

give in to painting. His art seems too thin and laid back and has often left me a bit cold, but I also find its quizzical ambivalence about painting and its issues provocative, needling. Moskowitz's art has emerged from the heroics of Barnett Newman's relatively geometric Abstract Expressionism to assume an antiheroic, almost juvenile stance. In his hands Newman's stripe has become, in various paintings, a sword, a cane, the edge of a

ART

locomotive, or the World Trade Center towers—something ordinary and, within the context of high abstract art, silly. These schematized images, at once distillations of some fact of American life and perversions of some abstract-art issue, float in fields of saturated monochrome—deep, bright greens, reds, oranges, and, more recently, black—sometimes painted flat, subtly modulated, behind which may hover a faintly outlined architectural space, the corner of a room.

Everything about these works can, upon first encounter, seem merely drawn

or designed, but they are full of repressed gesture, of furtive painterliness which slowly reveals itself. For all their irony and formal irreverence, they become extremely perceptual, with a contemplativeness which directs you back toward the purity of Newman or Mondrian. The deep, brown night space of *Wrigley Building* is a good example: the keeled-over building looms on a horizon which swings in from the right, while a tiny central night star of a cross somehow convinces us that it is not only right side up but affixed to an opaque plane, and, behind both, that ubiquitous Moskowitz corner lurks. Thus the ostensible thinness of Moskowitz's work (both a fact and a criticism) becomes triple-spaced.

Moskowitz seems at once very American—within the tradition of not only Newman but O'Keeffe and Sheeler—and yet very nonwestern in impulse. The precision and understatement of his art, its eschewal of typical painting ambition, the singularity of each work in terms of surface image and idea all lend an almost oriental tone to the proceedings. It is a strange and unique body of work and Yonkers is only 45 minutes from Broadway. (The Hudson River Museum, 511 Warburton Avenue, 914-963-4550, through September 13) ■

By Roberta Smith

Another out-of-town stop was the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers for an exhibition of 21 paintings and drawings (1975-1981) by Robert Moskowitz. Moskowitz, whose work is generally located within the New Image phenomenon, is a nonpainter's painter who refuses to