

Years of Friendship

1944–1956

The Correspondence of
Lyonel Feininger and Mark Tobey

Edited by Achim Moeller

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**HATJE
CANTZ**

In loving memory of my parents

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Acknowledgments

The year 2006 marks the fiftieth and thirtieth anniversaries, respectively, of the deaths of Lyonel Feininger (1871–1956) and Mark Tobey (1890–1976). While the lives of both artists are well documented, little is known of the deep friendship they enjoyed over a period of twelve years. Sparked by their first meeting in 1944, it continued until cut short by Feininger's death in 1956. The friendship developed through an extended correspondence of more than eighty letters that offer remarkable insights not only into the affection and profound respect they felt for one another, both personally and artistically, but into their individual personalities and artistic objectives as well. The story that unfolds in the letters is filled with mutual encouragement and criticism, humor and sensitivity. It is to the friendship of Feininger and Tobey that I dedicate this publication.

To my late friend Paul Cummings I am indebted for having introduced me to this extraordinary friendship. In 1989, I purchased Tobey's *Aerial City* (1950), a watercolor once owned by Lyonel and Julia Feininger. Cummings suggested that I look into the relatively unknown correspondence between the two artists. It was from this suggestion that the concept for a publication of the letters and an exhibition of the two artists' work was born. This undertaking culminated in a private publication of the letters in 1991 and the exhibition "Feininger and Tobey:

Years of Friendship, 1944-1956.” To pay tribute to Paul Cummings and to the two artists on their respective anniversaries, I have issued, with this publication, a new edition of the 1991 book. I am especially privileged to include an introductory essay by the art historian Peter Selz, in addition to substantial revisions to the transcriptions and annotations, an updated chronology, and numerous color plates of both the paintings discussed in the letters and the letters themselves.

The project could not have been realized without the help of a great many people. I would like to thank Stephan E. Hauser, research assistant for the 1991 edition, who initiated the long transcribing process and conducted extensive research for the notes. The present publication was realized under the stewardship of the current project coordinator, Kim Conaty, who managed all publishing details, retranscribed sections of the letters, and compiled the chronology. I am, as always, indebted to Emily Walter for her extensive and careful editing of the entire manuscript. Her vast editorial experience was matched only by her enthusiasm for and sensitivity toward the subject matter.

I am grateful to T. Lux Feininger, Mal L. Barasch, and Ralph F. Colin Jr. of the Feininger Trusts for authorizing the publication of much of the information included here. Miani Johnson contributed to this project by allowing us to publish letters by the artists in her possession. Charles Seliger generously provided photographs. I would like to thank Jill Walek at the Seattle Art Museum for assisting with copyrights and permissions to publish materials from

the Tobey Estate, including the letters written by Lyonel Feininger. Leslie A. Morris at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., kindly gave us access to the Lyonel Feininger Papers and granted permission to publish the letters written by Tobey to Feininger. The many individuals and institutions that graciously provided us with images and permissions include Barbara Goldstein Wood, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; Deanna Cross, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Amy Berman, The Art Institute of Chicago; Cécile Brunner, Kunsthaus Zürich; Lori Eurto, Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica, New York; Patricia Magnani, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York; Jennifer Hughes, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums; Wendy A. Griffiths, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; and those private collectors whose works were provided courtesy of Galerie Utermann, Dortmund. Additional thanks go to Nicole L. Bouche and Kris Kinsey, University of Washington Special Collections, and also to Susan Halpert and Jennie Rathbun, Houghton Library, for their help with reproductions of the letters.

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Achim Moeller

January 2006

Note to the Reader

Letters from Lyonel and Julia Feininger to Mark Tobey and one related telegram from Marian Willard are housed in the University of Washington Library Manuscript Division, Seattle, Washington (Mark Tobey Papers Accession No. 3593-2, also available on microfilm roll 3201 frames 0023-0131 at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and branches) and published by permission of the Seattle Art Museum Archives, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division. Additional letters are from the former Marian Willard Gallery, published courtesy of Miani Johnson, New York. All letters from Mark Tobey to Lyonel and Julia Feininger are housed at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Lyonel Feininger Papers bMS Ger 146.1 ([2877] and bMS Ger 146 [1386-1421]) and published by permission of the Houghton Library.

A brief description of each document prefaces each letter, including the location of the original and any information (such as the postmarked date or the return address) found on the envelope.

Dates have been standardized unless they are part of the document.

Some abbreviated words and figures have been expanded. Ampersands and squiggles have been replaced by “and.”

Obvious typing or spelling errors have been silently corrected.

Words or phrases for which no sufficient transcription could be offered are substituted by [?].

Parts written in French are printed exactly as they stand in the originals. This explains the presence of a number of oddities, which are often intentional puns.

Punctuation has occasionally been adjusted for ease of reading. In most cases, however, it has been left as it appears in the originals, even when this is not grammatically correct.

Editorial insertions are indicated with square brackets.

Where possible a biographical note accompanies the first appearance of an individual.

Abbreviations Used

ALS	Autographed note signed. A very brief message (entirely in the hand of the author)
TLS	Typed letter signed (signature in the hand of the author)
ANS	Autographed note signed. A very brief message (entirely in the hand of the author)
AES	Autographed endorsement signed (and endorsement on another person's letter in the hand of the endorser)
p, pp	number of pages
o/c	oil on canvas
AAA	Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Houghton	Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Miani Johnson	Courtesy of Miani Johnson, Marian Willard Gallery, New York
Mark Tobey Papers	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division, Seattle
Hess no.	Inventory number in Julia Feininger's oeuvre catalogue of paintings by Lyonel Feininger in Hans Hess, <i>Lyonel Feininger</i> (New York: Abrams, 1961), pp. 247-300
Prasse W	Inventory number of woodcut in Leona E. Prasse, <i>Lyonel Feininger, A Definitive Catalogue of his Graphic Work: Etchings, Lithographs, Woodcuts</i> (Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1972)

Parallel Visions: Lyonel Feininger and Mark Tobey

Peter Selz

Lyonel Feininger and Mark Tobey established a close friendship rather late in their lives. Having spent fifty years in Germany, Feininger returned to New York, the city of his birth, in 1937. Seven years later he first became aware of Mark Tobey's work, when the latter had his first solo show at Marian Willard's gallery in New York. Tobey, who in his lifetime had wandered over three continents, lived in Seattle at the time. A long and fruitful correspondence between the two artists ensued. Different as their lives and paintings were, they found what Goethe called "elective affinities."

Outside the Mainstream

Feininger and Tobey were both considered peripheral in the art world, which was centered in New York. Feininger often remarked that, whereas in Germany he was seen as an American, in America he was seen as a German artist. During his last twenty years in New York he had little contact with other New York artists. When he taught at the famed Black Mountain College in the summer of 1945, where Robert Motherwell was also teaching, his primary contacts were with Josef Albers, his former Bauhaus colleague, and Alfred Einstein, the German musicologist. Although Feininger exhibited regularly in New York, his

shows were held at Curt Valentin's gallery, a venue dedicated to European artists. His prize at the 1949 Carnegie International had greater international than national impact. His election to the presidency of the Federation of American Painters and Sculptors in 1955—when he was an octogenarian—was primarily honorific, an homage to his lifelong achievement.

Perhaps because Tobey was not a New York artist, or perhaps because he painted in a small format and mostly in tempera, he never received the credit he was due for his introduction of all-over painting, the hallmark of the Abstract Expressionist idiom. Jackson Pollock, who made the technique the center of his work, acknowledged having seen Tobey's 1944 exhibition and admired his work—as did Feininger, albeit for different reasons. The original impact on Pollock of Tobey's painting was subsequently minimized by influential critics like Clement Greenberg and William Rubin in their effort to establish Pollock's priority in "American-type painting." Tobey's award of the first prize at the 1958 Venice Biennale was barely noted in this country. When Robert Rauschenberg received the first prize in Venice only six years later, it was reported that he was the first American to receive this honor. (Actually, neither Tobey nor Rauschenberg was the first. James McNeill Whistler received first prize back in 1895.) When the Museum of Modern Art sent the pivotal exhibition "The New American Painting" to eight European countries in 1958, Mark Tobey was excluded, to the astonishment of many European artists and critics. French critics, considering Tobey to be one of the foremost American

painters, invented the term “École de Pacifique” to find a geographic niche for the artist.

In Europe, by contrast, both Feininger and Tobey achieved full recognition. Feininger was honored at his sixtieth birthday with a retrospective in Berlin’s Kronprinzenpalais in 1931, and Tobey was the first non-French artist to have a retrospective at the Palais de Louvre. Tobey was also the subject of a major survey—almost three hundred works—at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1961. This was followed, to be sure, by a smaller but excellent American show at the Museum of Modern Art, which I had the good fortune to initiate and which was curated by William C. Seitz. Recently, major retrospectives of both artists again took place abroad: Mark Tobey at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid in 1997 and Feininger at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin and the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 1998.

Between Figuration and Abstraction

Both Feininger and Tobey worked in the interstice between the figurative and the abstract mode of painting. Having taken full cognizance of Cubism and Futurism as well as total abstraction by Delaunay and Kandinsky, Feininger decided to avoid pure abstraction, writing in 1913 to his friend the fantasist Alfred Kubin that as far as his own work was concerned, “pure abstract art would simply signify the end of all progress.”¹ In fact, with the exception of the mysterious canvas *Broken Glass* (1927), his painting remained figurative. When he was invited by the American

Abstract Artists to join their De Stijl-inspired group in 1942, he refused, saying his art required a contact with nature.

Upon initial viewing, Tobey's paintings may seem totally abstract, but attentive contemplation will reveal their source in the natural world below the surface, which resembles the abstract. The titles he gave to his paintings often indicate their meaning: *Edge of August*, *Floral Landscape*, *Mountain Shadows*, *In the Marsh*, *Golden Mountains*, *Wind and Tide*. "When we find the abstract in nature," he wrote, "we find the deepest art."² Like Feininger, he rejected pure abstraction because "[it] would mean a type of painting completely unrelated to life, which is unacceptable to me."³ Looking at the Abstract Expressionist paintings of his younger American colleagues in New York, he wrote in 1954, "I keep very much to myself. I hate the avant-garde stuff, except for Mark Rothko, but he makes things so big and just color and space. The Pollock show (at Janis) was awful as far as I am concerned."⁴ The older Feininger, on the other hand, could view the New American painters from a more objective distance, writing to Tobey the same year, "some of our more adventurous American Moderns appear to me to have immense vitality, with prospects of developing into major achievement, and the one thing missing perhaps, is patience and deep love."⁵

Priority of Line

Both Feininger and Tobey would have agreed with the authoritative pronouncements of J. A. D. Ingres: "drawing is

the probity of Art”; “drawing does not mean simply to reproduce contours; drawing does not consist merely of line: drawing is also expression, the inner form”; “color adds adornment to painting.”⁶ Their emphasis on drawing and line separated their art from the gestural art of the Action Painters. For almost twenty years Feininger worked as a cartoonist and caricaturist, drawing comic strips for German and American newspapers, and he began working in oil as late as 1907, when he was in Paris and in contact with Oskar Moll and other German painters of the Matisse circle. Early canvases, such as *The White Man* (1907) or *Street in Paris* (1909), are basically drawings to which local color has been skillfully applied. Once he had encountered modernism in the form of Cubism, his painting assumed a linear, prismatic form: he referred to his style as “Prisma-ismus.”⁷ In his work he proceeded generally by first making rough sketches or drawings, which led to watercolors, and then finally ended up in oils. His paintings of New York skyscrapers show linear, two-dimensional silhouettes standing against the sky, their vertical lines criss-crossed by horizontals and diagonals. In 1946 he wrote to Mark Tobey: “In fact, my last Winter’s work almost eliminates local color and is chiefly built of linear stresses, on a general background tone and floating color accents.”⁸ *Vita Nova* (1947; see ill. ►), a beautiful late painting, shows only a breath of veiled color that suggests light. The picture’s title was supplied by Mark Tobey, who also wrote the introduction to the catalogue of his friend’s exhibition at the Curt Valentin Gallery in 1954 (see ►). Speaking of Feininger’s guiding us “from one space to another” and

challenging us “to see what we have looked at but not often seen,”⁹ Tobey admired Feininger’s way of working with line. In the very first letter he wrote to the older artist, he told Feininger that “my line shall grow more form and content since knowing you.”¹⁰ His use of line, however, is very different from Feininger’s. Feininger’s lines are uninterrupted and angular and almost always straight. He recalled that “an aunt spoke to me about Hogarth’s ‘line of beauty’: this baffled me, because I felt that the straight line and angle were more beautiful.”¹¹ Tobey’s lines, in contrast, are not just curved and interrupted. They are bundled; they come in loops and mazes; they intertwine. His “white writing” was an interconnecting calligraphic line that creates labyrinthine forms in the picture space. Tobey abandoned the hierarchical order of a center of interest in Western art for a continuous space created by a total pictorial field. Undoubtedly this moving, vibrating line and web formation in Tobey’s paintings is what fascinated Pollock when he saw Tobey’s show in 1944 before generating his own powerful all-over paintings in 1946.

Picturing the City

Both Lyonel Feininger and Mark Tobey achieved their signature styles late in their careers. Feininger was forty-one years old when he painted *High Houses* (1912) and Tobey was forty-six when he arrived at his own style of painting with *Broadway* (1936; see ill. ►). In the work of both artists, a view of the city was pivotal.

High Houses was based on sketches of the demolition of buildings Feininger had seen in Paris. In a letter to Julia,

his wife, he referred to the finished painting as “the first mature work of my career.”¹² The painting was exhibited in Herwarth Walden’s “First German Autumn Salon” in Berlin in 1913, the crucial first international exhibition of modernist art. In *High Houses*, Feininger converted the modernist exploration of form and space into a language of his own (see ill. ►, for *High Houses II* [1913]). The Cubist breakup of shapes became crystalline shards, and Futurist lines of force became rays of light. His rendering recalled city designs by utopian architects, such as Hans Scharoun and Bruno Taut, for whom transparent glass architecture served as a metaphor for new hope after the destruction of the Great War. This was also reflected in Feininger’s *Cathedral of Socialism*, the woodcut that illustrated Walter Gropius’s Program of the Bauhaus in 1919.

After his breakthrough in *High Houses*, Feininger painted numerous pictures of Thuringian towns and churches, reworking them on canvas into perpendicular forms of right angles and prisms. Several years later, after he returned to New York, he created a major series of canvases on the theme of the Manhattan skyscraper.

When previous European artists, such as Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Albert Gleizes, came to Manhattan, they also had admired the splendor, technological achievement, and modernity of the skyscrapers: Duchamp wrote of bridges and skyscrapers as America’s contribution to civilization. Feininger, returning to New York after these long years of absence, approached them with wonderment. The precise, prismatic, linear structure that was so fundamental to his paintings was

strikingly appropriate to the geometric abstract forms of Manhattan's highrise structures. Feininger related these vertical shapes dynamically to the space surrounding them. People are mostly absent, their existence acknowledged merely by light coming from the windows. In his last paintings, he dissolved the linear contours, dematerializing the city views into paintings of mysterious diffusion. In his 1954 essay on Feininger, Mark Tobey observed that Feininger's Manhattan buildings rise "resplendent, carrying within their magic structures the calligraphic black lines of window ledge and pane. Man's world of the city built of stone, glass and steel—yet to Feininger a letter wherein he reads a message not only from architect to building but from Nature herself as she surrounds and penetrates these forms, now immanent, now remote."¹³

Feininger, for his part, admired Tobey's city views and was enormously pleased when, early in their friendship, Tobey presented him with *City Radiance* (1944; see ill. ►); he bought *Aerial City* (1950; see ill. p. 251) when he saw it at Tobey's gallery. Feininger wrote about these to Tobey, "We reacted at once strongly and happily to your delineations of aerial perspective of vast terrestrial expanses as experience optically, imaginatively, from great heights. We feel that with one great stride you have achieved a spatial vision which is at once satisfactory and at the same time convincingly logical, and which should place you far and away beyond anything I have knowledge of by contemporary painters."¹⁴

Tobey's paintings of the city had undergone many changes since he had painted *Broadway* in 1936. *Broadway*

depicted an urban canyon teeming with dynamic life: the wild traffic, buses, noise, the screaming display of superabundant neon lights in Times Square. Six years later, he wrote to Marian Willard: “*Broadway* was an experience. This cannot happen very often and certainly not so much, being isolated as I am. I can only see parallels in Klee . . . Picasso. . . for any just excuse as it is still all in all experimental time for many artists.”¹⁵

By the time the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased this painting in 1942, Tobey’s scenes of the city had little reference to realistic representation. Feininger’s city views rarely show dwellers in the streets. In his later views, Tobey merely suggests their activity in a labyrinthine web of lines. In works such as *City Radiance, New York* (1944; see ill. ►), or the shimmering *New York Table* (1946) there is no longer any point of reference, as the whole surface of the painting appears to be in motion. The apparently random lines create undulating spaces, and viewers are left to their own devices in apprehending what Joshua C. Taylor called “a cosmos of contemplation,” in which “light becomes alive and the world ticks with a new rhythm.”¹⁶

“Music and Painting belong together”

Lyonel Feininger’s parents were both professional musicians. Karl was a noted violinist and Elizabeth (born Lutz) was a pianist, organist, and singer. They performed in concert tours throughout Europe, South America, and the United States. Karl Feininger supervised his son’s daily violin practice; Lyonel first appeared in concerts at the age of twelve. When he was sixteen he planned to study at the

Leipzig conservatory, as his father had done, but, instead, he drifted into art and studied at art schools in Hamburg and Berlin. He continued to see himself as a musician as well as a painter, writing to his lifelong friend Alfred Vance Churchill in 1913: "I play Bach and Buxtehude on my Estey Harmonium. Music is as much my life as air and creating in paint. My pictures are ever nearing closer the Synthesis of the fugue."¹⁷ As Hans Hess points out in his study of the painter, the fugal forms of Bach's counterpoint and his laws of music were paradigmatic for Feininger's own thinking about the structure and form of pictorial composition. Feininger's great interest in the music of Bach and the art of the fugue contributed to the Bach renaissance in the early twentieth century and was shared by other artists, Georges Braque and Frantisek Kupka among them.

At the Bauhaus Feininger encountered a love of music among his colleagues Paul Klee, Johannes Itten, Oskar Schlemmer, Wassily Kandinsky, Lothar Schreyer, and Josef Albers. Klee, who had also thought of becoming a musician early in life, often played duets with Feininger. In addition to playing the violin, Feininger also worked as a composer, producing works such as Fugue in D-Minor for Organ and Piano and Fugue IX in E-Minor; the latter was performed at the Bauhaus Festival in 1924 and then at the Leipzig Conservatory. His Fugue VI for Organ premiered at the opening of "Die Blaue Vier" (The Blue Four) exhibition in Los Angeles in 1926. When the same piece was played at Stanford University, the composer Ernst Bloch commented that "nobody else in America could compose such a fugue."¹⁸ Karin von Maur points out that the composition of

many of Feininger's paintings is parallel to the structure of Bach fugues.¹⁹

The correspondence between Feininger and Tobey abounds in references to music. On October 12, 1949, Feininger, writing to Tobey from New York, asked him about his "piano playing," and continues, "I immerse myself deeply in Bach and have a great gain of *discipline* from it. It is not even the point, to 'perform'; it suffices to *realize* and follow analytically, intellectually." Two days later, Tobey wrote from Seattle: "I am trying to relax a little must do it on my own—mostly piano playing—Schumann - Scarlatti - Debussy - early English music."

Although Tobey did not come from a musical family like Feininger's, for him, as for Feininger, hearing, performing, and writing music were essential aspects of life and work. In 1949, Tobey composed *Three Pieces for Solo Flute*, to which Feininger responded on May 2, 1950: "The linear expression of the flute is the logical concept of your line-painting. And your line-painting, as in Bach's melody lines, are formed to give depth and the indication, in accenting, of polyphony. There is no doubt at all that both Music and Painting belong together and each supplements the other in expression and validity."

In later years, Tobey also responded to contemporary music and became enthusiastic about Anton Webern's work. Tobey's paintings, in turn, had a significant effect on the evolution of modern music as written by John Cage. In 1936, Tobey and Cage first met at the progressive Cornish School of Allied Arts in Seattle and a few years later Cage saw Tobey's 1944 exhibition in New York. Like Feininger

and Pollock, he realized that these pictures presented a new and important step in contemporary art, and he acquired two of the “white writing” paintings. Cage was particularly impressed by the absence of symbolic or narrative references and the “surface that had been utterly painted”: that “could have continued beyond the frame.”²⁰ To a certain extent the time-concentrated “frames” in Cage’s music may have been affected by his response to Tobey’s continuous paintings. Cage, who was close to the Abstract Expressionist painters, also compared Tobey’s work to Pollock’s, saying, “If you look at the Tobey, you see that each stroke has a slightly different white, and if you look at your daily life, you see that it hasn’t been dripped from a can either.”²¹ In the 1970s, Cage, who had once thought of becoming a painter, did paintings and engravings as his “response to the work of Mark Tobey.” “In another sense,” he said, “*all* of my work is a response to Mark Tobey” (emphasis added).²² In 1972, he wrote a poem called “25 Mesostics re and not re Mark Tobey,” which ends:

all it is is a Melodie
of mAny
ColoRs
Klangfarbenmelodie

A Sense of the Universal

In 1919, following the Great War, Walter Gropius, pursuing a vision of creative imagination and praxis, established the

Bauhaus, a school, or, rather, a community, to engage all human faculties—feeling, sensation, and thought—toward the creation of an integrated man-made environment. In his initial Program, Gropius called specifically for a “new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of 9 million workers like a crystal symbol of a new faith.”²³ The Bauhaus was founded in Weimar, the revered city of Goethe, Schiller, and Nietzsche, where in 1919 the constitution of the new German republic was being written. The cover of Gropius’s visionary program showed a woodcut by Lyonel Feininger, the first painter—to be followed by Kandinsky, Klee, and Schlemmer—to be appointed Master of Form in the new school. Feininger’s print is a visualization of a Gothic church with three towers, which create a triangle, and diagonal rays of light and stars pointing toward the sky.

The crystalline print, called *Cathedral of Socialism*, much like Feininger’s paintings of parish churches and the Cathedral of Halle, can be interpreted as signifying the hope for a spiritual state—“crystal symbols of a new faith,” in which art and religion may once more be unified as they were at the Bauhütte in the Middle Ages.

Feininger’s paintings of the sand, sea, and sky—serene paintings of a light-filled world— point toward a pantheist worldview, going back to the German mystics Jakob Boehme and Meister Eckhardt, as well as to the Romantics’ notion of the primordial. In *Bird Cloud* (1926; see ill. ►), the central motif is a prismatic cloud. A small figure stands on the left margin, overwhelmed by the white cloud and the

dark sea and dunes. It bears comparison with Caspar David Friedrich's transcendental *Monk by the Sea* (1809). Both artists convey a mood of melancholy and silent contemplation. Feininger, who had acquired a basic Cubist syntax, rendered his vision in painting in which the faraway clouds and the beach are on the same picture plane, whereas Friedrich's earlier painting is still a three-dimensional rendering of space. Both, however, share an empathy with a universe without limits, as expressed by Friedrich's contemporary the poet Novalis, who wrote that art affects "the deepest insights and interactivity, the innermost communion of the finite with the infinite."²⁴

For Mark Tobey, the belief in the universal was deep-seated. "He has often stated that there can be no break between nature, art, science, religion, and personal life."²⁵ In 1918, Mark Tobey converted to the Baha'i faith, which teaches the synthesis of all religions into a single world faith of universal brotherhood, and he said frequently that his work was deeply influenced by this faith. Believing in universality, Tobey was open to the influence of Zen. In 1923, while teaching at the Cornish School, he met Teng K'uei, who taught him Chinese painting and calligraphy. He was attracted also to Zen Buddhism and the "spirit of the brush" in Zen painting.

Much of Tobey's life was spent in transit. In 1926, he traveled to Haifa to visit the tombs of the founders of Baha'i; in 1934, he traveled to Shanghai and on to Japan, where he spent an important month in a Zen monastery. His mature paintings, such as *World Egg* of the Meditative Series of the mid-1950s, were seen by William C. Seitz as

“visual prayers . . . profound communions with God, nature and the self.”²⁶ These pictures have no beginning and no end but an ongoing continuity, a universal rhythm. They are very close to the Romantics’ notion of art being “a miniature imprint of the great whole,”²⁷ words that resound in Gropius’s Program, as illustrated by Feininger.

- 1 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Alfred Kubin, cited in Peter-Klaus Schuster, “‘Prisma-ismus,’ Feininger, die Avantgarde und die Religion der Kunst,” in *Lyonel Feininger von Gelmorada nach Manhattan*, ed. Roland März (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1989): 244.
- 2 Mark Tobey, quoted in Gottfried Boehm, “The Abstract in Nature,” in Galerie Beyeler, *Mark Tobey* (Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1990): 25.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Mark Tobey, “Selected Texts,” in Museo Nacional Centro Reina Sofia, *Mark Tobey* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro Reina Sofia, 1997): 411.
- 5 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Mark Tobey, November 19, 1954.
- 6 J. A. D. Ingres, *Assertions*, cited in Joshua C. Taylor, *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987): 112, 115.
- 7 Hans Hess, *Feininger* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1951): 56.
- 8 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Mark Tobey, October 14, 1946.
- 9 Mark Tobey, *Lyonel Feininger* (New York: Curt Valentin Gallery, 1954): 24.
- 10 Mark Tobey, letter to Lyonel Feininger, November [1954].
- 11 “Feininger,” in Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957): 278.
- 12 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Julia Feininger, May 18, 1913, cited in Matthias Schirrent, “Lichtromantik, Lyonel Feininger Architektur in Deutschland,” in *Lyonel Feininger von Gelmorada nach Manhattan*, ed. Roland März: 253.
- 13 Tobey, *Lyonel Feininger*, n.p.

- 14 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Mark Tobey, December 2, 1950.
- 15 Mark Tobey, letter to Marian Willard, September 1946, quoted in *Mark Tobey* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1961): n.p.
- 16 Joshua C. Taylor, *Tribute to Mark Tobey* (Washington: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974): 11.
- 17 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Alfred Vance Churchill, March 13, 1913, quoted in Ernst Schreyer, *Lyonel Feininger Architecture and Fantasy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964): 133.
- 18 Hess, *Feininger*, 117.
- 19 Karin von Maur, "Feininger und die Kunst der Fuge," in *Lyonel Feininger von Gelmorada nach Manhattan*, ed. Roland März: 282-83.
- 20 John Cage, "Conversing with Richard Kostalanetz," in Wulf Herzogenrath and Andres Kreul, *Sounds of the Inner Eye: John Cage, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves* (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen, 2002): 160-61.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Walter Gropius, *Program of the Staatliche Bauhaus* (Weimar: 1919).
- 24 Novalis, "Poesie," *Schriften II* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960): 541.
- 25 William C. Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962): 10.
- 26 Lyonel Feininger, letter to Alfred Kubin, cited in Peter-Klaus Schuster, "'Prisma-ismus,' Feininger, die Avantgarde und die Religion der Kunst," in *Lyonel Feininger von Gelmorada nach Manhattan*, ed. Roland März (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1989): 244.
- 27 A. W. Schlegel, cited in August Wiedmann, *Romantic Roots in Modern Art* (Old Woking, Surrey: 1979): 6.

Correspondence

Mark Tobey [in Julia Feininger's hand]

Houghton bMS Ger 146.1 (2877)

May 12, 1944

Imagine being offered the bed of a master. I had such a lovely time with them—he will always live within me as the pure example of a man who has only to be felt—and the feeling or atmosphere is stronger than words—it is life itself which one gets from him—life which has been distilled and radiates as pure spirit—

Mark wrote this May 12, 1944

To Lyonel and Julia Feininger

Houghton bMS Ger 146 (1421)

ALS 2¹/₂ pp.

November [1944]

4144¹/₂ University Way

Seattle, Washington

Sunday

Dear Lyonel and Julia!

What a long silence on my part and yet you have been with me almost every day and there has been much communion of spirits. Life has been hectic and much, too much activity on the objective plane to suit me. This combined with eye-ulcers has kept me hopping.

Well I hear your show is up.¹ How I wish I were there to see it and meet you once again. I saw your "Bird Cloud" (see ill. ►) in the Romantic show in San Francisco and felt it was the only "resolved" painting in the show.² There was more sea in three inches of sand in your painting than all of [Marsden] Hartley's canvases of the Maine Coast.³ If Hartley was so formal in pattern as to be completely empty of the vastness or force of the sea. I went to San Francisco for dental work in exchange for a painting. Walked in to the dentist's office and there was a reproduction of a Feininger. She said that your show there some time ago had almost "knocked her out!"⁴ Also that a man came in for dental