opens onto another world—

Footage of New York skyline from Krauss' window.

(VO)—as say, this little porthole that I'm looking through that opens onto the skyline of New York; I can see the Empire State Building through it.

Rosalind Krauss ON CAMERA

(OC) Rather, what we have is the surface of the canvas as a horizontal field, like a desktop. (VO) like the working surface of somebody's studio, or somebody's writing table onto which junk is piled: mail, postcards, posters, advertisements, records, magazines, newspapers, a kind of tremendous clutter of banal experience, that interpolates even great art into that clutter, as here in Rauschenberg's Small Rebus.
Rauschenberg's Small Rebus and Port Arthur, Texas.

Rosalind Krauss (VO)
Rauschenberg went on to build a wall of information by silkscreening photographic images onto canvas, as in this work called "Port Arthur, Texas." The result is that everything here is homogenized in the uniform surface of photographic information. We may think of photography as a realistic medium, but Rauschenberg shows it as a single, flattened informational field: as flat as the screens of our television sets, or the front pages of our newspapers.

Jasper Johns's Target with Plaster Casts

Krauss: (VO)
One of the things that happens in Jasper Johns' work is that he makes the image that's projected inside the canvas synonymous with the surface of the canvas. There is no more interior space in the image.

Johns's Three Flags

Krauss: (VO)
The target, the American flag, are manifestly, absolutely on the surface of the canvas. Johns is being ironic about earlier pictorial subjects like portraits or still lifes or landscapes...

Johns's World Map

This painting based on Buckminster Fuller's map of the world is an ironic landscape: flattened to match the modern tourist's impression of space. By refusing illusion, Johns was making some sort of comment about the nature of modern experience.
Richard Long, Cross and Ed Ruscha's *Large Trademark with Eight Spotlights*

*MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)*

In the mid-1950s, the art of the disposable, consumer culture was born.

Richard Hamilton's *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*

In '57 the British artist Richard Hamilton issued its manifesto.

Michael Wood ON CAMERA

(OC) This art, he said, should be popular, that is designed for a mass audience. It should be transient, expendable, low-cost, mass produced, gimmicky. And in the 1960s, this art came of age: Pop!

Rosalind Krauss ON CAMERA

*ROSA琳D KRAUSS: (VO)*

There was at that moment a kind of liberating nihilism.

(OC)

A sense that you could sort of clear away the junk of an inheritance from the nineteenth century which people had long since ceased to believe in.

MONTAGE of Andy Warhol's *Marilyn, Diptych* and *2000 Campbell's Soup Cans*
*Roy Lichtenstein's Live Ammo* and *Takka Takka*
*Andy Warhol's Two Elvis*

*[VO]* So that kind of clearing away and allowing oneself to really stare modern culture in the face, that had a tremendously liberating, invigorating, energizing quality. And it's that quality that gave Pop art its kind of joyousness in the beginning.
Rosalind Krauss (ON CAMERA)

Roy Lichtenstein's M-Maybe, Mad Scientist, Masterpiece, We Rose Up Slowly

ROSALIND KRAUSS (OC)
Even though a lot of the message had this very acid undertone, because it was denying a lot of things we like to think about ourselves.

KRAUSS (VO)
When Roy Lichtenstein turns to the visual vocabulary of comic books, he's examining stereotypes, packaged images, packaged plots, packaged personalities.

ROSALIND KRAUSS
Warhol's move is absolutely brilliant, because what he does is . . .

KRAUSS (VO)
to make a canvas which is nothing but the repetition of identical objects that are the product of mass production, assembly-line production.

Warhol focuses on the effect of the commodity—its existence as pure repetition. And his commodities extend to people as well, especially movie stars.

Cagney (cont.), Twenty Jackies

Our experience of singular unique events becomes flattened out through the repetition of the way we experience such an event when it comes to us through either newspaper, magazine or television.
Red Race Riot

One of these unique events that Warhol presented as banalized through newspaper reportage would be the riots in Selma, Alabama.

We don't have an individuality that's secreted away from that clamor and refuse and chaos of the everyday. We are that chaos.

Germano Celant (ON CAMERA)

GERMANO CELANT (OC)
While in America with Pop art, the attention was given to recording and to criticizing the consumer culture carried on by objects, comic strips, advertising and the media, in Europe, Yves Klein and Joseph Beuys were dealing with the idea of the artist as a shaman, the person that can change the sensibility of the world.

Joseph Beuys's Tram Stop

GERMANO CELANT (VO)
A pilot in the German Luftwaffe, Joseph Beuys was shot down during World War II. This brush with death permeates his work. Here a man appears to be in the jaws of a primordial reptile and trapped in a pipe... It is like an ancient totem laid on its side, suggesting death and birth at the same time.
Joseph Beuys's *Revolution Sklavier*

**CELANT: (VO)**
For Beuys, each element in the world had the same value. It is a world where there is no difference between animals, plants, objects or human beings. All share the same energy. He envisioned a world where everyone was an artist. His work dramatizes unrealized potential. Like the scent of flowers decaying or the symbolic power of the cross.

**Beuys's *Infiltration Homogen for Grand Piano***

This piano is wrapped in felt, like an elephant's hide. . . . But, the concert grand is not dead, only mute. . . . Underneath it can still be played.

**Beuys's Schwammrelief***

**GERMANO CELANT: (VO)**
Yves Klein had the desire to purify reality, painting everything blue.

**GERMANO CELANT (ON CAMERA)**

**CELANT (OC)**
This kind of blue has been invented by Klein to represent and to symbolize the spirituality and the material sensibility that permeates any substance.
Footage from Yves Klein's film, Mondo Cane
Klein's Anthropometry

GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
In a carefully orchestrated event in the early Sixties, Klein took these models and made them his paint brushes. Traces of their bodies remain on the canvas. The canvas is transformed into a blue icon, which represents the transformation of the flesh into purity.

Sol Le Witt's White Pyramid

ROSALIND KRAUSS: (VO)
Minimal art, or what came to be known as minimalism, was really a phenomenon of abstract sculpture that ran parallel to the rise of Pop art in the early Sixties.

Sol Le Witt's Black Form

Minimal art seems to have devised a kind of abstract sculptural analogue to what it was that Pop art was doing.

Rosalind Krauss (ON CAMERA)

ROSALIND KRAUSS (OC)
Like Pop art, one felt that the artist was taking a certain kind of almost perverse and nihilistic pleasure in sweeping away the sense of the artist-creator as the generator of the form and instead subjecting himself or herself to the idea of these abstract forms (VO) as something that he of course could not have invented.
Sol LeWitt's White Pyramid and Black Form

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
What they did was to place the object into the gallery space or into the open air so that it was effected by changes in the environment around it, changes in light, in color and in perspective.

ROSALIND KRAUSS (VO)
We've been looking at a late work by Sol Lewitt—where a white pyramid and a black slab bracket a Baroque palace in Munster, Germany.

Footage of train and urban environment in Munster, Germany.

ROSALIND KRAUSS (VO)
When we remind ourselves that sculpture, because it is three-dimensional and free-standing, is always a model of the human body, of ourselves, we understand that these sculptors are using this strategy to say something about us, its observers.

Footage of Maya Ying Lin's Viet Nam Veterans' Memorial

ROSALIND KRAUSS (VO)
The relationship of the work to its specific site becomes an abstract way of insisting that the individual is always determined by his or her political and cultural context.

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
This is Maya Ying Ling's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. where the names of all the Americans who died in that war are inscribed.
Michael Wood (VO)
Initially, her design invoked storms of protest because it was considered unheroic.

Footage of the 1968 riots in Czechoslovakia

Michael Wood at Columbia University (ON CAMERA)

Michael Wood (ON CAMERA)

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
In 1968 a wave of opposition to the establishment swept through the West like a seismic upheaval. The shock waves were felt even behind the Iron Curtain, in the Prague spring in Czechoslovakia.

Newsreel footage of the riots at Columbia University

MICHAEL WOOD (OC)
Here in New York, at Columbia University, the storming of the gates . . .

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
. . . during the violent demonstration against the Vietnam War became a symbol of a generation's protest in a year fraught with assassinations and rioting. And in France, the government all but fell to an alliance of students and workers.

MICHAEL WOOD (OC)
The year ended with the establishment back in power, but this dissident youth culture had become international and politicized. And one result was the rejection of all forms of establishment art. And the effects of that are still with us.
Edward Kienholz's The Portable War Memorial

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
The heroic symbols of World War II are ironically recycled by Edward Kienholz in "Portable War Memorial." Images of glory from "the last just war" reverberate bitterly at the end of the Sixties.

Maya Ying Ling's Viet Nam Veteran's War Memorial

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
Both Pop and Minimalism ultimately evoke similar feelings of ambivalence and loss.
ART SINCE WORLD WAR II -- PART II

Footage at Storm King of:
Mark Di Suvero's Mother Peace
Charles Ginnever's Fayette: For
Charles and Medgar Evers
Isamu Noguchi's Momo Taro

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
This is Storm King Art Park in upstate New York. By the Seventies, massive abstract works like these had become the blue-chip staple of corporate collectors in America.

Michael Wood (ON CAMERA) beside Noguchi's Momo Taro

MICHAEL WOOD: (OC)
Fifty years ago, the German critic Walter Benjamin prophesied that the impact of film and mass reproduction would be to change forever our idea of what art is. At the heart of all this perhaps lies the belief that the myth of progress, which has sustained West for so long, is now at an end. There is a feeling of contradiction between our material demands and our spiritual needs.

Kenneth Snelson's Free Ride
Home
Michael Wood (ON CAMERA)

MICHAEL WOOD (OC)
And now that we've come towards the end of the century, we're nearer that point than ever before. Since the Sixties in particular, many people have felt that Western art is in a state of crisis and confusion, with no pattern or direction; indeed, that the Western tradition is played out.

Footage at Storm King of:
Manashe Kadishman's Suspended
Forrest Myers’s Four Corners
Gilbert Hawkins’s Four Poles and
Light

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
Because of this, many artists
today are turning back to first
principles and of course the
first principle of all is nature.

Footage of Robert Smithson’s
film of Spiral Jetty.

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
This is Robert Smithson, in a
film he made in 1970 of his
pivotal earth work, Spiral Jetty.
This 1500 foot long coil of rock
was built in Utah’s Great Salt
Lake. It leads the visitor out
into the water like an ancient
hero venturing through a maze.
He sought a modern restatement
of the artist’s relationship to
nature, one which led away
from what he considered to be
the historical exhaustion of
painting and sculpture. "Spiral
Jetty" is now underwater, but
the concept of earthworks like
this challenged, expanded and
revitalized our notion of what
art is.

Footage from the Maysles’s film
of Christo’s Running Fence

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
In his environmental work
"Running Fence" by Belgian
artist Christo, six miles of
parachute material mounted on
poles were stretched across
Sonoma, California, to the sea.

The entire ranching community
and the California Office of
Environmental Protection were
involved in deciding whether the
fence would be allowed, and so,
indirectly, whether this was a
work of art. The controversy
was part of the experience.
Footage of Centre Pompidou, Paris

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
At the same time, attempts were being made in urban environments to respond to criticisms that our culture had become dehumanized. New ways were sought for art to reach the people.

GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
In the early '70s, the idea of the museum changed. When the Pompidou Center in Paris was planned, it was envisioned as a kind of anti-museum. It was to become a factory of information, a sort of center for news, a center for masses. A kind of supermarket for culture. The idea was that the square and all the area around the building was more important in a certain way as the space inside.

Germano Celant (ON CAMERA)

GERMANO CELANT (OC)
They thought that the museum had to go into the street, and not the people from the street had to go into the museum. So it was reversing the attitude towards visitors.

Footage of Centre Pompidou

GERMANO CELANT (VO)
The original plan called for huge video screens projecting news of the world into the square.

Footage of the Stravinsky Fountain by Nikki de Saint-Phalle and Jean Tinguely

CELANT (VO)
This whimsical fountain by Nikki de Saint-Phalle and Jean Tinguely add to the creative surroundings.
All over the world in the Seventies, artists felt the desire to get out of the enclosed space of the museum and they tried to invade the city. So they started to think big.

GERMANO CELANT (OC)
And they start to think in a large-scale way that created objects that compete with skyscrapers and large elements. But they also want to compete with the media, and create something that is so theatrical that it takes the attention of the media and compares the media with art.

GERMANO CELANT (VO)
The "Swiss Army Knife" was designed as a ship for the city of Venice. It was the main character of a performance piece created by Claes Oldenburg, Koosje von Bruggen and Frank Gehry. Like any art object, it has different levels of meaning. (OC) It represents tourism: in fact the army knife is always in the pocket of the traveler. But also (VO) it is symbol of the double reality of Venice, the schizophrenia of Venice, which is seen in the contrast between the past and the present, an invasion of modern materials in an ancient city.
GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
The knife is truly a ship. It travelled on the water in the canals of Venice. So it becomes the symbol of the city and represents also the people visiting the city.

CELANT (OC)
It is a travelling object. And so, as a travelling object, it becomes a nomad. So a work of art is a nomad—going everywhere in cities as New York, Paris, Venice and Los Angeles.

Footage of street activity in Soho, New York

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Oldenburg's witty play with scale has been copied everywhere as here in Soho, New York's fashionable art center of the Eighties. We've now reached the point where more people are exposed to art than ever before in history.

Michael Wood (ON CAMERA)

MICHAEL WOOD (OC)
Not only through books, films and museums, but from the everyday artifacts around them in their lives: through advertising, through packaging, through the very clothes that they wear.

Continue Soho footage

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
The distinction between art and commodity is now blurred. So where does the artist go from here?
New York City skyline

ROSS ALIND KRAUSS: (VO)
We're looking at the skyline of New York — a sort of mythic image of modernist progress, of an endless sense of possibilities opening in front of an early twentieth century...

ROSS ALIND KRAUSS (OC)
... sort of drunk on its own sense of growth and power. And what's interesting is that now for us, in this age of post-modernism, this skyline, this sort of mythic field of vision, seems to have receded from our view, or seems to have vanished into a reproduction of itself.

Richard Haas' trompe l'oeil painting of building in Soho

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Richard Haas here has painted the blank wall of a Soho building precisely to trick us.

Michael Graves's Portland Building in Portland, Oregon

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Post-Modernism is a term that architects adopted in the early '70s to describe a kind of building that dropped a veil of neo-classical decoration in front of a traditional box-like structure.

ROSS ALIND KRAUSS: (VO)
This is Michael Graves' Portland Building in Oregon, more interested in the building as an image than as a three-dimensional experience.
ROSA LIBND_ KRAUSS (VO)
What we're really dealing with in the period in which we live is an

ROSA LIBND_ KRAUSS (OC)
extraordinary conformity, that despite the seeming pluralism, the seeming diversity.

ROSA LIBND_ KRAUSS (VO)
In fact we are seeing many many different reflections of the same underlying reality, and it is that underlying reality which seems to me to be at the root of what's happening in the art of our time.

ROSA LIBND_ KRAUSS (VO)
It's as though the world has become a kind of huge billboard, or an opaque wall of images that separates us as individuals from a nature that might exist behind that wall but which we cannot penetrate to. Somehow, reality has been swallowed up by a television tube, so this sort of nightmare possibility accounts for absolutely everything that's going on now.

—Certain artists have dedicated their work to the problem of how to break through this wall,

ROSA LIBND_ KRAUSS (OC)
how to put a kind of little crowbar underneath it and try to get some sort of leverage on it, try to make a kind of space between the imitation of the real and the real.
Francisco Clemente's Untitled

(VO) Or to try to comment on the ways in which we are trapped in this, what you could call Plato's cave, that is to say, trapped in this kind of cave in which what we are looking at is a world of shadows, a world of simulations rather than a world of real things.

Tony Berlant's The Journey

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Tony Berlant confines a miniature nineteenth century landscape within the modern contours of hammered metal.

Flight and Speakers by Gilbert and George

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Gilbert and George appear in their own paintings, a pair of artists romping through an unreal media world.

GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
Post-modernism is a new way of saying modernism—this kind of new culture that represents the absence of distinction between originality and reproduction—and the idea that you go to the past, and quote the past, remake the past, in order to say something new.

Pat Steir's Breughel Series, A Vanitas of Style

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
In fact, for today's artists, the problem seems to be, what new is there to say? In A Vanitas of Style, Pat Steir takes the traditional still life genre and fragments her painting into sixty-four separate frames. The range of styles presents an encapsulated course in the history of Western art.
GERMANO CELANT (VO)
Boldly invoking the classical tradition, Carlo Maria Mariani has painted Looking Into a Celestial Mirror. The artist self-consciously winks at his post-modern audience, a public fully aware of the ironies of recycling the heroic past in an unheroic age.

GERMANO CELANT (VO)
Here Julio Paolini presents art looking at art, two replicas of the most famous of Greek sculpture, the Venus de Milo, mirror each other. Beauty studies beauty.

ROSALIND KRAUSS: (VO)
The Palais Royale in Paris is an eighteenth century building that houses part of the French administration. Daniel Buren was asked to make a sculpture for its courtyard that would complete this glorious architectural monument. What he chose to do was to complete it as a ruin, turning the idea of the colonnaded peristyle into the stunted columns from an antique acropolis, felled by time.

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Before this work was installed, Deux Plateaux was blocked by a court injunction. Buren's work became the subject of a memorable cultural battle, as only the French can wage.
MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
The conservative newspaper of Paris roared its disapproval, calling the work "cultural hooliganism." Ultimately, people were attracted to the new landmark as a congenial place to be.

GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
A moving example of postmodern architecture is this museum in Munchengladbach, Germany, specifically designed by Hans Hollein to house avantgarde art. References to the Greek citadel, to the skyscraper and to the cathedral are all successfully combined here.

CELANT: (VO)
What has been built in the eighties with the Munchengladbach Museum is more the museum as a temple, as a church, substituting the museum as a place for another God. And art is the new religion of today, where you go, you don't understand but you trust — That's what the religion is about; you have to trust because it's in the museum.

Anselm Kiefer's The Book

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Anselm Kiefer's massive winged book captures both the spiritual and the material, the debase ment of the word in our time and a persistent belief in it. The wings rise towards the heavens while the material, lead, insists upon its place on earth.
Kiefer's Departure from Egypt

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
In Departure from Egypt, Kiefer varies the surface texture, including straw and a metal pipe which suggests the rod of Moses, again to re-examine the symbols of belief that have endured in our culture.

Robert Morris's Order

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
But in the twentieth century, the forces of irrationality and violence have also endured. "Order," a mysterious piece by Robert Morris, suggests an altar with painted flames suspended in its center, and a sculpture of the fire's smoke curling out into the air. Skulls are embedded in the mantle, images of death, and sacrifice.

Sigmar Polke's Paganini

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
Sigmar Polke uses an overlay of styles and techniques in the death of Paganini. His imagery frequently alludes to death and rebirth. Computer discs, skulls and swastikas swirl over the dying genius.

Nikki de Saint-Phalle's La Mariée Du Eva Maria

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
In this art we seem to see the legacy of the West contaminated. This is the Bride by Nikki de Sant-Phalle. If, as so many of these contemporary artists seem to be saying, ours is a culture out of balance, then women artists are becoming increasingly important in offering us an alternative.
ROSALIND KRAUSS: (VO)
Western art has been grounded on the figure of the woman standing for beauty, for nature, for truth, for eros, in short, the woman as a series of cultural abstractions pronounced through the medium of her mute body. Feminist artists want to break through this condition of being mute, of the woman's always having someone else speak for her. Sometimes this is done by parodying the roles women have played in traditional art.

ROSALIND KRAUSS (VO)
We see this in the work of Alexis Smith; or, again, in the work of Cindy Sherman...
Footage of Rebecca Horn's installation piece Das Gegenlaufige Konzert in a former prison in Munster, Germany

GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
This tower in Munster, Germany, was used as a prison for torture during medieval times and again during World War II.

GERMANO CELANT (OC)
For the European artist, it is very important the dialogue between past and present, history and our time. Rebecca Horn is using an abandoned building not for romantic reasons, but because it is a building that has a memory of torture.

GERMANO CELANT (VO)
And she includes in this space the sound of torture—water dripping, hammers striking, so that the silence of history is broken. Human beings once cried out in this cell. This tower has a kind of strange life because it is full of these phantoms—torture in the Middle Ages and again during World War II by the Nazis.

GERMANO CELANT: (VO)
The installation is temporary, to last for just six months. So there is a dialectical condition of the piece that relates the history of Germany to Germany today.
Helicopter footage of the Roden Crater in Arizona's Painted Desert.

Footage of the Roden Crater.

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
Our works of art have become ruins. Only our perception is real. And our senses are bombarded with the images and sounds of media which inform us but do not transform us. In a society saturated by data, the function of the artist is no longer to depict events but rather to re-awaken our perception.

Footage of Michael Wood walking up the side of the crater.

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
This is the Roden Crater in the Painted Desert of Arizona. Here artist James Turrell has turned back to the earth for his inspiration.

MICHAEL WOOD: (VO)
For the modern viewer to experience this work of art will be something of an act of pilgrimage.

Drawings of the proposed "solar observatory" within the crater.

When you come in, you won't come over the top of the crater, you'll come through a fourteen hundred foot long tunnel which will be lined with the blue clay sand the local Navajo Indians use for their art. And the tunnel will be so built to line up with the sun at every equinox and with the moon every eighteen years.
Helicopter footage of the crater.

ON CAMERA, Michael Wood climbing up the side of the crater.

And, the other viewing platforms in the crater will also be lined up with the planets, like the monuments of the ancient world, designed to take you out of yourself.

MICHAEL WOOD (OC)
Out here, above the immensity of the Painted Desert with volcanic cones stretching away to the horizon, is the very image of geological, rather than human time.

ON CAMERA, Wood reaches the top of the crater. Behind him, the Painted Desert stretches away into the far distance.

And yet what Turrell is trying to do up here is literally reshape nature with human hands. He's transforming this crater into a perfect circle, so that the modern visitor may come here and in this silence and solitude take in the clear sky of the north Arizona desert like a complete sphere. And in doing that, he's trying to restore to us some of that sense of magic, the power and the presence which the ancient monuments on earth possessed, the monuments of the Egyptians, the Maya, the ancient Greeks, the great stone circles and earthworks of Britain, like Stonehenge...
The Roden Crater and the Painted Desert. The setting sun moves over the Crater's rim.

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
All of them places which mediated between human beings, nature, the stars and the cosmos, in the belief held by all so-called primitive peoples that human beings and the whole of creation were one. And like them, this is ultimately an architecture of space and light, the mystery at the heart of all art.

ON CAMERA, Michael Wood sits at the summit of the Crater.

MICHAEL WOOD (OC)
At the beginning of this series, we tried to define the Western tradition in terms of the culture which arose among the peoples of Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire, the core of whose ethics came from Judeo-Christian religion and whose artistic inheritance owed so much to the Greeks and the Romans. And in fact much of what follows in the story of Western art can be seen as variations on the love-hate relationship that Western artists had with Greek and Roman classicism.

Footage of the desert.

MICHAEL WOOD (VO)
But that is just one view. Every generation takes from the past what it needs to make sense of itself.
There is no such thing as objective history, in art as in anything else. There are only our interpretations, our dialogue with the past. Ultimately it's impossible for us to see in an ancient Greek work of art what an ancient Greek saw. Nevertheless, to view the tradition as a whole is to help us understand its parts. And in that light the art of our own times may appear to be the disintegration of a tradition, its dissolution.

Against that, though, Western art is clearly still alive and changeable. In its past it contains a reservoir of riches for future generations to make of what they will. And its greatest characteristic has always been its capacity for innovation and change, to draw on the achievement of other cultures, whether or ancient Egypt or of modern Africa, the Pacific or Latin America.

And so perhaps now as our culture grows more and more global, the next phase of Western art will see it reaching back to its great humane values, to its meditations on the human condition, and integrating them with the global culture of the twenty-first century.

THE END