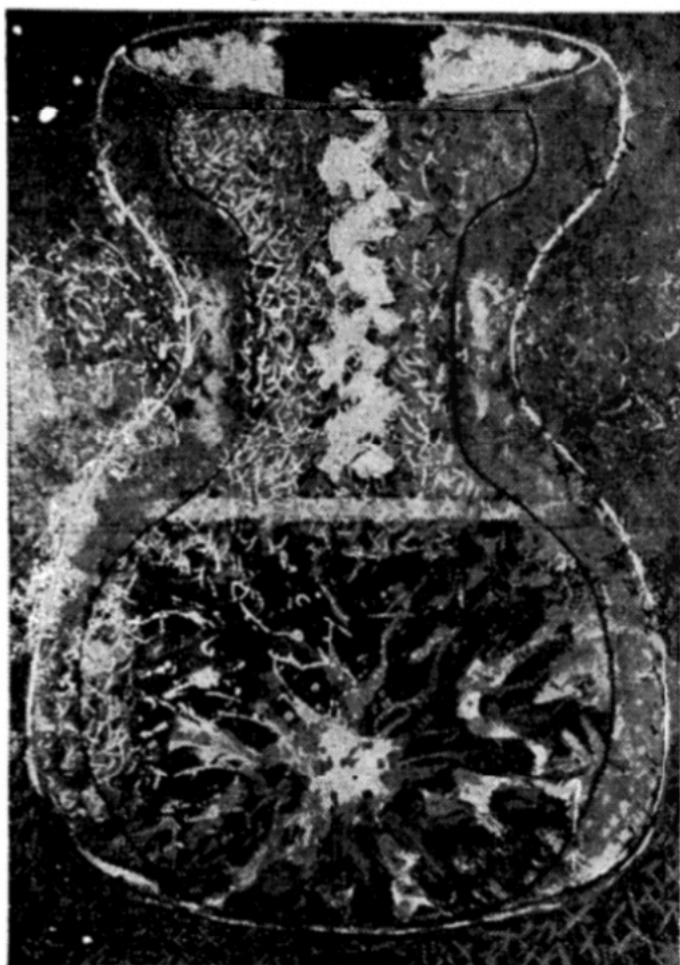


# Art: Object and Order



This oil on canvas, entitled "Fire Vase," is included in the exhibition by John Ferren now at the Stable Gallery.

## John Ferren Uses Symmetrical Shapes of Intense Color to Convey Meaning

LAVISH and magically intense in color, the new paintings by John Ferren at the Stable Gallery, 924 Seventh Avenue, represent a decisive departure from abstract expressionism, the painting style most salient today.

While many good painters are concerned with expressing flowing, unbounded space, Ferren has strictly respected the limitation of his canvas. Where others regard the physical gesture of painting, open form and the accident as means to express their experience of energy and flux, Ferren radically reverses the idea by enclosing his forms in definite outlines.

In his strange, absolutely personal canvases, Ferren has tackled two major problems: He has returned to the identifiable object, trying to endow it with symbolic significance, and he has utilized a compositional device long neglected, that of absolute symmetry.

The image Ferren has found is the vessel. Each painting depicts a single giant vase, cup, beaker or chalice, placed in dead center. They are emphatically outlined, but they give off brilliant light, rose, silver and bronze gold so intense it nearly obliterates definitional line. It is as if he were saying that the forms of life are fixed but the spirit moves out beyond.

In choosing the great vessel as bearer of his feelings, Ferren opens his paintings to a host of associations since it can be interpreted as crucible of life, metaphor for plenty, or ritualistic object. He amplifies these associations by painting whirling scarlet suns within the sphere, or suggesting bubbling alchemy. There is even the presence (probably instinctively selected) of the "mandala," the oldest symbol in existence for the magic circle of life.

An outwardly calm, soft-spoken, pipe-smoking man, looking younger than his 51 years, John Ferren feels he has arrived at an important juncture in this exhibition.

"No mystical ambiguity is intended," he explains, "but in the paintings in art history I most admire, the object is transcended without being destroyed. I think that is what I'm getting at in these paintings." He wanted to intensify his image and to keep the symbol within the painting (unlike the abstract expressionists who feel that the sum of the parts of a painting—that is, the painting itself—becomes the symbol).

Ferren's arrival at the idealism of these paintings, where flux is subordinated to the abstract notion of stasis, was prepared by extensive search. He has always been an avid reader, wading through volumes of poetry and philosophy. (Though self-educated, he is an instructor at Queens College.) At the same time, Ferren has been tempered by an adventurous, remarkably varied life.

He was born in Pendleton, Ore., of a pioneer family, was reared in California and came

to art rather suddenly after he had graduated from high school. From 1925 to 1929, he worked as an apprentice stonemason in San Francisco, where he experimented in off-hours with his own sculpture. In 1929, he and the poet Kenneth Rexroth went on a hitch-hiking trip to New York, and from there Ferren embarked for Paris. After vagabonding through France and Italy, he settled in Paris.

Making his living as a house painter, Ferren immersed himself in the vivid artistic life of the period in Paris and soon became known as a promising talent. There he exhibited non-objective paintings and plaster in two major galleries. In 1938, he returned to New York.

His return was followed by a restless period of experiment.

"I recapitulated the whole history of art in my work," he recalls, "went back to figurative painting for a time, but came, quite naturally, back to abstraction, which to me seemed capable of conveying another, more important realm of feeling." "When the central image first came to me," he adds speaking of the new paintings, "I fought it hard. Finally, I had to take a major decision."

The results of the decision combine a new painting technique, in which Ferren uses metallic paints in all-over patterns (calling to mind Persian and Byzantine art) and a flood of colors unaccustomed to such proximity, with a "fearful symmetry."

It is a like-unto-like painting, in which each rectangle has a mate, each sphere its echo, each color its opposite, as in the painting "Fire Vase." Tension is created by the rectangle between the two spheres. (Color is very important in the painting.) The idea of the image centralized, of the vase containing energy and expressing energy because it is contained, is fully explored. Ferren has, in these and other paintings, realized his will to intensify and deepen his imagery. D. A.

## SULLIVAN CANCELS DE MILLE AS GUEST

### TV Host Would Steer Clear of Long Dispute Between Producer and Union

By YAL ABRAHAM

Mr. Sullivan has canceled Carl S. De Mille's scheduled appearance on his television program as a result of the contract dispute between the producer and the union. The producer was dropped from the schedule for a similar reason in 1955.

The union has at times described Mr. De Mille as a "hater" but in good standing and in other times as a "respected member." But despite the mixed picture, several programs have announced that they will present Mr. De Mille as a guest next week.

Mr. Sullivan explained that he did not want to become involved in the dispute between Mr. De Mille and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. "The union goes back to 1922 when the producer was first a member of 'Lionel Lincoln Theatre.' The union, the Los Angeles and the group, it was then the American Federation of Radio Artists, seemed with members to fight what it considered an unrepresentative leadership in California when it is a union matter."

Mr. De Mille refused to pay the \$10,000 and the union threatened to sue him for \$100,000. The producer denied the suit to the Supreme Court. The union then filed a \$100,000 suit with the Los Angeles Superior Court. The union then filed a \$100,000 suit with the Los Angeles Superior Court.

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## TV Review

### Mickey Rooney Scores as Bitter Comedian

By JACK GREEN

A SCATHING portrait of a modern comedian, and a remarkable performance by Mickey Rooney, was presented last night on "The Mickey Rooney Show" on Channel 5.

The play was written by Fred Goetz and directed by Fred Goetz. The play was written by Fred Goetz and directed by Fred Goetz.

Adapted by Fred Goetz from the play by Fred Goetz, "The Comedian" was presented in the form of a play on the stage. The play was written by Fred Goetz and directed by Fred Goetz.

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## MITCHELL IS GUEST ON WNYC CONCERT

### Conductor in Capital Leads Symphony of Air Program—Offers 3 Premieres

By JACK GREEN

Howard Mitchell, regular conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, appeared yesterday as guest conductor of the Symphony of the Air.

Mr. Mitchell led a program of contemporary American works in Carnegie Hall. The concert was presented by the National Association for American Composers and Conductors as a part of the series of "Symphony of the Air" programs.

The three works that were the focus of the program were written during the last decade, yet each was of an exciting quality that will give the listener a new feeling for the music of the 20th century.

The first work, "Symphony of the Air," was written by Howard Mitchell. The second work, "Symphony of the Air," was written by Howard Mitchell.

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