DANIEL ROBBINS

Good [00:01:00] afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this — the third lecture in my series, devoted this afternoon to Albert Gleizes — a too little known painter.

Henry James wrote someplace — I'm sorry, I can't remember where — that if you really want to understand the motivations of a character — if you really want to study him or her psychologically and in the full — then you take a character who's had very little — in the way of struggle for material things — that's why his characters were usually rather well-placed in life. That is, if you eliminate from consideration having to struggle for material things, then you can see what a person really [00:02:00] would be like. Now this may or may not be true, but in any case, it's a situation rather parallel to the one we encounter with Albert Gleizes, a painter who never signed a contract with a gallery; who never had any great urge to show his paintings in the dealer shops of Paris or Munich or Berlin or Southern France or New York, as far as making money was concerned. Fortunately, he was endowed with a very wealthy wife and was able to pursue this kind of life.

He came to cubism in a way markedly different from the other members of that early cubist group. In fact, as I tried to indicate in earlier lectures, it's something of an error to talk about the cubist group [00:03:00] as a group. Gleizes had very little to do with Picasso and with Braque until about 1912. He came to cubism because he saw the paintings of a man named Le Fauconnier — a French artist who was very well known and much appreciated by certain German artists like Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Gleizes said that when he first saw paintings by Fauconnier in 1908 and 1909, they were a revelation to him because they pointed out what he himself had been aiming at — on in a very cloudy and unclarified fashion.

In 1908 and 1909 he went to a place in France near the western coast called [Ploumanac'h?], and he made drawings — like the one you see here on the left. Very firm, very vigorous, very simplified. [00:04:00] One is conscious always of the vibrant touch of a very strong brush. And if you look at just this part of the drawing — it's a rather large drawing — in brown sepia and black — you'll see something of a kind of simplification that you will see forever after in the work of this painter.

In 1910 he made that drawing — which you see now on the right. The head of the poet, and friend of his, [Jacques Nerail?]. Very forceful, very strong, rather majestic. In fact — as Gleizes came to public attention — and incidentally he, along with Le Fauconnier and Albert Delaunay and [Jacques Léon?], were the artists who put cubism on the tongues of the public. Because it was they who exhibited in the public [00:05:00] salons, and they who called down the preaching's of the member of the French chamber of deputies against cubism. Guillaume Apollinaire — to continue this long and involved sentence — wrote about Gleizes art the following, "Majesty, this above all characterizes the art of Albert Gleizes. Thus he brings to contemporary art a startling innovation, something which, before him, was found in but few of the modern painters. This, majesty, arouses and provokes the imagination. Considered from the plastic point of view, it is the immensity of things. This is a powerful art. The pictures of Albert Gleizes were realized with a force comparable to that we feel in the pyramids, in the cathedrals,

metal constructions, [00:06:00] bridges, tunnels.". And that was written in 1913. As far as it goes, it's quite good. It describes what was evident to every perceptive viewer at about that time.

But Gleizes's art and Gleizes's life went far beyond what it achieved in 1913. And the latter part is almost completely unknown — particularly to those of us who live in America. I want to sketch out as much of his art and his life as I possibly can in an hour, and my great difficulty will be how to cut myself down.

If we look at a landscape of his from 1911, and compare it with a painting by Georges Braque of the same year — a painting which some of you will probably recognize because I've shown it in every lecture I've given, as a kind of characteristic [00:07:00] cubist piece of 1910-11 — you can immediately discern the very tremendous differences. Differences that are so vast that it seems almost inconceivable to us now, that anyone could have spoken of those people as forming a coherent group with similar intentions. What we have come to think of as cubism has been based on our knowledge of Picasso and Braque around this time — 1911 — was.

The Braque painting is extremely delicate. It's color is very limited. It has a kind of discreet quality. I said once, it almost has a kind of finicky quality — that's perhaps an adjective, or rather an adverb, I shouldn't use — it's not finicky. It's very beautiful. But it is very discreet. It involves the sense of a spectator's eye or the spectator himself [00:08:00] roaming around actual, real objects. And these objects have to be of a very limited kind in order to achieve this kind of discretion. There's a very shallow space from this part of the table — which is the closest to us — and this area, which marks the back. This is the famous shallow space of cubism. There's a simultaneity of points of view — insofar as you look down on the table here, and you see the side of the table here, and you see the table in elevation here, with this great marked line. Beyond that, there's the dissection of a number of typically so-called cubist objects on the table — the violin, it's strings, the indications of music.

Well now very different is the Gleizes painting from the same year. Apollinaire was right — "majestic," "harmonious," big, huge, swinging rhythms. [00:09:00] These rhythms — which to him were to become more and more significant, until finally they constituted the whole of his art — were already present in his work at this early date. In addition, perfectly obvious that his sense of color was never restricted. He never restricted it, as did his contemporaries, Picasso and Braque. They're strong, they're dark. The two trees rise up from the earth, suggestion of the sun turning in the heavens is present, a figure lends scale to the whole. Apart from the suggestion of a bridge, the reminiscence of a house, perhaps even the reminiscence of a village in the background, all of these planes, interloping and intersecting, give an enormous and powerful impression of a whole [00:10:00] turning world. A kind of power — analogous, in the sense — to the art of his very close friend, Robert Delaunay. But, to a certain extent, things in this painting on the left are looked at from different points of view. Gleizes still regarded the world from different points of view. Only the entire image seems to move a little bit from one side to the other in a great arch that eventually becomes the sweep of the whole universe.

In two more paintings — the one on the right, *Man on the Balcony* from 1912 — and incidentally one of the two paintings with which Albert Gleizes was represented at the famous armory show in New York in 1913 — and a painting which passed into the collection of Arthur

Jerome Eddy — the first American [00:11:00] descender of avant-garde art — and from his correction to the [Arnsberg?], and from them to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. You'll see again these powerful, sonorous colors; this strong, vibrant image of a man on a balcony. And it's perfectly clear his physical presence on that balcony, with a city spread all around him and below him.

The painting on the left is somewhat more amusing in rather a lighter vain. And yet, it involves a curious analysis of subject — one again which you will not find in another cubist painter of this epic. The man in the hammock, now in the Albright Knox museum in Buffalo, is quite evident. Here he is — his head, his arm, his other arm, his leg. [00:12:00] He holds in his hand — and this, of course, is a kind of reference dear to many of the cubists — a very specific reference — Alexander Mercereau *Paroles Devant La Vie*, a famous book of poetry by a very close friend of Gleizes's, friend of Apollinaire's — one of the leading avant-garde poets of the time. Beside him are some of the things that one would like to have besides one on a summer's afternoon — a spoon, a lemon, a flask — and whether it was filled with water or something else, one doesn't need to know. The curiosity in the painting is that instead of the figure being analyzed as if a spectator, the artist or you or I, were turning about it, looking about it from various points of view; he chose to make a hammock which, as everyone [00:13:00] knows, swings back and forth and then swings back again. In short, here at one point and arch this way. Back, forth. And you can see some of this effect distorting the face as it moves forward and then backward. These were the kinds of problems that would interest a man who's principal preoccupation was the dissection of form and the search for basic underlying rhythms.

Usually he's thought of as a very serious painter, as a very austere painter. And for the most part, this estimation is true. But he often had his moments of humor, and in another — I'm sorry, coming up some more humor. In these two paintings, two landscapes, [00:14:00] we can see — not his humor — but the fact that unlike the other cubists, he was preoccupied — not with still life, not with discrete problems — a few objects on a table — but, again, as I said before, the whole sweep of the land. Something vast, something big. He wanted to do with landscape and with the human figure what Picasso and what Braque and what [Juan Gree?] were doing and were to do with still life.

The picture on the right — we're very fortunate to be able to have a slide of it — is in the collect of Jacques Cléon at [Perto?]. Jacques Cléon, a collaborator of Gleizes, and a painter himself — I'll lecture on him in two weeks' time. Where is the windmill? It's not so important in Gleizes to search for it. [00:15:00] This powerful tower — this great structure — its radiating arms — all form one extremely vital and powerful analysis of movement. Only this house retains a kind of specific affinity with an object that one would see in life. The same is true in this curious landscape in the collection of the Société Anonyme now at Yale. Powerful movements, diagonals, and curves united. Dark, boldly applied colors. A sense of the brush stroke throughout.

Another painting we're fortunate to have a slide of is this rather amusing one on the left called *Lady with Animals* of 1914 in the collection of Peggy Guggenheim in Venice. Here, [00:16:00] his wit is demonstrated probably best in the lower left-hand corner. This dog, whose head seems to turn towards us and away from us, and whose head — as it turns away from us — describes in

yellow here, another animal who's set upon haunches down on the floor. And the hand of the lady caresses still another very small animal. I would hesitate to make an identification of its species on the basis of what I see — but a charming, little animal. Possibly, I'll go all the way and say a cat — if you look at the little mouth. Her head turns in this direction — great movements splinter it. The dog turns from this direction [00:17:00] to the other direction — setting up, again, these large vibrating rhythms which were his principle preoccupation.

The picture I show you on the right dates from 1914. It's a portrait of Jean Cocteau as Gleizes envisioned him in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for which Gleizes was about to make set designs and costume designs. Thus he would have been the first of the cubist artists to make a production for life — that is for the life of many people — something that would confront thousands and thousands of people. This was consonant with his beliefs about the role of art in life — that art should participate in everybody's life — not just the lives of those people who could afford to own [00:18:00] individual paintings. Another consequence, if that production had been realized, would have been to have put Gleizes in the minds of thousands and thousands of people. But, unfortunately — or else, fortunately — the production fell through. It fell through chiefly because, as you know, in the summer of 1914, war was declared between France and Germany and Gleizes — who had done military service like almost all of his contemporaries — his French contemporaries — was called into the army just at that time when he began to realize some of his most important paintings. It didn't stop him, however. He was sent to [Tool?], very close to the front.

On the right, you see a very quick drawing that he made [00:19:00] of a friend of his who was a doctor. And the Guggenheim museum is fortunate to own about seven studies that all evolve from that drawing on the right and become more and more abstract until the painting that you see on the left was realized. Now it's pretty obvious to see affinities between even the first of the studies and the painting which came at the end. First of all, something of the character of the man is visible here. Something of the jauntiness of his hat and the swing of his body forward and back — note this shape which is preserved in this shape, and this shape also preserved in here.

But the final painting, which I'd like to look at alone because the white destroys the color, is a synthesis of all these observations. [00:20:00] And not a synthesis that is made on the basis of a number of different points of view — but simply a synthesis of very powerful, strong rhythms. One can analyze the way it's put together and perhaps thus better appreciate its majesty, its strength, its beauty if you like. One can see that this was once the black hat, and these were the fierce eyebrows, and in here somewhere was a mustache, and in here was a lively [odd?]. But mostly, now, we have the strong image of a strong man — the sharp white — possibly recalling the fact that he was a doctor; a man who had to perform very disagreeable duties at the front but performed them without breaking. And yet, at the same time, some extraordinarily delicate passages — not simply the delicacy of these little dots — this mosaic work of bright color — which, I might add, owes something [00:21:00] to Delaunay. The delicacy of these lines indicating perhaps the movement of shoulder and arm — very light divisions that carry through the sweep all the way around — here and here and here. And through it all, like a powerful rod, this black picked up here and in here.

One of the reasons that Gleizes has a very great importance — historically — was because — even before Guillaume Apollinaire — this man, this artist had acquired the reputation as a thinker; as an intellectual. This was because — with another friend of his, with another early cubist, Jean Metzinger — he had written the first book on cubism. It wasn't a book about the specific painters — as Apollinaire's book was — [00:22:00] and it wasn't particularly an interpretive book — as was Apollinaire's. It was a book that tried simply to explain why cubism had to be — why, after four and five hundred years of representational art — cubism had to bring man back into contact with certain eternal verities.

I want to read just one very small passage from this book that was written in 1912, because it shows that these artists — particularly Gleizes — knew where it would all wind up. They wrote, "Let the picture imitate nothing. Let it nakedly present its motive. And we should indeed be ungrateful were we to deplore the absence of all those things — flowers, or landscape, or faces — whose mere reflection it might have been. [00:23:00] Nevertheless, let us admit that the reminiscence of natural forms cannot be absolutely banished as yet, at all events. And art cannot be raised to the level of a pure refusion at the first step." That was in 1912. In 1912, as far as these artists were concerned, they'd never seen a non-objective painting. It's true, a non-objective painting had been made — Kandinsky had made a non-objective watercolor in 1910; he had shown a few paintings in 1911. But these had not been universally seen. As a matter of fact, those of you who attended these lectures last semester know that there were many other antecedents in the late nineteenth century in connection with the art nouveau that verged on pure abstraction. Why did they say [00:24:00] "as yet" at all events? They say an art cannot be raised to a pure [effusion?] at the first step. One reason they said this was because they felt that through art they could regenerate the public — they could educate the public to believe, to know that what they saw, and the way that which they had been taught to see in 500 years of representational art through perspective — wasn't what really was there. They didn't want to jolt them too much. And truly they did this out of a sense of social consciousness — at least Gleizes did.

Yet, writing in 1912, Gleizes was hardly to realize, hardly to suspect, that suddenly a painter that he knew very well — a close friend of his — was suddenly to explode into that very art of pure effusion that he thought [00:25:00] was still yet distant. Some of you will remember this Delaunay from late in 1912 which I showed two weeks ago. It's called *Circular Disks* or *The Sun and the Moon*. Over here on the right is the sun, because it's brighter. This is the moon, softer. Only this isn't really intended as a representational painting. Not in the least. It's just that Delaunay felt that he could analyze the movement of light and the rhythm of light, and this was what the universe was all about, and this is what he would paint. And paint it he did — about 12 to 15 pictures over two years like this, until he decided to try and integrate it with a specific analysis of objects. Two weeks ago you found out how we kind of failed in that endeavor. But Gleizes [00:26:00] pulled a great lesson from this. All these things were happening at exactly the time the war was breaking out — well what an extraordinary ferment there was in the world and in the minds and on the brushes of all these painters.

In 1915, just about a year after he'd been in the army, due to the efforts of a French magistrate, [Granier?], who got a lot of painters and writers out of the army. Gleizes was mustered out of the service. He got married to one of the most charming and witty women of the epic, Juliette

Roche. And they set out for New York. You can imagine the impression that New York made on these people — sophisticated and witty as they were, they'd never seen anything like Manhattan island. These people — sophisticated, witty — were also pacifists. They were also against war. [00:27:00] Gleizes apparently found a revolver in his wife's purse as they were entering New York Harbor — she didn't know what to expect — perhaps Indians, perhaps gangsters. He said to her, "How can a pacifist like you or a pacifist like me carry a revolver?" And he pitched it into the harbor, where perhaps it still is.

But if you look at this sketch, just an oil sketch of United Street — made shortly after he arrived — you can see the vibrancy with which it was done. And the impression that the city made upon him. And you can also see the circular disks of Delaunay. Not the light of the sun and the light of the moon. Because the circular disks — as far as Gleizes was concerned — proved only one thing — a thing that perhaps he tried to get at in that hammock painting — that it wasn't necessary to walk around an object or explore it from all sides [00:28:00] with your eyes and have facets and fragments to understand it — but that you could make the whole painting move because these simultaneous contrasts of colors whirled and the whole picture was set in motion. Only one rhythm wasn't enough for Gleizes. He wanted many. You see many in the picture of United Street, but you can see it better in some of these other rare and beautiful New York paintings, which we've been able to get some slides of.

The painting on the right is in the collection of Frederic Stern of New York. And I only just discovered it two weeks ago because Mr. Stern came to the Guggenheim museum and announced that he had it.

Delaunay's discs — the red light and the green light of New York traffic. The buildings of New York. [00:29:00] Above and below and all around. And this painting, called *Broadway*, from the collection of Arthur [Allshill?]. The letters, times, just as you see them now, glowing at night. The great, circular rhythm; the sense of being on top and the sense of being underneath; the sense of being completely surrounded by these huge forces that were New York. He seems to have had some obsession with advertisements for tires. It's hard to know whether he knew some of the signs that he was copying down, because when he arrived he didn't speak a word of English, although his wife did.

Now many of these small oil paintings of New York [00:30:00] found their — perhaps definitive — expression in this painting, which is so huge we can hardly fit it on the screen. What fascination. You saw Kelly Springfield tires in the last painting. Here you see it through a window, "Kelly Springfield." The man last, as I said before — you're on top of the city, and you're underneath the city; the city is all around you. It's night, and it's day — blazing light and dark shadow. It's cinema publicity, beams of light, signs, flickerings, noises. All of these things, but all reduced to tremendous harmonies. [00:31:00] It's pretty clear that you're inside a building as well as being outside, because you see here — in translation — a term which I hope I'll be able to explain a little bit better — a view through a window onto the city. It's as if you were in this window and out of it at the same time, just as you are below and above at the same time. Some of his strongest paintings were made while he was in New York, and yet, in the middle of it all, he went back to Spain — to Barcelona — and then back to New York again, and then to Bermuda and to Canada and to Cuba, and finally back to New York.

This is *Brooklyn Bridge* on the left. A painting in the Guggenheim collection. One of two such paintings we have. Again, you may notice [00:32:00] that he's getting more and more abstract. He's painting depth and height and breadth without the use of perspective. If you look at the center part of this small drawing — which is disfigured only by the fact that the speakers hand is holding it up to be photographed — but look at the center, you'll see how intricate all this becomes. And what an enormous sense of space going back is realized by means which are unfaceted and unfragmented. And once again, the presence of tires. Perhaps it's because Delaunay feeling for the circle was taking such an important part in his life and his art. [00:33:00]

On that trip to Barcelona, a very quick trip early in 1916 — just three months long, he saw a great deal of the circus. And as soon as he came back, he painted this picture called *Clowns*, which is in the collection of Madam Gleizes in Saint-Rémy de Provence. I'm sorry I can't show it to you in color, because it's infinitely more exquisite — much more beautiful. All you can see in this, really, are these rhythms with which he tries to integrate the whole. And you can see something else in the painting — that is, he's not trying to create personalities anymore. His faces are blank. They're expressionless. Very soon they're about to disappear entirely. He's teetering now on the edge of that which he had recognized [00:34:00] he would go to as early as 1912. An art of pure effusion and art of which all reminiscences of natural form were to be banished. An art that is non-objective or abstractive.

Now the painting on the right is by Picasso. It's from late 1915, and it's a harlequin. And it's very beautiful. But one is very much conscious of a personality, as one always is with Picasso. One is conscious of Picasso's personality, of its force and of its strength and of its wit. One is also conscious of the personality that it a harlequin to Picasso — somebody very gay, somebody very exuberant, somebody very funny. All of you know Picasso's early paintings from the circus — his [salt and banks?] of the blue period and the rose period — and how sad and weary and tired and unfortunate they are. This is because Picasso always [00:35:00] is concerned with that kind of human emotion. He identifies with it. He feels it deeply. Gleizes was just the reverse. You see at beginning in this painting — in this tiny little sketch called *Acrobats,* you see still more what he's after. An analysis of motion — acrobats. With Gleizes, there's never going to be any sense of danger. There's never going to be any human drama. There's never going to be any excitement and fear. There's never going to be any palm sweating. This is still far from an art of pure effusion. This is 1915. There are many reminiscences of natural forms in it. There are the people, there are the acrobats twirling and falling — it's all very clear. Now this is a series, and I can only show you the beginning of it which was in that clown [00:36:00] and this painting. And the end of it, which is a painting in the Guggenheim collection called *Stunt Flying* — but here is his art of pure effusion. Here is the art from which all reminiscence of natural form is banished. Here is the art where only the harmony of action — only the purity of movement — is what one takes ones pleasure — intellectual pleasure, or perhaps emotional pleasure — from. No reminiscence of people. There is an extraordinary sensation of height, but how is the height achieved? It's unfaceted. There aren't different points of view. There's just rhythm — this one, and this one, and this one intersecting, and this one. You remember, I think, the slide that was just in this place efficiently, to see how this — two years later in 1917 — [00:37:00] developed from what we saw. I'm afraid I must go faster.

Abstract he was from that point forward, with one or two exceptions. It's often said of abstract painters that they simply fail to react to their environment — that they cease to be concerned with the immediacy of life and the sensations of life. This wasn't true, because later in 1917 he went to Bermuda and what happened? His palette changed completely, as you can see in this slide, and as you can see in the slide on the right. And from time to time he would return to a more realistic rendering of what was around him, if it was a place that particularly impressed him. He had a house in Southern France — in Cavaliere on the Riviera. He loved the house very much — Kandinsky came to stay with him there — and he made this. This is a particularly good [00:38:00] slide and gives you some idea of the force and the strength and the brilliance of his colors. And always these same surging rhythms that you saw as early as that little 1911 landscape I showed you in the very beginning. But for the most part, he strove more and more to simplify and purify his art. He painted flat; He abandoned the use of varnish in his pigment; he used gasoline as a medium, because it would be flat; and he turned to big, huge subjects like this on the left, called *A Railroad Station Mural* — but painted as it was in 1920, just after his return to France, it was really called *Project for a Mural in the Gard du M*. And the *M* stood for Moscow.

And at this point, I must digress for a moment. [00:39:00] I show the evocation on the right, simply because some idea of the color and treatment of this painting on the left can be gleaned from looking at the color in the picture on the right. Why Moscow? Because Gleizes, from the very beginning, was obsessed by this social idea. In 1906 and 1907, even before he had become a cubist — before indeed cubism was begun — he had founded something called the Abbaye of Creteil. It was an association of artists and writers who went off to live in the country all by themselves to live communally; to support themselves on the basis of their work — and their work had to be artistic. Of course it failed miserably after two years for a lack of funds. And when the Russian Revolution occurred, he, along with a lot of other people, thought that this was to be the salvation [00:40:00] of the world, and that at last people would live together organically just as he wanted to paint organically. By 1921 however, he was completely and totally disillusioned. It's rather amusing to think why he was so disillusioned. It suddenly occurred to him — after meeting some of the refugees from the revolution — that this was not a revolution on kind of Tolstoian principles at all. So he was bitterly disappointed. But he never lost faith in these social ideals, and just a few years after these paintings, he began another utopian colony — this one on the banks of the Rhone at Moly-Sabata — and that lasted until the Nazis came in 1939.

I have a very poor representation of his work in the '20s. I can only begin to suggest what it was like. It was flat, and it was rhythmical. He was concerned to [00:41:00] make depth in a painting by using only flat objects. And so these he developed what was called — or what he called — translations and rotations. Translation would be an area like this posed against another flat area in a slightly different plane. And these would seem to circle back and forth. And the rotations, of course, meant that they would revolve this idea of all-pervading rhythm, which he took from Delaunay. In the very small gouache — again from the collection of Frederic Stern that you see on the right — some of the delicacy of color and the sense of depth that can be achieved in these rigorous and austere paintings — can be seen. The color, however, could become very gay and very vibrant.

This is another gouache in the Chicago collection. And the structure [00:42:00] of the painting — without losing any of its rhythmic qualities — could become infinitely more complicated, as you see here — with dashes of white, flecks of color. And never — even when he was painting flat and using in his oil gasoline instead of varnish and turpentine as a medium — did he lose that vigorous sense of touch.

Sometimes, with rather direct reference to the kind of subject matter that the rest of his contemporaries were making, he would make a picture like this one, which is in the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford. It's called *Imaginary Still Life*. That is, it's not a still life at all. There's no pretense to be analyzing from a number of points of view or in any fashion at all — particular objects on a particular table. He's simply painting rhythms and colors for the excitement [00:43:00] that they provide for our eye and for our mind. And he does provide this kind of excitement in an extraordinarily complicated way. Here are his planes in translation, because of the way they're distributed it seems to revolve. Here are marvelously colored stripes of two shades of green, translated into still other shades of green and reversed down here. The whole thing put together in a very exciting fashion.

I have to skip 20 years, for lack of a Gleizes slides, and can only show you now a few drawings — drawings that he made in the '40s when he had retired to get away from the invasion to Saint Rémy de Provence in the South of France, where he was preoccupied [00:44:00] with an enormous project — a project that nobody had ever thought of doing in some 300 years — to illustrate the *Pensées* of Blaise Pascal. Now those of you who know the *Pensées* of Pascal will readily understand why one of the most popular books in the world could go through 80 editions without anybody ever trying to illustrate it. This is simply because it is a book of abstract thought. But it was precisely for that reason that Gleizes wished to illustrate them. He calls this, on the left, *Rhythms*, that's all. And he calls, on the right, this drawing, preparatory for an etching, *For Meditation* because this is what all his paintings were about. For meditation. Something to look at and something to think about. He was very fond of what Pascal defined as the "esprit de Geometry" — the spirit of geometry — and the "esprit de finesse." [00:45:00] That is one, the first was an analysis of the world according to its appearances — trying to understand its underlying structure. But the second, the "esprit de finesse" was an understanding of the world based on faith. That was what he came — eventually — to believe. That his reason and his faith supplemented each other. They were not opposite things.

This essential preoccupation, only with rhythm — and yet a rhythm doesn't come loosely out of his emotions or out of his spirit, but from great control and thinking — can be seen in another one of these studies preparatory to the etchings in the Pascal series. Are those last paintings — I'm sorry [00:46:00] I can show you but few. This — in black in white — is one of his most enormous. It's over three meters high — the color in it is extraordinary. It's called *Painting with Seven Elements*. Here are the seven elements, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. All integrated, all put together. Throughout these surging rhythms, you can see even grays — I tell you they're grays. That's very important. For the most part, these lines that run through and around the painting are all the same color. And yet, when you look at the painting, they take on the shades of all the colors that are nearby. This was his color signs. And consequently, they

seem to whirl and to roll and to turn, only never to lose their place. Every bit as much as the paintings [00:47:00] by Delaunay.

He died in 1953. In 1952, he painted this — another sketch. I show it to you only so that you can see that up to the end, he retained the same force of touch, and the same liveliness of color that he had in the very beginning. And to conclude, I want to show you one enormous painting — with two elements or a harmony of violets — which characterizes his late art. In this, you can begin to sense what he could do with these winding, rolling grays. In fact, you can even see how the grays take on some of the surrounding colors. You can see how these translated planes around — moving around and moving back — [00:48:00] set up an extraordinary kind of depth, and that there's no point in trying to say, what is it? Or where am I in relation to it? It takes you in and spins you around gently without ever getting lost — without ever losing your feet, without ever losing your sense of balance. And yet, suffused as it is with this extraordinary rhythm, it's actually rather a passionate painting. But passionate in the sense of tremendous control and austerity.

Perhaps, if one insists on understanding or dealing with the question of what is it that he was representing, this remark by his friend, [00:49:00] Jacques Cléon, will give you something to hold onto. Cléon said, "Obeying the inner voice, he interpreted the miracle of life as a miracle of rhythmical forms. For rhythm, being to him natural and essential, it was his daily bread. To whom did he owe this daily bread? This was the problem which oppressed him more and more. Some years ago, he could not do otherwise than to give it a name. And after great and long struggle with himself, he stuttered the name that he had already heard in his childhood, God." So if you ask what his pictures represent, the answer is they represent the absolute. Thank you very much.

END OF AUDIO FILE
615212T03_01.mp3

Albert Gleizes / Daniel Robbins. 1962/3/15. Reel-to-Reel collection. A0004. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York

