THE FOX

NEW YORK 1975 $3.00

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED WITH TRYING TO RECLAIM ART AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION, IN EXPOSING THE DOMINATION OF THE CULTURE/ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS AS WELL AS ART WHICH INDOLENTLY REFLECTS THAT APPARATUS, YOU ARE URGED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS JOURNAL. ITS EDITORIAL THRUST IS IDEOLOGICAL: IT AIMS AT A CONTRIBUTION TO THE WIDER MOVEMENT OF SOCIAL CRITICISM/TRANSFORMATION. (OUR CONTRIBUTION WILL BE ON THE ART FRONT BUT BY NO MEANS LIMITED TO THE FIXED CONTEXT-CLOSURE OF 'ART'.) WE NEED A BROAD SOCIAL BASE IN POSITIVE OPPOSITION TO THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT AND SOCIAL RELATIONS REPRODUCED BY 'OFFICIAL' CULTURE. THOSE OF YOU WISHING TO PARTICIPATE SHOULD SEND CORRESPONDENCE TO: THE EDITORS, POST OFFICE BOX 728. CANAL STREET STATION, NEW YORK CITY, 10013

THE FOX

EDITORIAL STAFF:
MEL RAMSDEN, SARAH CHARLESWORTH, JOSEPH KOSUTH, PRESTON HELLER, MICHAEL CORRIS, ANDREW MENARD, IAN BURN

ASSISTANCE:
KARL BEVERIDGE, LIZZIE BORDEN, AVRIL BURN, CAROL CONDE, GORDON GILBERT, NICK HOLMES, NIGEL LENDON, STEVEN MARTIN, PAULA RAMSDEN, JAMES YATES, JAAP RIETMAN, ART & LANGUAGE PRESS (UNITED KINGDOM), GERRY ROSEN (WEST COAST), TERRY SMITH (AUSTRALIA). IN PUBLISHING THIS ISSUE WE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS.

THE FOX IS A PUBLICATION OF THE ART & LANGUAGE FOUNDATION, INC. EDITORIAL ADDRESS: POST OFFICE BOX 728, CANAL STREET STATION, NEW YORK CITY, 10013.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

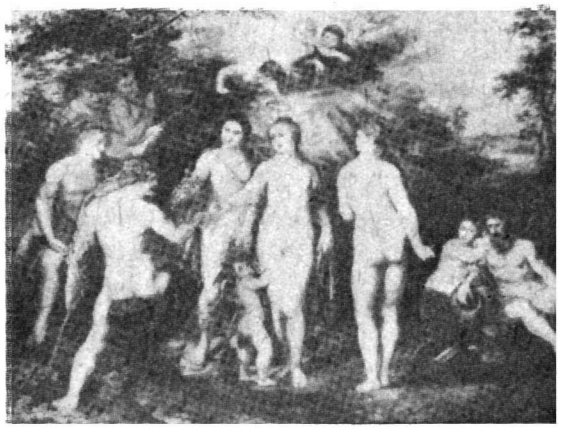
NUMBER TWO
1975

DISCUSSIONS

ARTICLES

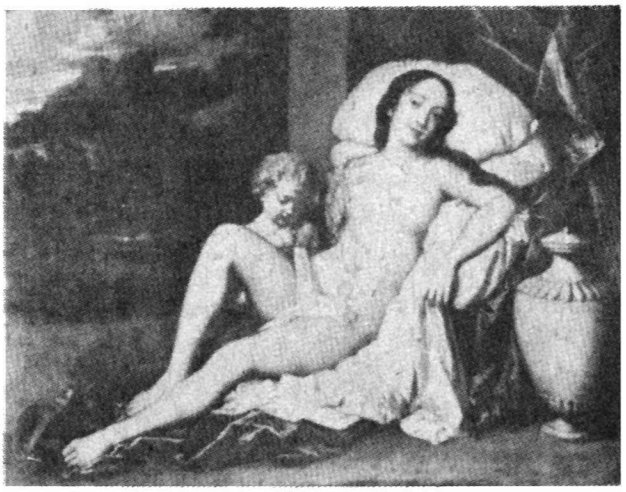
But a further element is now added. The element of judgement. Paris awards the apple to the woman he finds most beautiful. Thus Beauty becomes competitive. (Today The Judgement of Paris has become the Beauty Contest.) Those who are not judged beautiful are *not beautiful*. **Those who are, are given the prize.**

THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS BY RUBENS 1577–1640



The prize is to be owned by a judge – that is to say to be available for him. Charles the Second commissioned a secret painting from Lely. It is a highly typical image of the tradition. Nominally it might be a Venus and Cupid. **In fact it is a portrait of one of the King's mistresses, Nell Gwynne. It shows her passively looking at the spectator staring at her naked.**

NELL GWYNNE BY LELY 1618–1680



This nakedness is not, however, an expression of her own feelings; it is a sign of her submission to the owner's feelings or demands. (The owner of both woman and painting.) The painting, when the King showed it to others, demonstrated this submission and his guests envied him.

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN BERGER'S 'WAYS OF SEEING' (THE VIKING PRESS, NEW YORK, 1973)

EUNICE LIPTON

> Charles the Second commissioned a secret painting from Lely. It is a highly typical image of the tradition. Nominally it might be a *Venus and Cupid*. In fact it is a portrait of one of the King's mistresses, Nell Gwynne. It shows her passively looking at the spectator staring at her naked.
>
> This nakedness is not, however, an expression of her own feelings; it is a sign of her submission to the owner's feelings or demands. (The owner of both woman and painting.) The painting, when the King showed it to others, demonstrated this submission and his guests envied him. (p. 52)

John Berger, who wrote the above, will be conducting seminars during the coming year for museum educators and trainees at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Rockefeller Foundation Training Program for Museum Educators will fund these meetings. Berger, a Marxist whose books and films are saturated with his politics, is nothing if not irreverent of high art and cultural institutions like the Metropolitan. He is neither an iconographer of cultural phenomena nor a formalist. Abhorring critical vocabularies which insist on the exclusively uplifting, edifying and spiritual nature of art, he asks instead, what is art's function and how are its contents related to our daily lives and to the lives of the people for whom it was made? How does it help us live better, or very frequently; how has it reinforced an oppressive and elitist society? Berger lifts art from its habitual pedestal and jolts the reader (and viewer) from the superior complacency cultivated by traditional art education into a palpable and perplexing human experience.

Until recently Berger was known here only to art historians who had read, and mostly deplored, *The Success and Failure of Picasso* (1965), scattered fans familiar with his novels and film scripts, and some radical intellectuals who sought his reviews in English left-wing journals. One wonders then why now, two years after the appearance of Berger's last book on art, Thomas Hoving, not exactly a flaming radical, has invited the Englishman to come to the Met.

In 1972 Berger made a series of television programs for the BBC called *Ways of Seeing*. It came on the heels of Sir Kenneth Clark's *Civilization*. Berger's informal, almost anti-intellectual approach, plus his casual open-necked style of dress, stood in direct contrast to Sir Kenneth's graciously elegant appreciation of the masterpieces. The book based on Berger's films is similarly modest. It is a slim volume of seven essays, three of which are entirely pictorial.

First Berger shows how our culture mystifies art:

> when an image is presented as a work of art, the way people look at it is affected by a whole series of learnt assumptions about art. Assumptions concerning:

> Beauty, Truth, Genius, Civilization, Form, Status, Taste, etc. (p. 11)

Because of these assumptions people don't see a work of art; they are intimidated by the "atmosphere of entirely bogus religiosity" (p. 21) which surrounds it. Nor do art critics ask viewers to put themselves in direct contact with paintings, to ask them direct questions, such as for whom they were made, how much they cost, what their sexual content is, and what class of people they depict. Such questions are inappropriate to a cultural politics dominated by Beauty, Truth and Genius. As a result, people, inarticulately shot through with unadmitted worries about quality and authenticity, nervously stare at what they are told are masterpieces. (Is that why so many intelligent people are struck dumb in front of paintings? Is it not, then, that they are overwhelmed by beauty?)

If art is to be accessible, Berger insists that a choice must be made

> between a total approach to art which attempts to relate it to every aspect of experience and the esoteric approach of a few specialized experts .... (p. 32)

Following the example of I. A. Richards, a critic of the early British formalism of Clive Bell and Roger Fry, Berger rejects the notion of disinterested art-gazing promoted by a cultural priesthood who claim to possess the only keys to the kingdom.

Berger's examinations of female imagery (essays two and three), similarly reject the vocabulary of a cultured elite. Both essays focus on the objectification of women, reminding us that the pulse beat of our daily lives vibrates with myriad publicity images of women in bras, panties, girdles, stockings; posing, preening, painting, offering themselves. In our society "*men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." (Original italics.) (p. 47) Reluctantly and only with a sense of enormous risk would most scholars accompany Berger when he asks:

> What does a nude signify? It is not sufficient to answer [this] question merely in terms of the art-form, for it is quite clear that the nude also relates to lived sexuality.
>
> To be naked is to be oneself.
>
> To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude ....
>
> To be naked is to be without disguise .... Nudity is a form of dress.
>
> In the average European oil painting of the nude the principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity. But he, by definition, is a stranger- with his clothes still on. (pp.53-54)

To ask such questions is to run the risk of getting angry. One is not supposed to get angry at paintings. But if the female nude, as Berger suggests, is a symbol of property which, behind a facade of disinterestedness, masks the objectification of women, then anger is a legitimate, even inevitable response.

In essay five Berger makes his most alarming indictment of European art. He calls the average oil painting "a celebration of material property" (p. 110) glorifying "a new kind of wealth – which was dynamic and which found its only sanction in the supreme buying power of money." (p. 90) More than frescoe and water color, the medium of oil was particularly conducive to capturing "tangibility," "texture," "lustre," "solidity," (p. 88) characteristics capitalists valued most. Furthermore, oil paintings depict possessions: still-life, portraits (with class-defined accoutrements), animals, paintings themselves, houses, women, etc. Berger even interprets mythological scenes as a projection of what the spectator-owner could spiritually possess and therefore be. In sum, oil painting, since its inception in the 15th century, has been essentially about exteriority and ownership. Happily Berger confines these remarks to the "average" oil painting. He claims exceptional status for such painters as Rembrandt, EI Greco, Giorgione, Vermeer and Turner whose works he believes are concerned with interiority and mutuality.

In his essay on advertising (number seven), Berger brings to a head his

condemnation of the duplicity inherent in capitalist imagery. Commercials make people envious and put a premium on glamour. They glorify the person one *would* be if only one owned that new car, or drank the best liquor, or wore the most exquisite clothing. Addressing itself to exteriors, it tantilizes the poor and the middle class and creates their very visions of happiness and success.

In a particularly impudent section, Berger shows how advertising borrows its images from oil painting. He finds that the aura of oil painting lends prestige and persuasiveness to advertising's blandishments:

> Any work of art "quoted" by publicity serves two purposes. Art is a sign of affluence; it belongs to the good life; it is part of the furnishing which the world gives to the rich and the beautiful. But a work of art also suggests a cultural authority, a form of dignity, even of wisdom, which is superior to any vulgar material interest; an oil painting belongs to the cultural heritage; it is a reminder of what it means to be a cultivated European. And so the quoted work of art (and this is why it is so useful to publicity) says two almost contradictory things at the same time: it denotes wealth and spirituality: it implies that the purchase being proposed is both a luxury and a cultural value. (p. 135)

His check-list of particular similarities between advertising and painting include: "the gestures of models (mannequins) and mythological figures," "the exotic and nostalgic attraction of the Mediterranean," "the poses taken up to denote sterotypes of women: serene mother ... perfect hostess ... sex-object, ... " "the special sexual emphasis given to women's legs," "the materials particularly used to indicate luxury: engraved metal, furs, polished leather, etc." (p. 138)

Thus Berger relentlessly strips the lie from our cultural idiom: works of art are *not* only spiritual; images of women are *not* merely beautiful; objects in paintings are *not* simply luscious; advertising is *not* only about a better tomorrow. All the complexities and contradictions of life-political, social, psychological, economic-combine to give art its meaning. If one does not look at art with such considerations in mind, Berger insists, it remains mystified, the property of the initiated and the rich.

It would be easy to quarrel with Berger, for he does not elaborate even his fundamental ideas, nor does he explore the ramifications of his arguments. His writing is conversational—impulsive, brilliant and provocative, but not systematic. What does it mean, for instance, to say that paintings which he thinks are great are exceptions to the tradition of oil painting? Moreover, if Berger is going to link oil painting to the capitalist ethic, he might distinguish between aristocratic and bourgeois painters and paintings. Smaller but still glaring faults are the absence of any references to modern art, or to sculpture and architecture. Berger will disappoint many artists as well, because he never considers art from their vantage point. But probably the greatest defect from a methodological point of view, is his assumption that a contemporary eye and intuition is adequate to the understanding of the past, that one can assume that if a work of art denotes property to today's perceptions, it also did to the past; that if a female figure of the 17th century looks objectified to our eye, it also did then. An art historian wants more than a brilliant hunch; she wants proof.

But Berger does not pretend to be a historian. His value lies less in his answers than in his daring. Not intimidated by genius, Berger trusts his intuition, and feels free to ask anything. Because he never writes in an authoritarian manner, his reader feels free to do the same. And because Berger states his biases clearly, it is easy to trust him. Even the informality of this book's design—its newspaper-like type and irregular right-hand margins—reinforces the straight-forwardness of his approach. He even encourages the reader to draw on the illustrations. (p. 64)

Of course, Berger is not completely alone in his attempt to humanize the study of art. In recent years Linda Nochlin's social consciousness has shed new light on Courbet and women artists of the past and present; T.J. Clark has brilliantly knit together the art and

To be naked is to be oneself.

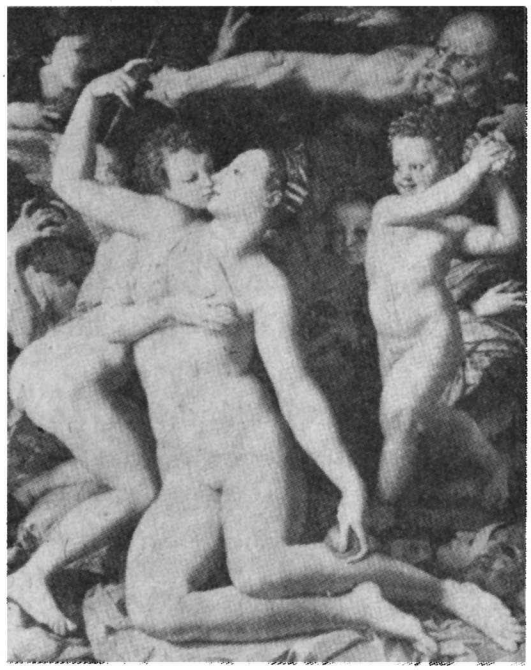
To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.) Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display.

To be naked is to be without disguise.

To be on display is to have the surface of one's own skin, the hairs of one's own body, turned into a disguise which, in that situation, can never be discarded. The nude is condemned to never being naked. Nudity is a form of dress.

In the average European oil painting of the nude the principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity. But he, by definition, is a stranger – with his clothes still on.

Consider the Allegory of Time and Love **by Bronzino.**



VENUS, CUPID TIME AND LOVE BY BRONZINO 1503–1572

The complicated symbolism which lies behind this painting need not concern us now because it does not affect its sexual appeal – at the first degree. Before it is anything else, this is a painting of sexual provocation.

The painting was sent as a present from the Grand Duke of Florence to the King of France. The boy kneeling on the cushion and kissing the woman is Cupid. She is Venus. But the way her body is arranged has nothing to do with their kissing. Her body is arranged in the way it is, to display it to the man looking at the picture. This picture is made to appeal to *his* sexuality. It has nothing to do with her sexuality. (Here and in the European tradition generally, the convention of not painting the hair on a woman's body helps towards the same end. Hair is associated with sexual power, with passion. The woman's sexual passion needs to be minimized so that the spectator may feel that he has the monopoly of such passion.) Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own.

Compare the expressions of these two women:

LA GRANDE ODALISQUE
BY INGRES 1780–1867

one the model for a famous painting by Ingres and the other a model for a photograph in a girlie magazine.

Is not the expression remarkably similar in each case? It is the expression of a woman responding with calculated charm to the man whom she imagines looking at her – although she doesn't know him. She is offering up her femininity as the surveyed.

politics of the second French republic;

Leo Steinberg has brought stunning psychological insight to the study of Picasso, Leonardo and Michelangelo; Wayne Anderson has been similarly provocative (if sometimes irritating) in his analysis of Gauguin; and Wanda Corn has made daring social and cultural analyses of early 20th century American moderns as well as the oft-scorned Andrew Wyeth. In addition some of the most exciting contemporary reevaluations in art history are being made by feminists. Linda Nochlin, Carol Duncan and others have challenged traditional readings of Manet, Degas and the German Expressionists; denied the potency of the history of art as a history of geniuses; and posed consistently suggestive and vexing questions about sex, social mores and power.

These new directions, however, have made scarcely a dent in the discipline's mainstream where scholars and critics continue to talk to each other in a language of expertise that carves out individual bits of turf. Thus while other disciplines have assimilated Marx, art history acts as if Marx never existed. History, political science, literary criticism, usually avoid the Great White Way of heroes and the singular cataclysmic political event, while art history continues to be titillated by geniuses and the "unique" stylistic innovation.

All things considered, it is natural that art historians would scorn Berger. They condemn him for not looking at art, for only considering social phenomena, for squeezing art into his handy categories, for ignoring art's poetry. But why is Berger's admittedly partial view more suspect than the circumscribed view of an iconographer or a formalist? Historians are not frank about their anger.

When Berger's polemic initially leaves the art historian bereft, wondering why she has spent so much time and energy analyzing and loving an art tradition which is inherently unjust, she does not thank him. Moreover, most American art historians find Berger's socialism irritating. Why confuse art and politics, they say? Berger believes the two are inseparable. The most important prod to anger, however, lies in Berger's challenge to the traditional elitism of most art historical inquiry. Formalist and most iconographic inquiries are posed on "superior" terrain, raising issues relating to genius, creativity, the mind and the spirit. The lay of that land is inscrutable to the uninitiated; they need an expert's explanation in order to understand it. Berger's questions, on the other hand, are accessible to all. Where does that leave the expert? She senses a threat to her power, and Berger becomes an enemy. Moreover, art historians are untrained in social history and social theory, and feel inadequate to meet or confute Berger on his own ground. It is easier to scorn him.

At present, art history's elitism prevents it from adapting to the changing cultural climate. A negative element of that climate is that art has become big business and the hard-sell is on; a more positive feature is the desire of some museum directors, the federal government and teachers to make art vital and accessible to more people. A gauge of their success is the ubiquity of art in reproductions, inexpensive art books and on TV programs, as well as the extraordinary increase in museum attendance. The relationship between class and culture is changing, as ttiembers of the working class and lower middle class come into daily contact with works of art and their reproductions. The appreciation of art which up until now was one of the most protected symbols of class distinction may now become a more humble affair. The Metropolitan and the Rockefeller Foundation undoubtedly hope to learn from Berger how better to disseminate art to the masses.

Not only are museums now politically to the left of the academic art historical community, so is the university, the very womb and life's blood of art history. Consider how much the student body in this country has changed in these days when more middle and lower middle class people are in college than ever before. In New York City, for example, 75% of all high school students begin college. These new students ask different questions than did their more affluent predecessors. No matter how much they are upwardly mobile, their curiosity

grows from their particular class sensibility and experience. Why should these students be attracted to the study of art? At the City University, where open admissions has been instituted, new enrollees do not, in fact, study art history. At Hunter College, for example, the introductory art history course, which before open admissions was one of the most popular in the school, now attracts few students. In part this is so because art history isn't "practical" and because for many, western art is alien (though most open enrollment students in New York are white and native born). More importantly, however, while a few are attracted by art history's prestige, most know for whom art was made and to whom it was largely addressed; they know they're not included.

I do not here intend a plea for relevance. But most art historical inquiry is blind to crucial questions of existence. Therefore its audience may well dwindle. If it does not surrender its superior self-protectiveness, art history itself will wither away. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* offers some provocative alternatives.

New York, New York.

PUBLICATIONS, ETC. BY JOHN BERGER

BOOKS ON ART:
Toward Reality, 1962
The Success and Failure of Picasso, 1965
The Moment of Cubism and other Essays, 1969
Art and Revolution, 1969
Selected Essays and Articles: The Look of Things, 1972

NOVELS:
A Painter of Our Time, 1958
The Foot of Clive, 1962
Corker's Freedom, 1964
G, 1972

FILM SCRIPTS:
La Salamandre
In the Middle of the World

REVIEW

JEREMY GILBERT-ROLFE'S AS-SILLY-AS-YOU-CAN-GET 'BRICE MARDEN'S PAINTING' (ARTFORUM, OCTOBER 1974)

MEL RAMSDEN

Brice Marden's paintings are kinda dumb. I think so and Marden seems to agree himself.[1] The reason he and a lot of other painters can proudly proclaim their work "dumb" (the dumber the better it seems) is that there is a sovereign infatuation that in impoverishment, blankness, passivity, emptiness, there lies the truest metaphors for purity, profundity and transcendence.[2] Instead of viewing a canvas divided one-half blue and the other half yellow as an especially silly thing to do (today only the rarest cases can even be credited with a lazy lust for the absolute) we instead assume profundity is lurking everywhere – omnipresent.

Marden's paintings are what the various maestros of historico-criticism hawk as "reduced." Reductionism serves to mystify the fact that we live in a class antagonistic society by fragmenting – and so blinkering – our view of the wider interconnectedness of things.

The looney tentacles of this fragmentation pervade the art-world. The art-world is a constellation of specialized activities the majority of which by this time ought to be seen for what they fucking well are: immanently antagonistic to the potentials 'of a socially penetrating art. These specializations include such choice entrepreneurial half-life as art-education art-history, art-critics, art-managers, pundits, aestheticians, museums, and other middle-persons, dilletantes, imposters and careerists of every variety. These santify the limits of bourgeois order, making sure art reinforces the market imperatives of the status quo. The ability to act in a socially resonant way is effectively blocked by restricting the ,legitimacy of practice to a specialized area of commodity bound "things" or fetishistic "events." These are easily controlled. You either pack it all in, accept the activity, in a wider social sense as inadequate or irrelevant, or you recognize the concrete presence of these institutions and the individuals perpetuating them as brutal, class antagonistic, *and go ahead and abuse them*.

It is especially significant to discern the relationships between the institutional tentacles of far-reaching capitalist order and art, between, that is, art and institutional congealment (allowing for, of course, the fact that without the capitalist order, art might not even *be*, and also that not all aspects of art "institutionalization" need be "congealed"). It seems to me that Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe's singularly preposterous article on Brice Marden's painting offers one good illustration of this institutional congealment. Gilbert-Rolfe doesn't do this congealing without Marden's help. Marden does museum and art-history

pious art. Most artists are professional ostriches. They are not at all ashamed of groveling and fall all over themselves in order to make art suitable for entry into the museum, the market, the media. One reason Marden is such a smash nowadays is that his work is coquettish enough to index straight into art-criticism. The work seems almost *made* for art-criticism, This suggests to me that Gilbert-Rolfe manages the semantics of Marden's work.[3]

I don't know much about Brice Marden. Most of what I know comes first from an interview bulging with hairy-chested art-cretinism, and second, Gilbert-Rolfe's above-mentioned critical gag. The latter serves mostly to puff-up degenerate modernist "sensibility,"

So far as I can tell from Gilbert-Rolfe, one 'concrete (emphasize concrete) achievement of Marden's is "an insistence that metaphysics be immanent in the physical."[4] Pretty remarkable eh? We are led to believe this is a new thought, and, worse, is the philosophical momentum behind Marden's whole activity, as if merely by "insisting" Marden had, through painting itself, struck an heroic blow, above all an intentional blow, at all the absurd pettifoggery of centuries of geriatric epistemology. Actually, I find such lurking metaphysics to be true of certain teapots and all the hard-boiled eggs I've eaten since January. I hardly ever have to "insist" it's there either. It is ridiculous to even hint that this assumption of oozing profundity is intentionally unique to art, and not—if you will—equally true of 'times spent perusing the nature of cats, dogs, rabbits, and other furry little creatures – albeit the latter have far less to do with social climbing and getting $30,000 a year.

Another of Marden's *concrete* achievements (again to go by what Gilbert-Rolfe writes) is "a reconciliation of the colours of the landscape with a post Johnsian insistance on the painting's identity as a conventional—social—object that functions as a cultural sign of a certain sort." Pretty shit-hot stuff eh!

But Gilbert-Rolfe doesn't stop at concrete achievement—if I may call it that. Oh no. He employs one of the time tested methods of mystification. His pseudo-analysis begins in the past and moves to the present. This is a conservative methodological characteristic wherein he reaches known present reality at the *end* of his analyses or investigation. The form is geometrical: he knows from the outset what he wants. He wants the last line of the proof and searches for the earlier lines. He does not *begin* from what is known, a material and concrete reality. Oh no, no fear. He begins by obliterating the known present and moves to the past in order to move back to what is presently known, which is actually what he wants to be known.[5] In doing this he disguises that reality is what the priesthood of historico-criticism wants it to be. For example, he's naturally eager that Marden be a "towering figure" since bourgeois history excludes everyone but "towering figures" and "important people." So, using the regressive methodology Gilbert-Rolfe moves into the past of other "towering figures," Cezanne, Manet, Barnett Newman – old chestnuts all, then comes back to the present: Brice Marden. Thus he moves nowhere while creating the impression of moving somewhere. This preservation of things as they are blandly masquerades as a critique, and, by ramming down our throats *blik* "important events" of Western culture propaganda, serves perfectly both to perpetuate as well as disguise the fact that present material reality is what the cultural mandarins and priesthood of historico-criticism *want it to be*. Make no mistake about this. *They want it to be a museum*. They act to obliterate social action and bottle practice in formaldehyde, to mystify art-practice as a safe museum. They do this by convincing artists that the only reality is a museum, a market—whereas these are really only the limits of the bourgeois order. So, art practice is a secure and stable tentacle of historico-criticism's mythology. It enters the world as the latest neutered stone in history's neutered stepping stones of galleries.

Keeping this goal of mystification in mind, suppose we take a look at some examples of Gilbert-Rolfe's backsliding:

> "Marden, having converted the abstract notion of 'figure and ground' into a concern with the interaction of surface and support, proceeded to present the abstract terminology of landscape 'foreground, middle-ground and

background' in the form of one two and three canvases ... In Marden's two-panel painting, the colors are almost indescribable, fleeting combinations of greenish colors that approach an optical grey. It is this common tendency toward tonality that is the product of color working against itself —against cromatic purity—that unites the left and right parts of the painting. [So far this bit doesn't appear too troubling, but you see it's not enough for the backslider to leave it at that. Oh no, he has to go on to proclaim] It is to me, quite like one of Cezanne's more frontal studies of Mont St. Victoire, where the opposition between ground and sky is established by the horizon ...."

The juxtapositions with Cezanne are demented:

" ... he manages to apply Cezanne's compositional procedure to the subdivision of real rather than fictive space. His achievement in this regard, seems to follow from something fundamental about Cezanne's technique ...."

And so it goes on—and on—and unbelievably on. As if these achievements aren't exalted and momentous enough, Gilbert-Rolfe really rubs it in by backsliding into the more recent modernist past:

" ... reminicent of the encaustic that Johns uses, the mixture of oil and wax Marden paints with ...."

Get that "reminicent." But still not satisfied with these flashes of crystal insight, he further goes on to this time add:

" ... I take it as significant that although I've connected Marden's sense of colour with Cezanne and Manet [who else for crying out loud] it may also be accounted for through his stated interest in the color of the minimalist sculpture of Morris and Andre ...." [Stated interest!!!]

But wait oh patient reader, there is still more:

" ... astrologers may care to note that he shares a birthday with Friedrich Nietzche ...."

The article is really like this. I'm not taking stuff out of context and I didn't make any of it up. Its implicit function is to act as a rationalization or a naturalization of the parameters of media, museum and market. More obviously, I think Gilbert-Rolfe's idea of this bullshit art-criticism is that it serve as a deodorant, preventing us smelling the stink of modernism. What a fake. I think he's whitewashing a corpse and as such I think we have a fitting example of the modem art rip-off. Especially together, Marden and Gilbert-Rolfe embody this rip-off to perfection. The paintings are dumb.[6] They are passive. Gilbert-Rolfe utilizes this passivity to make up (and I do mean make up) a historico-critical picture of Marden's semantics. We're all supposed to be impressed by the swanky pedigree—nay, dazzled. Each field of color mirrors first Stella, Johns, Newman—then Cezanne and Manet, then Zurbaran, each a "giant" of the Great Western *blik*, the cultural free-for-all. Pardon me while I vomit. He also throws in Morris and Andre. And Walter Benjamin. Yes, and Bertolt Brecht! *Brice Marden and Bertolt Brecht—aaaarrrrgggghhhh!* And just to top it off – why, the cherries jubilee for impressing those who know less than you know: a titbit of French semiotics; just a touch of the old linguistics garnished with a dash of Merleau-Ponty just to make sure the intellectual shoring-up is complete: De Saussure and Brice Marden!

I can't stand quoting this drivel much longer, but there is just one more quote. It polishes off Marden's pedigree as well as the already tenuous links with reality. Gilbert-Rolfe says of Marden's use of red yellow and blue that "this will inevitably cause comparison with Barnett Newman." So cop this one:

"Newman towers over American painting and sculpture, and it is appropriate that Marden should invite comparison with him ...."

Gawd!

This, at least to my mind, thoroughly heinous,kind of exegesis, is meant to mystify the known present. It avoids real-world implications in order to sanctify clerky-assed "culture." He says nothing about Marden's contract with Bykert. Instead we are directed toward the fact that Marden "internalized Cezanne." He doesn't speak of the saleability of Marden's paintings. who

buys them, whether their affirmative link to market stability contributed – at this time of international economic "crisis"—to his present modishness not to mention a Guggenheim retrospective? Oh no. No fear. He talks instead about Hegel, Brecht, Zurbaran, Cezanne, Godard and Robert Morris! And all through this ooze of backsliding historico-vacuity Gilbert-Rolfe blows out wind concerning materialism—*aaaarrrrggggghhhh!*

By the time I'd paddled my way through all this feces-under-the-sign-of-Taurus it occurred to me what was really taking place. We were actually being sold the best of both worlds. Why how chic! How terribly chic! Conservative paintings which actually indexed to Bertolt Brecht, Godard, Saussurian linguistics *as well as* indexing to the *creme de la creme* of the modernist tradition, Manet, Cezanne, Barnett Newman et al. Ah what wizardry! We were getting our Greenbergers and eating them too.

But suppose we have a closer look at Gilbert-Rolfe's use of juxtaposition. Marden, possibly through innocence (but probably through indolence) acts as Gilbert-Rolfe's ally in removing practice to the greyness of media-life. Such a middle-life thrives on the control of art's semantics often, as here, by idiotic juxtapositions with the "towering" figures of the past. Thus we get the systematic distortion of the present and a reinforcement of the parameters of museum and market. Some artists fall all over themselves to help.

In trying to fathom Gilbert-Rolfe's posturing it is helpful to turn briefly to a logical empiricist-Nelson Goodman. Goodman never bothered much about semantics since he was convinced that any comparison between reality on the one hand and a descriptive system system on the other was impossible. Accordingly, we only knew about the world insofar as we had described it: "that we know what we see is not truer than that we see what we know." Pictures can be made to yield whatever information we please: "with suitable principles of correlation, Constable's landscape painting could provide an enormous amount of information about a pink elephant."[7] This suggests there is some problematicity associated with "principles of correlation." They can be formulated in support of all sorts of daft causes. It also suggests that meta-activities like art-criticism tell us more about the needs and ambitions of the describer, not the thing described. Gilbert-Rolfe "selects" from the past only that which brings about what he wants to be known: that is, that Brice Marden is a "towering figure." The past is remembered as a string of *blik*-fetishes, contextless and Mickey-Mouse historical. It supports Modernism which is Mickey-Mouse art anyway. For Gilbert-Rolfe the past acts as a deodorant—however, one which is less and less able to ward off the stink of embalmed modernism, going, that is, by the following pink elephants:

> "Marden's use of color as something that exerts pressure on real space has direct affinities with Andre's creation of 'a column of air' above the work through concentration on the materiality of steel.'

Or cop this one, it's even better since Marden seems to have thought it up by himself:[8]

> "A recent drawing of Marden's from the Homage to Art series, has a reproduction of a Zurbaran crucifixion next to a rectangle that seems to suck out the color from the Spanish painting in order to restate it as a slab of suspended, spatially ambiguous material."

Re-stating a crucifix as a slab of suspended spatially ambiguous 'material!! Did I hear right? *A crucifix!* This is obviously a chronic loss of reality disguised as the continuance of tradition. Of all things a crucifix is embedded within a vast constellation of cultural and religious points of reference. There is also a gratuitous comparison with Smithson. They were both born, he explains,
"...on the fringes of New York City in 1932"
and represent "two sides of the same—entropically preoccupied, Romantic – coin."
This is bullshit. Yeah sure, they may both be "romantic" but in terms of hard experience the juxtaposition is treacherous: Smithson's work always had a fairly aggressive stance toward the reigning cultural institutions (galleries, etc.). Marden's work is not like this at all. In fact there is a BIG difference which Gilbert-Rolfe overlooks in order to find a *tiny* similarity, a similarity which shores up the pedigree of his

boy. This is typical of advanced cases of pink elephantiasis.

Gilbert-Rolfe considers himself a materialist. I take it he has a rather coarse notion of materialism: that is, that everything is strictly caused by material (inanimate) processes and entities, He seems to steer clear of materialism in the sense of it explaining human actions through economic factors. The reason he does this is obvious. It may lead to a *commitment* to dialectical materialism and *commitment* is enough to strike barbs of terror into art-sychophants and other entreprenerial imposters. But why would *anyone*, materialist or otherwise, write garbage like he does. I'll tell you why. He's trying to climb in the critical priesthood's ranks and you need work fit for the nearest waste-basket to do that. GilbertRolfe is no different than Greenberg – just much more inept at disguising his ineptness. In a certain sacred text of 1962 Greenberg urged that it is enough that a painting restrict itself to the articulation of the properties of the conventions or norms of the medium: flatness and the delineation of flatness. Compare this quotation from Gilbert-Rolfe: "the development of an explicitly materialist esthetics is an urge to identify art more closely with its support."[9] Here "support" is taken to mean space occupying material—e.g., canvas and stretcher. How convenient. Thus, according to Gilbert-Rolfe, *shazaam*: materialism equals formalism. He goes on to butcher both worlds. He hypocritically disguises formalism as materialism and diabolically enlists in his cause Brecht, Walter Benjamin and a kind of cockeyed Marxism (carefully avoiding the practical-imaginative revolutionary nexus of Marx of course).[10] He does this in order to trendify the critical language, to give the impression he's moving somewhere whilst in fact going fucking nowhere. This is identical to the way his peer, the woefully uninformed Rosalind Krauss, digs up Witgenstein (via, natch, Stanley Cavell) to lend credence to her view that we should eliminate "privacy" and return with Mel Bochner, Dorothea Rockburne et al. to the undialectical stone age. But it's really the same old crap critics have been getting away with for years, the same wretched formalist prison jazzed up with mod lingo to appear less irrelevant. Why is "material support" taken to mean only canvas and stretcher? This is a totally arbitrary cutting-off point and would be seen as such if Gilbert -Rolfe wasn't just another formalist eager-beaver. Could it not mean prevailing systems of ownership, distribution, exchange, could not art-criticism itself be a support? Why is paint seen only against a ground of stretcher support? What about the historic-economic reality? What about the artworld's cherished privileges"? So I'll tell you what sort of materialist is Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe: he's another formalist sheep in materialist wolf's clothing, attempting to conserve modernist painting and secure his own entry into the critical priesthood's Hall of Fame by updating the lingo. What is the material support of Marden's painting? Does it rest with the society of consumption, waste, alienation? The society of the fragmented "professional man", the atomized "expert", the media-manipulator? So listen, I'll tell you what sort of materialist is Gilbert-Rolfe: he's another withered formalist, but this time in drag.

Actually I have only once met, or barely met, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe. It was at a meeting of the Association of International Art Critics (I am not a member.) He certainly seemed a sensitive young man and apparently does things like "read Gide on trains." [11] He seems to confirm the intelligentsia's,relation to the world: as a specialization which just happens to be used in a manipulative way, to exert power over others, to use others, to use the lingo of semiotics and other modish criteria to claim insight and "appreciation"[12] where the gullible and the hoy-polloy gaze unseeingly. All the preposterous goats-farting about Cezanne and Manet and Zurbaran are the noises educated middle-persons utter to each other in a vacuum. There are many such middle-persons. They sit on their clerky asses, removed from any transformation of the world, and insist that their cultural exegesis, language of mediation, are terribly necessary and terribly terribly valuable if the future is in fact to be as great as the past. The epitome of such relation to the world is Sir Kenneth Clark who once said "the peasants stormed the cathedral and razed it ['it' being the code-word for 'Civilization'] to the

ground [why, the presumptuous little fuckers] . "

There are some who will no doubt consider the above a "violent outburst" and even an unnecessary *ad hominem* attack. But it seems to me peculiar to the tradition of which I speak above, the tradition of "gentlemen", to regard ideas as separable from "the individual" – all in the interests of "objectivity" of course. All in the interests of knowledge as a object rather than as practice, as a property somehow distinct from the mind that is knowing. Of course, regarding ideas as separate from individuals who have them, as separate from interests, regarding "private life" and "politics" as separate, is just a scholastic smokescreen. In reality, practically all art-world exchanges are *ad hominem*. At the Association of International Art Critics meeting I attended, almost all of the exchange was bitchy and *ad hominem* in substance. But self-promotion and careerism of which there was plenty that night, must be kept concealed. Politics must be hidden under the respectable veil of "nice" gentlemanly objectivity. That is to say, the politics of the art-world, which itself consists overwhelmingly of struggles for career, a 'niche in art-history, monetary reward arid ego gratification, *are disguised*. Thus the art-world reflects perfectly the "strategies" and "tactics" of high bourgeois politics. Back stage politiking —secrecy and pretense in other words—is a distinguishing feature of all politic~ reaction. Its abolition is an old revolutionary principle. So let candy-assed liberals grumble about *ad hominem* attacks: for me, it is here that "politics" lies, not in Northern Ireland, statements made by Exxon executives, Napalm bombings and so on.

Gilbert-Rolfe and his miserable meanderings deserve abuse. The fact that his Mickey Mouse historical backsliding can be made and apparently gotten away with, that this sort of pious gloating is published in "the leading contemporary art journal" says a lot about the monopoly the praxiologically homeless have on art-producer's semantics. In fact this is what made me write this review I suppose: it's incredible just how *stupid* much of the writing in *Artforum* is. I don't give two hoots about Gilbert-Rolfe, I think he's a nobody. But it seems to me that he is paradigmatic of reproducers of primitive enslavement disguised by a learned, humanist and liberal veneer. If class antagonism is to emerge as a possible material base for work published in *The Fox*, then it is within such an administrative nexus that we ought to try more strenuously to force out contradictions.

The constant refuge taken in the sponge of art-historical niche-making which occurs all through "Brice Marden's Painting" is a specialism for mystification. It is the trecherous language of management. The criticism of Gilbert-Rolfe, however innocent it may seem, fulfills its function of stabilizing the parameters of this alienating and mad society. It is media mystification ,disguised as thought and can only be greeted by a sly and foxy smile—then a ferocious attack.

New York, New York

REFERENCES

1. See the interview in Art Rite or Rong, Spring 1975, Marden said "a painter's just this odd weird person who has to do this dumb thing called painting".

2. "Honest painting" is one prevalent euphemism for passivity and reactionary work. I am sure there are painters who are aware of the problems, Many counter these arguments by saying that material conditions don't really matter, what does matter is the transcendental, the ineffable and "what's inside", By the way, none of this is a simple-minded anti-painting argument. To be on principle against some particular medium like this is a sure sign you are dealing with a stylist. If I ever saw the need for a painting or a sculpture, I'd do one.

3. In 1966 Harold Rosenberg said "To the critic, the bareness of a work is an opportunity to display his powers of exegesis and to top other critics who might have given up the work as hopeless". According to Rosenberg, "today no degree of dullness can safeguard a work against the determination of critics to find it fascinating", See "Virtuosos of Boredom" in Discovering the Present, Chicago 1973,

4. All quotes by the way and unless otherwise indicated, come from the exalted: "Brice Marden's Painting" in Artforum, October 1974—I'm not making them up.

5. For more on this see the chapter" Abstracting" in Power and Authority: the Inside View on the Class Struggle, by Fred Newman, published by Centers for Change Inc., 314 West 91st Street, New York City, 10024.

6. By "dumb" I mean less that they are stupid and more that they are mute,

7. See Nelson Goodman's review of Gombrich 's Art & Illusion in The Journal of Philosophy, 57. See also Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, "Problems of Art & Language Space" in Art-Language, Volume 2, Number 3, 1973.

8. Marden himself also seems addicted to Mickey Mouse historical juxtapositions. In Gilbert·Rolfe's gag there is a reproduction of a painting of his titled "First Figure: Homage to Courbet". It so happens when I saw this I almost threw up in the face of the esteemed journal. I had just finished Tim Oark's book on Courbet and was vividly aware of the political complexity and brilliance of his (Courbet's) ambitions—it seemed to me that a painting consisting of three flat colored panels and titled "Homage to Courbet" was just wretched. See T.J, Clark, Image of the People, New York Graphic Society, 1973,

9. See J, Gilbert-Rolfe "Robert Morris: the Complication of Exhaustion" Artforum September 1974.

10. A kind of insipid limp-handshake Marxism runs somewhat sanctimoniously throughout Gilbert-Rolfe's work – as it does Rosalind Krauss recently. Even Barbara Rose isn't immune to this middle person's soup de jour. Barbara Rose and Karl Marx! Even Barbara Rose and Telos or The New Left Review! Going by some of the things Barbara Rose comes out with, I find the possibility of such an encounter nausea-inducing. Could such people eventually reach Marx's "revolutionary nexus." I can't imagine.

11. I'm not making this up. That's what Gilbert-Rolfe said he does. See his Morris article, ibid.

12. Ahhh ... a word to be uttered ill reverence. It conjures up the cultural tourist, a middle-class leisure creation "popularizers" are forever trying to ram down the throats of "the masses". The affirmative admirer is great consumer fodder and helps keep the market "healthy". "There is hardly a coherent study of failures, or an analysis of the repressive or destructive nature of patronage and the like. Affirmative values are constantly reiterated in art-historical studies, and a good lecture is expected to leave you with your head a little higher and your heart a little more satisfied, ready to face another day of news and pressures. See Kurt Forster, "Critical History of Art, or Transfiguration of Values" in New Literary History, Spring 1972. It's true. You only have to visit art-schools to encounter this affirmative appreciation. If you offer any criticism suggesting perhaps that art's made by men not gods, students act as if you're spoiling their fun.

REVIEW
FIGHTING MODERN MASTERS
TERRY SMITH

The coincidence of the Art & Language show and the exhibition "Modern Masters:

From Manet to Matisse" at the major State galleries in Australia during May, June and July created a battleground of contrasting conceptions of culture. The clash has significance both in and beyond New York-where both shows, in different senses. "originated." Imperialist/colonialist hackles were raised, and there was enacted a drama of censorship rebuffed or ratbaggery curtailed (depending on your viewpoint).

"Modern Masters" epitomizes, enshrines and celebrates that very nearly "official" version of the history of the art of the past century which takes painting to be the highest art, and avantgardism—especially the School of Paris period – as its essential expression.

Two relatively minor Manets from the 1860s arc tacked on at the beginning (the Metropolitan's *Boy with a Sword* and Cincinnati's *Women at the Races*), along with two works from the 1870s (Renoir's *Monet Painting in his Garden*, c.1874, from the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, and Cezanne's *Mme. Cezanne in a Red Armchair*, c.1877, from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). However, most date from after the late 1880s, the show really getting into its stride in the later 1890s through the first two decades of this century.

Matisse, with ten works, and Picasso with seven, dominate; Braque has six, Cezanne five, and Derain, Monet and Vuillard follow close behind with four each. Futurism gets a nod as an "affinity of Cubism,"[1] as does the only Russian Constructivist work, Malevich's *Dynamic Suprematism*, 1916 (Hammer collection, Los Angeles). German Expressionism appears briefly, blurred in with Fauvism first, then Soutine next, followed by Kokoschka. Surrealism peeps into a section entitled "The Painted Dream," which goes from Rousseau and Redon through Miró, Chagall, Klee, Balthus, Delvaux, Tanguy, Brauner and Dali.

Absences are, of course, as indicative as inclusions. Difficulties in arranging loans cannot alone account for the underrepresentations just mentioned, nor for the total failure to show examples of Dada, Constructivism, geometric abstraction of almost every sort, Mexican painting. Or, if works by "masters" is the criterion, how to justify one Mondrian, no Duchamp, no Rivera? Clearly, many lesser artists are represented in order to show the influence and ambience of the major School of Paris "masters."

It is above all a museum show, conceived bureaucratically like a textbook for an art history survey course. Of the 114 works by 58 artists (approximately, as some were shown in Sydney but not Melbourne, and vice-versa), 68 were loaned by various museums, mostly American, and 46 came from private collections, mostly in or around New York.[2] Here, presumably, lies the "news" of the show as displayed at the Modern: the paintings from private collections do provide interesting sidelights to the "definitive" history of modernism ranged through the rooms upstairs. Balancing this are some undeniably major works: Picasso's

Bottle, Glass and Fork, 1912, from Cleveland; his final *Women of Algiers*, 1955, from the Ganz collection (New York); Matisse's *Large Interior in Red*, 1948, one of the nine paintings from the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; the two Cézanne portraits of Mme. Cézanne, 1887 and 1893-5, from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Chicago. And there arc some very "popular" works: Renoir's *Child in White*, 1883, from Chicago; Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912; and a Modigliani *Reclining Nude*, 1917, from the Zeisler collection (New York).

"Modern Masters" grew-out of a request by the Australian members of the Modern's International Council (a $1,000 plus per annum club) for a travelling show of Impressionist paintings. It was compiled and presented by William S. Lieberman, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Modern. Preliminary titles were "Modern Masterpieces" and "Modern Masterworks: From Monet to Matisse." The Modern put up A$25,000 for catalog costs and were guaranteed against losses on the catalog to that amount by the visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, which also set aside A$15,500 to bring students from the State capitals which would not receive the show. All other costs were met by the Aluminum Company of America's Alcoa Foundation. The Australian Government endemnified insurance on the paintings to the value of A$70 million—something, incidentally, the U.S. Government does not do, whereas Britain, for example, does. 250,000 people saw the show in Sydney, and a similar number in Melbourne, during the month it showed in each city. They paid 20 cents to enter the Gallery, 50 cents to see the show, and $4 for a catalog.

The Art & Language discussions/ installation at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, cost a little over A$3 00, at the 'Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide slightly more, and in Sydney, nothing. Attendance at the Melbourne discussions averaged perhaps 60-70 each day, in Adelaide roughly 30, and in Sydney, none.

When Art & Language in New York were invited by curators at the Melbourne and Sydney Galleries to do a show, some of us had been carefully watching the reception of *Some Recent American Art*, travelling Australia early 1974. Organized by Jennifer Licht, it presented the usual highlights of late 1960s New York avantgarde, unusual mainly in that some of the artists visited Australia with it.

We felt it to be essential that, if we were to do anything at all. it should stand as an alternative model of what an "international art show" might be like. We wanted the "information" to be genuinely exchanged, not just presented. We wanted it to be flexible, translatable, to establish a learning situation around it – so, above all, we needed a structure which would allow the participants to feed in their reflection on what *they* are engaged in. As well, although every issue would first come up inevitably in an art context, we needed a form which would be loaded towards breaking the limitations and question-begging of that context. Finally, we wanted to examine the technical problems involved in the "cultural noise" which transmitted messages pick up, to sec how "translation" functions in such situations. The core problem is the compartmentalization of our culture(s). A focus for this is the provincialist dependence on metropolitan art models, of which stylistic influences are only the most obvious symptoms.

We hoped that by exaggerating the mechanism of sending "current New York art information," by sending telexes of work being done at the time by some members of Art & Language in New York, the issues would come up in unavoidable ways. And by my presence as a "translator" the implications of the exchange would be surfaced, rendered available for discussion and change in the dialogue with me.

So the form of the show became simply: members of Art & Language in New York send each day for a week telexes of extracts of work they are doing at the time to a discussion room set up in the exhibition spaces of the gallery, where myself and an invited guest would attempt to embed the telex message in dialogue with each other and the audience. The invitees were all people with developed, articulable ideologies indicative of their contexts of work, mostly from outside the artworld.

Such were some of our intentions, and they could be closely related to a reading of the period of national self-questioning focussed around the coming into power, after 25 years

in opposition, of the Australian Labor Party. Despite the Government's compromises and failures, its hopeless struggle against inflation (i.e. the crisis within the economic system of which it is an outpost), there remains here a widespread sense that it is sit;l possible to choose the kind of society you wish to live in. In one variety or another, the questions amount to a choice between a private petty capitalism dependant on multinational corporations (Japanese, American and English) or a mild technocentralist socialism committed to "buying back the farm" (i.e. regaining control of the vast mineral resources which are our major asset). Behind this is a more profound sense that it is open for us to construct, experimentally, the details of the cultural interactions which make up our lives. This demands of the artworld that its putative "rehearsal of cultural change," its celebrated "testing of models and metaphors for living (seeing) differently," be put up or shut up.

Yet this kind of questioning is itself anathema to conservative forces within any society, especially those in Australia who cluster under the peculiar banner of the Liberal Party. When it became clear that the discussions were to go on in Sydney at the same time as "Modern Masters," a local politician was able to bring pressure to bear on the Director and Trustees of the Gallery with the result that they rejected the proposed show. This same politician is editor of an "intellectual monthly," called *Quadrant*, financed by the local branch of the Association for Cultural Freedom, dedicating itself "to confine the public sector, to reduce the power of government, to protect the rights of private activity—from writing poetry to doing business."[3]

In Melbourne, "Modern Masters" did not need a local defender, the visiting "modern master" saw to that himself. Six days before the show was to open, Mr. Lieberman read the handbill/poster (published by the Gallery, with the Director's approval, and distributed widely over the preceding two weeks) and promptly threatened to sue the Gallery on the basis of this paragraph below:

> "This latest form of art imperialism can only be assailed by first assailing our given producer-consumer 'natures'. Are we in good hands with the Museum of Modern Art and the U.S. Information Service, the professionals, the specialists, the artocrats/bureaucrats who hand us culture, not as something we do but as something they do, who 'creatively' wrap themselves around the creations of others, not something we do but something *they* do?"

The Melbourne director's response was similar to that in Sydney: an immediate, almost "instinctive," knee-buckling self-censorship. Mr. Thomson cancelled the Art & Language show, but was then persuaded to stage it in the Art School in the back of the Gallery. I was presented with this as a fait accompli, and, under protest, agreed to go ahead on the grounds that the parody of noisy "radical" versus conservative institution left all of us locked into stereotypes.[4]

So, five days of discussion were held at the Art School, and various Art & Language publications relevant to the discussions were available there for two weeks. In Adelaide, where by no coincidence a Labor Government has been in power for some years, the Art Gallery of South Australia kept exactly to its word and the original format was followed – indeed, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees helped lead one of the the discussions.[5]

What came out of it all? I can't, obviously, report on conclusions because rational research was not the aim, nor was it to cover topics. The "take" of each participant on the fragments of discourse which he/she encountered as relevant from his/her projections was the "learning" we sought. I can't detail this for other individuals, but I can show a surface wherein it might have been happening. So out of the roughly twenty hours over ten days in two different cities I've extracted half an hour from the session on May 31. Humphrey McQueen is a historian from the Australian National University in Canberra. The words in capitals are extracts from the telexes.

IDEALISM IS FUTILE IN NEW YORK, IT'S WHY YOU FINALLY LEAVE NEW YORK. PRACTICE IS OVERWHELMED BY CULTURAL "REALITY" ... THAT IS THE PRACTICE AND REALITY OF NEW YORK: SUCCESS ONLY BY BECOMING

OBJECTS OF HISTORY, NOT SUBJECTS ... ARTISTS WHO ARE DEAD IN THEIR OWN LIFETIMES: SOME OF OUR BEST FRIENDS ARE ...

A CURSORY LOOK AT THE SEWER OF NY TRADITION: ANDRE MAKES A POINT OF SHOUTING MARXIST SLOGANS AND DON JUDD DINES AT THE WHITE HOUSE. YET THEIR ART IS CULTURALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE ....

McQueen: **For me, here, receiving this telex with its lacings of "soft" Marxist slogans, the people who wrote it seem culturally indistinguishable from Andre and Judd, they belong to the same history. They are right to try to distance themselves from the usual sterile and bankrupt forms of criticism of art and society, but they are a long way from a "realistic" approach. They come close to a beginning when they see, in the case of Andre and Judd – what about their own case?—that the stated intentions of the artist do not, in themselves, determine the kind of art they then set about to produce ... you clearly can't go upstairs and take a poll of the political opinions of all the painters in "Modern Masters," count up those on the side of communism and those on the side of fascism, and from that conclude that the exhibition is fascist or imperialist. Marinetti, D'Annunzio were swept towards fascism, while contemporaries with essentially the same world-views in Russia found themselves heroes of proletarian culture ... some of the paintings which have come down to us as progressive because they were anti-war, were done by painters who were on the most reactionary side of the war but found their side losing ... What "realistic" art or criticism seeks to do is achieve a coherence of technical change with social change – and the relationship is one of reproduction, at some distance, respecting the integrity of each social area, *not* one of reflection.**

***Smith*: The great trick in bourgeois art theory and practice is the way the "art object" is reified off from all but the subjectivist who created it and the subjectivist who consumes it, within the preserving framework of the "art history" shared by both. Even the best-intentioned cultural criticism goes more than half-way along with this: you find yourself stressing context, but the very notion of "context" implies that the internal relations of this autonomous physical object are a pretty clearly-distinct figure and all the rest is ground: "mere" biography, "mere" social setting ... but blurring object and context doesn't get you very far—it's soft, feels better. I think you've got to talk about the ways what we do gets used, but also about something like the reproductive structure of what we do ... about whether we can be, and have been, absorbed, annexed against the grain or whether we can deliberately misfit in our work.**

If you take the exhibition "Modern Masters" as an integrated cultural act it's clear that a bourgeois life is being put forward as admirable, "official," properly "cultural." Shows like this one circulate around the world sanctioning, legitimizing the power and the way of life of cultural elites. It's when we take such shows as merely art exhibitions, as "natural" forms of cultural exchange, as accumulations of things which are "just paintings"—well, then we've got the intended message. It's not a message we can do much with ... you see we've got the power to say quite strongly that we do not want a culture such that objects like these will be its most central, "refined" expression ....

***Martin Munz, lawyer*: Isn't it really just a reaffirmation of the mundane in art? I mean, it's nice to see the originals, but they are a fairly standard bunch ... it's picture book paperback art history .**

***McQueen*: I've been researching the 1920s here, and I rushed into "Modern Masters" hoping to catch something of the excitement that painters then felt when they first saw these paintings. But I came away preferring to read Margaret Preston and Grace Cossington Smith's accounts ... it is so bland.**

***Participant*: Paintings with any punch were left out ... with four or five exceptions, I would say; they weren't difficult, challenging ...**

Smith: My feeling is that we could go on for a long while shuffling our art-critical-type responses to the show. I'd rather get back to ...

***McQueen*: Can I stop you doing that? Because one of the things about reproducing art—that is, constituting cultural reference-points—is surely for people to rehearse their responses in their own art-language?**

Munz: You have M.O.M.A. and Alcoa reproducing the Big Lie, so to speak ... this series of bland paintings, the accepted classics of Modern Art, an inoffensive cross-section—so accepted that there's no possibility of debate about them .... People walk through the Gallery and go away with the message that M.O.M.A., Alcoa and the National Gallery of Victoria really do deliver the goods, just as they do in every other service industry situation.

McQueen: Yes, Alcoa encases bombs for efficient delivery to Hanoi and Cambodia, whereas we get well-packaged modern masters. From their point of view they pick the audience and deliver the politically most accurate goods. Whether it's coincidental or not, this show presents capitalism with a civilized face, and that's propitious in Australia just at the moment.

Jeff Stewart, artist: O.K., a lot of us accept your reading of the paintings and of the intentions behind the show ... and how Modern Masters amounts to the same thing as a show of current art, how it displays the same impossible artworld structure that we're trapped in. The question is: what do we do? how do we go on given all that?

Smith: Well, the telex.has a strong suggestion: THINKING OF ART AS A 'STRATEGY OF (RE)SOCIALIZATION', CHANGE RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE, NOT, GOD HELP US, 'REVOLUTIONS IN PERCEPTION' AND CRAP LIKE THAT. WE HAVE BEEN GOING ON A LOT ABOUT AN 'ART' AS AN ACTIVE AGENCY IN CHANGING PEOPLE, ABOUT THE IDEOLOGICAL ROLE OF AN 'ART.' Contrast this to what we were saying earlier, that the very notion of "art" in the modern sense is historically produced by the rise of the bourgeoisie, that art may be possible only in a bourgeois world, and that it is necessarily elitist in that world—it has a nouveau riche function which we all service. If this is so, then there's some fudging going on in the telex. If you're engaged in a "strategy of (re)socialization," well, that's got to stand on its own feet if it's to go at all ... it may be that there's no way of relating that 'to "art." The art carry-overs, aspects, contexts might just be so loaded that to try to keep connections ... all you end up doing is saying: O.K., *I'm* committed to ' strategies of resocialization—I'm committed, so I start with myself, de-constructing my conditioning, enculturation, which for me is my elitist artworld background. So "art" comes up only as a kind of subject-matter ... it's a bit duck-shoving that the deconstructive process be itself a priori loaded as an "art activity."

Stewart: I can see that as a starting point but it could also be a rationale for not getting out of that position. You become embedded in that situation ... you're wallowing around in it.

Smith: Precisely what we're doing now, I suppose.

Participant: That's very tight ... isn't it just saying that nothing gets changed with the use of concepts, no revolutionary change is possible?

Smith: It's close ... if you put before yourself the options of resocializing yourself at one extreme and changing the whole world at the other, both become impossibilities and you end up doing nothing. But we all have quite specific, pragmatic problems which we can identify as resulting from a destructive socialization—we can begin with these as reconstructive material. But "art as a strategy of (re)socialization" seem to have a least three words wrong with it: "art as a." Maybe we forget about art. You can resocialize yourself in the real world by acting differently within it, then you see it differently. These sound like slogans ...

Stewart: In the context of what we've been doing here for the past three days ... you have put us, we've put ourselves in an "art audience" situation ... this stops any resocialization: we stop you, you stop yourself, we stop each other. We can't get out of it because you're up there, and we all modify what we're working through so it will fit to what you're going through. It's false because it reinforces an artist-audience situation, it always ends up with that.

Smith: Yes, probably, ..

McQueen: No, I don't agree that it's hopeless. When Terry was talking about resocialization beginning with himself, or oneself, it sounded like the late 1960s New Left gambit of substituting alienation for psychoanalysis. It's not just an abstract problem. I was glad he went on to say that you change yourself only by acting differently in the real world. You are a different historian, for instance, if you go on street demonstrations rather than

hang about the sidelines taking notes ... you perceive, think, act differently. Terry's other worlds will change his artworld –that's how it happens.

Participant: The telex, where it says: THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN ART CONTAIN THE ESSENCE OF A DELIBERATELY (?) ELITIST STRATEGY AGAINST THE EMERGING MASS-BOURGEOIS-PHILISTINE-TASTE ... BUT ALSO AGAINST ANY PROLETARIAN TASTE (IF SUCH 'TASTE' EXISTS OVER AND ABOVE THE ESSENTIALS OF SURVIVAL). This is the whole French avant-garde tradition, I suppose. A short history of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. But how can there be a "proletarian taste" in this country, with its well-off working class, who are victims of massive and constant materialistic propaganda through advertising and all that?

Participant: Well-off, bullshit! Record numbers of people living below the poverty-line, record unemployment, inflation rampant, employers setting the unions against each other, locking the building laborers out of sites all over the city ...

McQueen: You can't presuppose that the workers are empty vessels into which things are poured, that they don't have real experience by which to sort out what is being fed them. "Taste" is that nice acquired thing which you pay a lot of money for and go to Switzerland to have polished up, or off, or whatever it is. Hopefully proletarians have been spared that kind of "culture."

Participant: There are no proletarians in this room, that's for sure.

Participant: If culture is something you do, not something you consume, then there are thousands of people in things like watercolour societies all over the country doing it. Elitists write them off as amateurs ... I saw an exhibition in Sydney which had paintings in it as good as anything in the Gallery and the commercial galleries.

Smith: Maybe a useful distinction here is the one between consuming and creating, or passive consumption compared to an active, oppositional consumption which leads to creation. It strikes me that a lot of what passes for art criticism, for art-audience talk—a lot of what we've been saying about Modern Masters – is worrying about how to consume art 'better,' 'properly.' More than that—most artmaking has been so absorbed by bourgeois notions of consumption that, amateur or professional, it's consumer-doing rather than consumer-creating. Taste comes in here as just the history of consumerist art: the history of modern criticism, of the 'proper' making and responding to art, runs in stages of 'sophistication' from acquiring 'taste,' then acquiring 'sensibility,' to acquiring ways of separating out these precious objects, looking at them for their own sake, so that everything else becomes 'mere social context.' We reduce ourselves and what we do to objects of contemplation. The key issue for me: is there a way of making art, acting creatively in any cultural sense, which hasn't been absorbed by bourgeois notions of consumption? I'm feeling rather strongly that there isn't.

McQueen: I think there is, and the example comes from the people we properly call proletarian. While they are subject to the consumerist brainwashing which all the rest of us are too well aware of, it doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens in the reality of having to go to the factory everyday ... they have an oppositional consumption. No matter how hard Alcoa and M.O.M.A. work to put out a display to get the 'right' response, it will be constantly matched against realities. Much of it will be swallowed, but not all, and never in exactly the way intended. The one-dimensional image of society is not a radical image, it's pernicious, it entraps everyone ... it excludes oppositional responses, it defuses the possibility of such responses organizing themselves so they can act effectively in changing state power.

Jenny Watson; painter: Is it necessary to an art with a radical framework, such as Art & Language, that the people in it be ultraconservative in other aspects of their lives —for example, the fact that there are no women in Art & Language?

Smith: No, it's obviously not necessary ... I suppose part of the reason why there is a search now more for a lived sense of community, symbolized by *The Fox*, rather than the group profile we had, which was partly macho-individualistic ... I don't know, I don't think the participation of women in the community

is token, but you might read it that way. Look, if you take it as a fact that no women have a leading role in Art & Language work, yet at the same time that work has 'radical' intentions, well, then I, for one, am in a contradiction, and so are some others. It's one of those situations where your lifeworld rubs your aspirations raw. In one way it indicates a failure of authenticity ... But in another way thank Christ for it—you see, our situation is much more desparate than the Marcusian one, than being trapped in impotent one-dimensionality—we live in massive contradictions, and they are essential to the possibility of our going on.

***McQueen*: At this moment of high capitalism it's not surprising that a divided, specialized, role-bound society like ours has most of us acting differently in different parts of our lives. But you've got to watch the great bourgeois put-on of having you fall for the line that you can't be a good socialist if you don't live in a hovel. The great trick, which so-called 'radical' groups impale each other with all the time, is to believe that because you're not perfect in a world that deliberately organizes to make perfection impossible, you have no right to change that world ...**

Melbourne, Australia

NOTES

1. The four Futurist paintings were Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912, Albright-Knox, Buffallo; Boccioni's *The Laugh*, 1911, M.O.M.A.; Severini's *Armoured Train in Action*, 1915, Zeisler collection, New York; Malevich's *Scissors Grinder*, 1912, Yale University Art Gallery.

Museums: M.O.M.A. 23, other U.S.A. 31, Musée National d'Art Moderne. Paris, 9; Tate Gallery, London, 1, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. and Art Gallery of New SouthWales, Sydney, 4. Private Collections: in New York or nearby 33, elsewhere U.S.A. 3, outside U.S.A., mostly Europe, 10.

3. From the editorial, June 1975. In this and the following issue some pages are devoted to an attempt to show that the rejection of the Sydney Art & Language show does not amount to censorship. Members of the Association for Cultural Freedom tend to share a history of Marxist leanings during the 1930s transformed into a virulent, C.I.A.-financed anti-Communism in the 1950s, a defence of 'academic freedom' (against students) in the 1960s 'and of private enterprise (against 'mixed economies') more recently. Perhaps the best- known member would be Sidney Hook, until recently Professor of Philosophy at New York University.

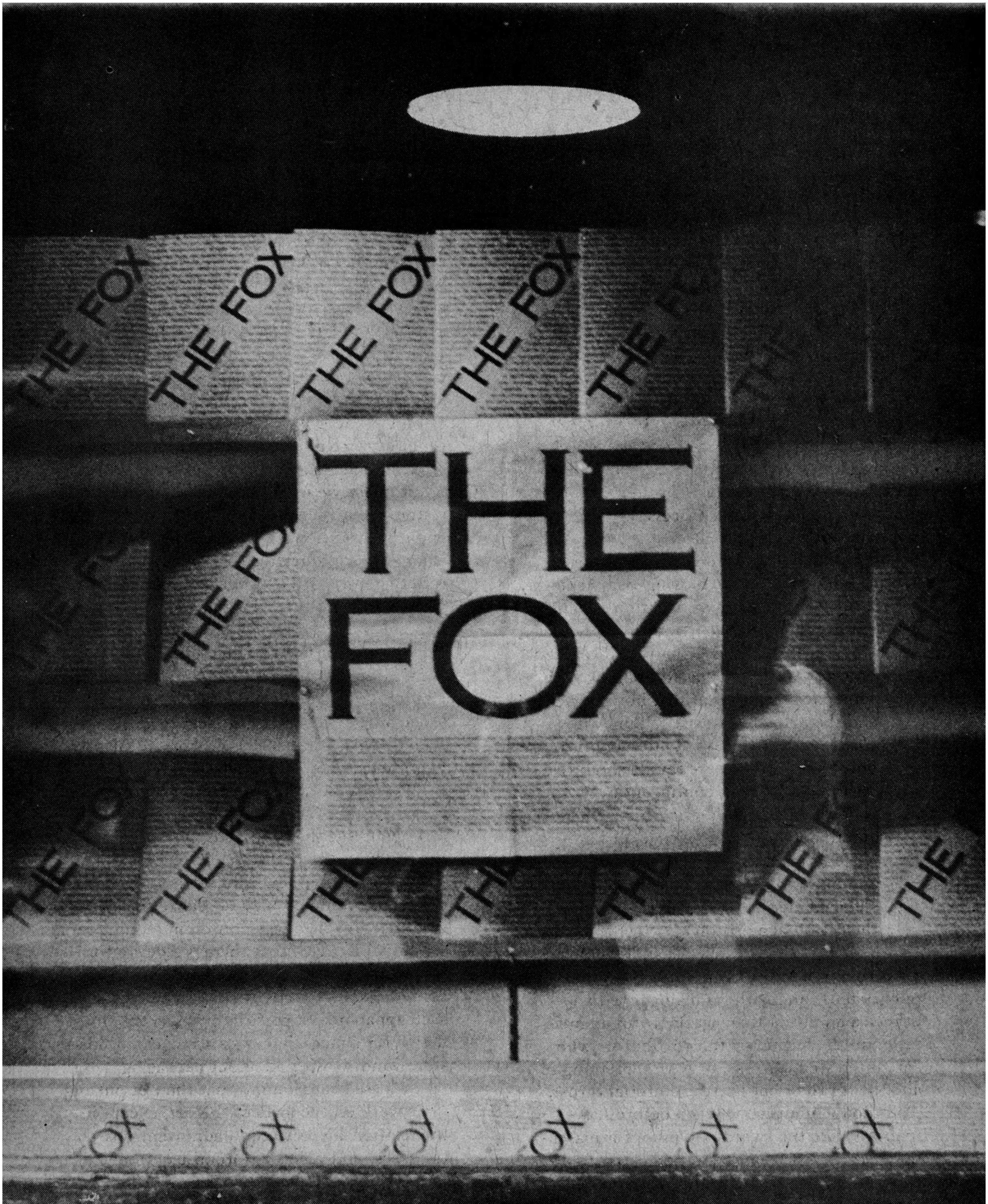
Naming names and detailing events is an important principle in cases such as this, however opaque they may be to readers in other places. The politician is Mr. Peter Coleman, member for the State seat of Fuller, covering Sydney suburbs. As well as contacting a trustee and the director of the A.G.N.S.W., he also spoke to the State Minister for Culture, Sport and Recreation—who, at the official opening of "Modern Masters," announced that only in a free society could such art be made, and only a free enterprise system could bring it to us. Mr. Coleman claims that he insisted only that the Art & Language "counter-exhibition" must not go on in the same room as "Modern Masters"—something which was never planned.

The Trustees dismissed the proposed show in these terms: "It's not art, why doesn't he do it in the lecture room?," "It would be discourteous to M.O.M.A. whilst 'Modern Masters' is showing and members of the International Council are our guests," "It would be a very open situation, anything could be said, people milling about in the galleries will create another Tim Burns-type scandal." The Tim Burns (not Ian Burn) scandal erupted when one of the two people he had living naked in the Gallery for the duration of the "Recent Australian Art" exhibition forgot to dress to go to the john.

4. Mr. Thomson saw the point about the significance of context for the receipt of trans-cultural "messages," but saw it upside down: he observed that there was no way the Gallery could control what was said in the discussion, so by moving them to the Art School he had shifted "what is said" to a place where, in his words, "it doesn't matter what is said."

As I write, (late August) this attitude has produced a rare large-scale political reaction by artists in Melbourne. The immediate cause was Mr. Thomson's removal, without consulting the artist, of two sculptures on temporary exhibition because of "the unfortunate relationship they set up with the historical works of art around them which I think it unfair to ask the public to accept." Two hundred and fifty artists and others sat in the Gallery to hold a meeting which condemned the Director's action in this case and that of the Art & Language show, and criticized—to put it midly – the Gallery's utterly inadequate allocation of resources to local contemporary art (four staff with other, major duties and the tail-end of the budget). Issues were raised about the Gallery's confusion of policy regarding its role as a museum only, or a museum *and* gallery, its service to "the public" rather than artists, its excessively bureaucratic public-service structure, its departmental divisiveness, etc., etc.

5. Dr. Earle Hackett. The other invitees in Adelaide were: Noel Sheridan. artist; Donald Brook, Professor of Visual Arts, Flinders University; Lucy Lippard. The Progressive Art Movement, organizers of much of the protest against "Some Recent American Art," refused to participate because of what they saw as incompatibility with their "concern that art should be put to the service of ordinary people rather than remain a diversion for privileged intellectuals." In Melbourne: students from the Art School, Preston Institute of Technology, the Fine Arts Department, Melbourne University, and elsewhere; Humphrey McQueen, historian, Australian National University, Canberra; Henry Kripps, philosopher of science, Melbourne University; Patrick McCaughey, Professor of Visual Arts, Monash University.


THE
FOX

DEAR FOX...
LIZZIE BORDEN

You write of alienation in the art world and the exhaustion of art. You assume a marxist stance: you talk about the necessity of analyzing the relation of a mode of activity (art) to labor & leisure, to inherited esthetic assumptions, and the relation of monetary reward in art to labor on the open market. You shift your emphasis to pragmatics, the grit and unexpectability of actors interacting: the contexts and intentions of each exchange rather than the linguistic bases of the exchanged product. You concentrate on the group (yourselves) as the frame for these encounters, as a context independent of the cultural 'monolith', discovering in the friction of your communal thought-processes syntheses unavailable in inert art matter.

> " ... eliminating producer-consumer relationships means moving away from knowledge and communication which has become rigid and towards knowledge and communication which is based on *transformation*. Ideally, talking with someone should mean that both ourselves and the person(s) we are talking with change in the process of interaction: not only that, *what* we are saying should be regarded as shared, contingent upon the way we are discussing it. When we talk about 'acquiring' knowledge, or knowledge of people, we treat both ourselves and our knowledge as objects to be exchanged, neither of which is altered in the act of 'acquisition'."
>
> Andrew Menard

To extend the community, you take public steps for creating a dialogue with others: you put out a magazine with an invitation in the beginning to contributors who "are interested, curious, or have something to add (be it pro or con) to the editorial thrust." And though your name (even before Lawrence) is, like the sword, a symbol for masculinity, there is a woman on the board of editors (and three articles by women in the magazine).

I admire and appreciate your efforts, but I wonder if you can step back and frame yourselves in a wider context.

Now that the empire of formalism has crumbled, everyone is flailing away at it. Feminist art, South American art, Black art, graffiti artists, Video freaks, Tom Wolfe. The list could go on. Your anti-ethnocentric arguments are shared by more than one on this list, as well as the use of the group as an independent context and the questioning of economic inequalities. While most of this work is not capable of such high levels of self-consciousness as you are (I use this term positively), it might view itself in a similar light: as restoring emotions & subjectivity to art, as exploring individual lives & events. With the emergence of Narrative Art a few years ago (photographs with little stories, like "human interest" captions in newspapers), art became humble and self-effacing, attempting to bring High Art down from its high horse. Now, of course, most of this stuff is seen as cute and cloying, coyly reaffirming the elitism of the artist, whose smallest scribbles are "art." Feminist art, while often working in this" "humble" mode, has been as aware as you

are of the importance of creating a group context (Judy Chicago & Woman House, for example). But their art is suspiciously like the products they criticize – they are eager to join the rewarded few who suffer reward "in order to continue." While I realize that "look" is an inescapable consideration in public presentation, it seems that there is a desire for respectability that creates a bourgeois aura for bourgeois content (even if it surfaces in such apparently superficial ways as the cover design for a magazine or its arrangement in a store window). It's all about packaging.

Please keep in mind that I'm not putting your work on the level of this art, except in the relationship between your intentions (theories) and your compromise in practice. It is precisely because the work mentioned above is so bad

that comparisons of intention become necessary.

Consider the evidence. You work in collaboration with each other with positive results. You produce a substantial amount of work from the mutual transformations possible through your interactions. But the public knows you only through your public appearances: your work in galleries and museums, and your books (available primarily in artworld places-Jaap Reitman's, Weber gallery). The public hears of shows and sales (have you really been working on graphics?). You are well aware of the problem of depragmatized work, yet all the work you put out within these *context is depragmatized*. You're probably also very aware of the many doubts that outsiders have about your intentions—your collective sincerity. Occasionally it seems like your attempt to create an independent context is like living in Westchester and growing your own vegetables. Because the structure surrounding you is so massive, your analyses (fine within the group context)" are subterfuged by the public's inherited and internalized ways of receiving information. Since much of the writing is reminiscent of early *Art-Language* (not just the same writers, but the same tone), it is too easy for the public to see *The Fox* as just another name for the same work. Although it is a simplification to regard this magazine as your only work, it is not separated enough from your other endeavors.

I'm bringing these problems up because it seems wasteful to undercut your efforts through the prejudices raised by your tone and presentation. It seems to me that one of the major difficulties you have in concretizing your methods outside of the group is that your analyses are so involved with an abstract "marxist" argument, and borrowings from anthropological, philosophical & historical theory. Some examples:

> **"According to some theories that have bearing on the historical development of the practice of criticism (the public sphere as outlined by Habermas), the current situation of the entrepreneurial status of art critics-historians is analogous to the triumphant entry of the troops of liberation's transformation into the forces of occupation. The bourgeois public sphere, which was once constituted by all the institutions as democratic checks on the power of the aristocracy, has been transformed into a bureaucratic dispensary of cultural truths. The potentially caustic, though archaic, notion of 'public opinion' originated in the public sphere. It was a point of departure for effective political action, had meaning for the emerging bourgeois class, and was predicated on the later 18th Century (then radical) ideology of liberalism. The almost total capitalization of the public sphere, as a function of monopolistic capitalism makes participation in that domain dependent on the economic-ideological resources of monopolistic capitalism. (Corris)**
>
> **7. Perhaps the locale of 'praxis' is just here at the vectors of where the historically located and philosophically aware anthropologist joins the agents of lived cultural reflexivity (artist) ... art is an activity which, to (scientific) 'objectivity' is more a complete paradox than a profound one—but in lieu of such an objectivity they are simply two over-lapping yet perpendicular 'myths'. (Kosuth)**
>
> **Mannheim's attempts to get over his own mechanistic determinism-relativism with the 'freischwebende intelligenz' involve a fictitious structural postulate. Overt 'Iife-transformations' are indigestible to his theories, and the fictitious postulate is introduced to cope with that fact. Intellectuals are 'mobile' (intellectually and sociohistorically) because—you guessed it—they are intellectuals. The ideological function of these angels is supposed to be the transformation of interest conflicts into idea conflicts: the Lukacsian' 'totality' is no more than a methodological principle but Mannheim is supposed to be 'empirical.' (Baldwin-Pilkington)**

Practical problems are frequently dismissed, as "naive" or having been dealt away by scientists and academicians, but practical problems still underlie the economic and political relationships you are investigating. They are buried in your "heavy theory." It seems essential

for you to recognize that many of your concerns and confusions (as well as the nature of your compromises) are a barometer for

the current political situation: Post-Vietnam & Post-Watergate, the changed image of America in the world. I don't think it is too farfetched to compare some of your combatative reactions to those of the late sixties-particularly to SDS and the dissenting PL (Progressive Labor): you're probably closer to PL in its concentration on the white workingclass and its heavy marxist style. Their major failure was the absence of a base for "reconstruction" —the inability to follow through theoretical criticisms with practical action outside of the group without resorting to violence.

Lest it appear that I'm just delivering a gratuitous lecture, I'd like to trace my steps to this opinion. In many ways, you've covered this ground, so don't be impatient.

ART & POLITICS

As you've pointed out, recent abstract art has generally been regarded as "above" politics: as a-moral and a-political: as referring only to its own geneology, alluding only to itself. During the sixties, figurative references left over from 50's art were progressively obliterated. Any association that happened to occur was read as a perceptual phenomenon rather than as a symbolic reference (even when· the artists' titles were obdurately referential). Freedom from symbolism 'and literal representational image meant that work was free from surrounding social contexts. Formalist art' criticism implicitly accepted (or maybe created) the dissociation of formal content from social considerations. Most criticism of the sixties followed the formalist lead, at least in 'part, but with various histories of form serving as hierarchical order. The work of "socialist" critics (Marcuse, Hauser) was looked at suspiciously by critics who claimed that they didn't pay enough attention to the attributes of the particular object.

While some critics of pop art (Alloway, Coplans, Steinberg) appeared; on the surface, to discuss the sociological and political contexts around art, they stopped at the iconographic parallels between art and culture. These critics "named" the cross-fertilizations rather than investigating how they were generated. The only "dialectical" art writing of the sixties was Smithson's sci-fi convolutions, Morris' paragraphs of phenomenology, and Lewitt's ingenuous sentences. Significantly, this wasn't art "criticism."

As you've also recognized, the single attempt within conventional art criticism to

dive underneath the accepted formal geneologies of art-breeding-art has been Max Kozloff's "American Painting and the Cold War." (Followed by Eva Cockcroft's article, Kozloff's piece is such an anomaly in his "oeuvre" that I feel cautious in my admiration.) As he pointed out, Pop Art and Color Field painting were insidiously propagandistic, the cultural argument for American expansionism and sense of self-importance. An index of America's superiority, finally wrestling cultural primacy away from Europe. The "benevolent" self-righteousness of art was even in the language of materials-factory produced metals, plastics, the vast nuclear-reminiscent bare canvas spaces of modernist painting. American art was the "trustee of the avant-garde spirit," with "a belief so reminiscent of the U.S. Government's notion of itself as the lone guarantor of capitalist liberty." Value was placed in function, spareness, neutrality, a cool & detached attitude toward subject matter: a conscious dissociation from the humanism of the 50's.

> "At the risk of considerable schematization, I would say that the torments of the 50's had enervated and ground down the ideological faculty of the American artist. Never comfortable with manifestos, he embarked now into an ironic, twisted, and absurdist 'neo-dada' as it was first known, a distinctly impersonal, highly engineered chromatic abstraction. Significantly, neither of these modes pretended any philosophical or moral claims at all-the better, as it turned out, to specify sensations and appearances in the immediate environment. Technology had shown, that means were more important than ends, and that in the vacuum of a society that was losing a sense of its goals, professionalism and specialization had utmost value."

Kozloff writes predominantly of pop and

modernist work. Pop was "timely and expansive," with:

> "an objectivity that seemed a mask for the celebration of what everyone, even the artists themselves, admitted to be the most abrasive images in the American urbanscape."

Color field painting (and, though Kozloff doesn't mention it, Minimal art)

> "upheld the timeless and reductive. The symbolic values latent in such abstraction aspired to a vision of limitless control and ultimate, inhuman perfectibility (which was also a particular aspect of 60's america.) Nothing interferes with the efficient plotting of its structure—in fact, efficiency itself becomes its pervasive ideal."

While Kozloff didn't talk about "conceptual" or "information" art, these developments can be seen as an exaggeration of symbolic propagandistic values. From Warhol's desire to be a machine to the use of catalogues, computer programming, lists, (etc.) the impetus was toward greater efficiency and objectification. In fact, person became synonymous with (or objectified as) art work. While a lot of this work was a reaction against the cultural appropriation of the art product, the artist was put in the product's place and was merchandised instead. A massive schizophrenia began to develop. While most artists were well aware of the evils of the marketplace and wanted to remain unappropriated, the lure of economic reward and gallery recognition was too great to relinquish (even if seen as a temporary measure). Even Earthworks, attempting to bypass the gallery and museum (the most obvious packages for the object), copped out by using salable photographs in galleries. These began to undermine the necessity of first-hand-on-site experience. For example, the "spiral" of Smithson's jetty is seen graphically because of photographs, rather than experientially – the way in which the piece forces the viewer to walk around so that one *must* see the entire landscape: *this* is the spiral jetty, not the aerial view of the shape. Of course, the dilemma, as has been pointed out many times, is how to make people *recognize* work (to be aware of its existence as well as the more extreme "knowing what it is") without putting it into a conventional mode of presentation.

IN POLITICS & ART, THE VILLAIN IS FALSE OBJECTIVITY

The aspiration toward perfection (the underlying conviction that perfection is within range, there to be grasped, the object of desire), whether manifested in the product or in its maker, implies an ultimate authority, a reified "prime~mover" (the belief in America, the esthetic value of art, the corporate head). There is a teleological thrust toward some idealized state, as if its meaning could exist beyond all subjective contexts. This is like the circular argument of corporate thinking: the corporation becomes reified into something larger than the sum of its parts and then becomes the self-created and self-perpetuating reason for its own existence. It isn't "framed" or "bracketed" as merely one way of structuring information within a context that embodies a certain economics, system of education, perceptual conditioning, language. Like some immutable "fact," it is its own historical justification, appearing to have always existed, driving toward greater expansion and efficiency. I know that talk of false objectivity is old hat to you, and you've been over this ground many times. But it seems important to emphasize that the consequence of "objectivity" is that no one is responsible. If something is reified above or beyond individual subjective choice, there can be no moral stance. (This is how art got away with its air of a-morality.)

In art, a priori assumptions were objectified into goals, as if those ends were the objective, original facts. Modernism is the easiest scapegoat, but it is only one instance of formalism in the sixties. I'm defining formalism here as modes of criticism or ways of working based upon reflexive assumptions, self-referential, concerned only with the characteristics of the object (or idea) rather than with the *perception* of the object (or idea) within a context.

This is where you come in. (And remember of course that simplifications arise from my viewing you contemplatively, as

an outsider or voyeur.) Early *Art-Language* assumed the position of analyzing the philosophical and linguistic bases of art (the sense of calling art "art," esthetic attitudes, quality judgments, etc.). But your roots in British Analytic philosophy often tripped you up: not only in giving your writing its sometimes snotty tone, but in limiting your enquiries to what "made sense" as a linguistic proposition. Logic was idealized and "objectified" as the authority to the extent that if something didn't fit into the logical system, it was nonsense and its validity as a problem dismissed. In this kind of writing, logic was elevated to the same position as the reified "flatness of the picture plane." You really weren't incorporating extra-art concerns at all—mlerely applying a method borrowed from philosophy rather than from, say, the history of pictorial form.

THE OBJECTIVITY OF FORMALISM

Formalism (Modernism, Minimal art, early *Art-Language*) believes in the "abstract," whether it is the idealized end toward which art develops, or the "truth" of propositions. In both cases, the abstract is viewed as independent of contemporary' social and political contexts. While formalism's arguments are founded on Kantian self-criticism and resolution to essence, its self-analysis doesn't function as critique or therapy (this implies some friction against contemporary social beings or institutions, some "transformation" or change). Formalists have used Kant "un-dialectically—to "purify" each medium (or mode of thought) to its essential properties. (I know that "essentialism" was never an aim of *Art-Language*—and Kosuth was once criticized for being an "essentialist," but I think you fall into it unintentionally during one period.) The notions of purification were often arbitrary and illogical (such as, Greenberg's argument that the opticality of sculpture was more "advanced" than tactility). And even though Minimal artists weren't talking in terms of purifying the work, their belief in "trueness to materials" and "process" was another form of purification.

The different viewpoints of critics were like party lines in the same government. There were tactical and taste differences, above- and below-board methods. But they all accepted the perimeters of art concerns within the history of art without bracketing them into a social context. The arguments gave the illusion of greater divergence than ever really existed. The ideological differences seem silly now: Greenberg could not stomach Stella, Fried saw Stella as the zenith of modernism but got shivers whenever he entered a room with Minimal sculpture. Krauss "converted" and traded in her modernist art vocabulary for a modernist film language, Steinberg rejected the flat picture plane but reinvented the "flat-bed."

Within the reflexive frame of formalism, all distinctions of "quality" are only quantitative measurements. This is not to say that nothing was interesting or that everything was the same. The art works have had "value," but not for the reasons provided by critics. Modernist quality judgments reflected the hierarchical power structures and systems of patrimony more than the art. And Minimal artists undoubtedly thought they were escaping the esthetics and fine adjustments of modernist sensibility because their permutative structures seemed to lie outside of critical judgment. (How is one of a series better than another?) But Minimal artists had only relocated the critical point from the particular object to the originating idea (Lewitt). Once the initial decision was made, the artist could play out the possibilities until it was time to think of a new idea. And in its materials and styles, its simplicity, elegance, and detachment, Minimal paralleled modernist taste (although it was more adventurous-using walls, floor, ceiling with greater abandon).

This is where you come in again. Before 1973, pre-*Handbook* (or *Blurting in Art & Language*) and the *Anti-Textbook*, you attacked the injustices of the economic system and quality judgments but remained attached to the gallery-press-museum superstructure of this work. You talked only about formalist work and its stars. You were the underbelly of formalism, its bad conscience, maligned and put down by artists who said they couldn't understand your prose. And while you rejected "sensibility," you never gave up good taste. (It is important for readers to remember that some of you elders were minimal artists way way back in pre-A &

L days, and, more importantly, artists outside of New York whose contact with the art world was through magazines.) You had internalized the arguments and believed in them implicitly.

Again, in writing this, I see how easy it is to get caught up in the relations between formalist ways of working—to be entrapped within the same self-referential assumptions that had bewitched you for a while. Maybe it's a plot: the illusion of intra-art argument prevents everyone from recognizing wider realities. And the belief in the art sphere creates a moral illusion: that art's progress is toward some good. The morality and responsibility of the artist are tied up in bettering the art form, being" original." While this process seems at first to be ascetic—(dedication, hard work, simplification of means & desires), the work soon begins to get mannered because content is determined by such a limited set of elements. Severe implosion sets in. (I've stolen your use of this term.) Elements are exaggerated and refined in the desire for greater inventiveness (early and late Stella, Poons, Ryman, Terry Atkinson). One might call this decadent.

It's true, you went far beyond other artists in trying to investigate the true subject of the work—not the particular art object, but the structure surrounding the object. But until recently, even you did not fully recognize the frame of formalism as market expansion. It all seem's so clear now: it wasn't only that the work was used as propaganda for the U.S. but the tone of the work, the illusion of ideological controversy, the liberalization of ideas and the paternalistic support of galleries (& collectors, beginning under Kennedy): all reflected the contemporary political picture.

MEDIA & MANIPULATION

This kind of manipulation (and maybe it is not manipulation: maybe it is the inescapable fate of being caught in one's time) underlay the more obvious forms of manipulation of which artists were aware, such as the arbitrariness and fickleness of the market and the media. But the reaction of artists was to cling to the idea of media as only manipulative. (This implied a belief in "pure" unmanipulated information, again a notion of objectivity.) The reactions ranged from romantic (some of the earthwork impulse: back to the land: like the sixties' *Greening of America*) to prankish (ants at MOMA). Even the use of pamphlets, silk-screened posters, etc. was ingenuously ineffectual: more like arts and crafts: unable to deal with the contradictions between the media as it exists and its revolutionary potential.

The only artist to radicalize his position in relation to the media was Andy Warhol. He was, at first, a producer rather than a product. A revolutionary plan would make everyone a manipulator of the media, and The Factory was potentially a community of producers. (It never realized itself: sexism, star-worship & drugs fucked it up, leading to the exploitation that finally destroyed Warhol, beginning with Valerie Solanis and ending with advertisements for Pioneer). In his pop paintings and objects, Warhol used the iconography of advertisement, derived from the products in such a way that they advertised themselves, using their own methods and images. It was as if Warhol were producing the products: every "real" advertisement advertised Warhol's art. He was ripping off Brillo and Campbell, and if it hadn't served them so well, they could have prevented him. Warhol, as much as other Minimal & Modernist artists, believed in the objective, external recordable world where genius and stardom were recognized and rewarded. While this is apparent in his use of newspaper images, it is even clearer in his method of filming. He took on the power of making stars. He trained the camera on what was happening, usually in the time it took for something to actually occur, and left it (for the most part) unedited. He embraced the ideal of the perfect, unmediated image, aspiring to become the flawless recorder, man as machine, as camera eye and tape recorder.

OBJECTIVITY & POLITICS

Warhol's mania for recording and his belief in external objectivity parallels Nixon's obsessive consciousness of creating and recording history, finally his own downfall. (This comparison was first suggested by Bruce Kurtz who used the metaphor "drag queen. ") There were two simultaneous impulses in him—the lawbreaker and the investigator. While he was breaking the

law, he was busy recording his transgressions, bringing himself to justice in spite of himself.

> "The President placed himself under the scrutiny of several overlapping systems of surveillance. Secret service agents, White House 'ushers,' military aides to the president, and White House switchboard operators were required to note down every meeting he held, every phone call he initiated or received, and generally speaking, every move he made. At the end of the day, the notes were turned in to a central office, where a presidential 'diary' was put together. Also, aides who sat in on any of the president's meetings were required to take rough notes. These notes were then collected—for the President's file ... ' The president sometimes transformed himself from political actor into political reporter and gave an account of the day's events to a dictaphone. In addition, there was, of course, the automatic taping system, and if some nuance of the presidents utterances should happen to escape this small army of scribes and collection of machines, it might be captured by aides who had been asked to serve as 'anecdotists' or 'color reporters' ... who were to record 'vignettes' of human interest. '"
>
> Jonathan Schell, "Reflections" (The Nixon Years), *New Yorker*, June 30, 1975

Nixon's conviction that history could be created at will, that it would then exist as incontrovertible, and that the official opinion was the final authority, emerged in his creation of scenarios (high theatre) which were then seen as historical facts. He staged protests, brought in agitators, set up negative as well as positive reactions to his appearances, authored his own baiting & booing. And the manipulation toward his version of objectivity extended to the news media. In 1972 a memo from Buchanan to Mitchell in a section called "accuracy in media" suggests the

> "establishment of a 'fair coverage committee' or 'equal time committee' ... which would 'clock' precisely the positive and negative coverage of presidential and vice-presidential candidates on the networks, If we are getting anything more than 'equal time,' this committee can remain silent; if we get anything less than equal time, it should ... then send a memorandum to John Mitchell who should get on the horn to the network president and point this out, indicating that if it is not corrected, and equal time not provided, this will be made an issue in the campaign and the subject of legislation in the coming Congress."

This threat was reinforced in 1972 by Clay Whitehead, the head of the office of Telecommunications policy and the administration's official spokesman:

> "Station managers and network officials who fail to act to correct imbalance or consistent bias from the networks—can only be considered willing participants to be held fully accountable at license renewal time."

The Administration's problem with the Networks, and the desire to enforce an official notion of "objectivity" was present throughout Nixon's presidency, although it was 1969 when Nixon asked Herbert Klein, the White House director of communications, to "contact Howard K. Smith and give him a true record of what the administration has done. " In 1969, Magruder proposed a plan called

"the Shot Gun versus the Rifle" in which he proposed ways of getting "fairer" coverage, including an official monitoring system giving the government legal right to the Networks, using anti-trust legislation and the IRS as scare tactics to make networks change their views. In another document, "Tentative Plan/Press Objectivity," Magruder stated the objective or battle plan:

> "to question the overall objectivity of a television newscaster who has expressed opinionated views in an influential consumer publication while still employed as a supposedly objective television newscaster and to question the motivation for such remarks ... further to extend these questions to cover the professional objectivity and ethics of the whole media and to generate a public re-examination of the role of media in American life." While considerations of the motivation

behind opinions are necessary, the administration had no intention of examining *itself*. The use of scare tactics and enemy lists can be understood as extreme partisan politics, but underlying it all was the belief that there was an objective truth in the officially-engineered stories: that they were not manipulated, that they were "true records" (as Warhol's films were true records of a certain perverse reality).

Nixon's excesses can also be seen as an extension of mass-marketing techniques: it is important to remember that the economic power of the television industry is based on high profit and hard selling, exploiting the audience as products. Even stations that want to present good news coverage are thinking of news as entertainment: drama, conflict, and human interest in a style of reportage that might be structurally analyzed into short take, quick wrap-up, and brief example. All of these modes of presentation hide behind the role of the neutral, objective reporter. It's all show business. While stations have different styles and personalities, it is the same party system (as *Time* or *Newsweek*, *Art Forum* or *Art in America*).

As in art, the true content of TV news is the surrounding economic framework. In both, authority resides in the chiefs. It is probably not too farfetched to compare the sports metaphors of Nixon and of Greenberg in assessing their own value as judges. Nixon was the captain of his football team, and Greenberg proclaimed his good "batting average." How American they both were: it became an emotional appeal.

Both politics and art had their downfalls at the same time. Vietnam, Cambodia, Watergate, and independent scandal (like Agnew) disillusioned the public, making them realize that everything was false, tarnishing the still idealized position of "presidency." These disillusionments were paralleled by the relatively minor (in comparison) scandals of the art world: Marlborough and Rothko's estate, the Metropolitan Museum's transgressions, Geldzahler's Met show, the blackmailing of artists by MOMA for their 1969 Abstract Expressionist show. These uncoverings shook the idealism of the political and art publics-in the purity of political and art institutions.

THE HUMILITY OF SUBJECTIVITY

In the aftermath of Vietnam & Watergate, with the U.S. no longer the center of the world, New York is no longer the center of the art world. The sixties' bubble of economic success has exploded. In politics and art, the public wants to know where & from whom ideas are coming, rather than accepting information from the corporate block. Of course, this desire is being exploited by big business. Rights to exclusive interviews are being fought over by the networks, books are commissioned for large sums. This has been exaggerated by the shift of interest in the past decade from the novel to "real life": the most devastating experiences (murder, rape, prostitution, etc. perpetuated by or done to the author) have been transformed into reward.(Clifford Irving, Xaviera Hollander, Angela Davis, Joan Little, All The Watergate Men, etc.). These are the stars—in contrast to the sixties, when the stars were mythical & unattainable (the high glory of rock groups: until Altamount).

In the art world too, the heroes are fading. (I'm not being sexist—there were very few women.) Warhol is a society portraitist who goes to a lot of parties. Johns and Rauschenberg are old masters from whom one expects too much, nobody knows or really thinks too much about what happened to Noland, Olitski Poons and Stella.

And there has been the outgrowth of small personal work. Stories, anecdotes, harmless, ingratiating, often funny, sometimes "moving" real-life or fictional narratives, cutesy and inoffensive, sometimes diaristic, not claiming any span wider than the author, not greedy or ambitious but "honest" and "direct," self-analytical. (A lot of this is said to be "women's work," but men were among the first to initiate it—Wegman, Baldessari, Borofsky, etc.).

It looks pretty hopeless, but underneath the self-effacement is the desire to "communicate." This indicates an awareness of audience that most art of the sixties refused to acknowledge. The 'grand-scale objectness of sixties work seemed to exist impervious to onlookers, as if timeless, beyond the individual. The viewing context was accepted as given.

This is where, earlier, Earthworks

had tried to break through. Since the work was in the landscape, the viewer had to deal with where the piece was, how it adjusted to its surroundings, or how the environment was forced to accept it. It was necessary to experience the work—in context. Some of this work might have been destructive—a romantic dream, an ecological fuck-up-but the attempt enforced a dialectical relation between work and viewer. (The work failed *not* because it could not provide this exchange but because the means of informing the public were so conventional.) This kind of interaction was a possibility within the gallery too. It is ironic that Fried's horrified reaction (frisson) to Minimal sculpture could have provided a more productive way of seeing the work: not in ripping anything off from theater, but in creating the condition in which the viewer's presence is primary in the perception of work. This would have provided a grounding for a truly phenomenological criticism (rather than the so-called "phenomenological" descriptions by Judd in *Arts Magazine*). The cognizance of each viewer is the only way to prevent illicit reconstructions of the viewing process (formalism).

Criticism that is "phenomenological" involves a consciousness of the "other" similar to phenomenological "inter-subjectivity."The individual's "cogito" extends to the self-aware "other," whose actions are comprehensible. (The *expectation* is that they are, even though they may not be: one seeks reasons for the failures.) Morality is this mutual recognition. While the performing arts have had to work with this as content, most recent pictorial & sculptural art has denied its importance.

Some "conceptual" art tried to take the gallery into account as a meeting place. Ian Wilson, for example, or pieces of paper suggesting activities that need never be executed. But the "experience" of such work was negligible: it was literary & academic. And communication was one-directional. While information was presented as idea rather than as object, the ideas were treated as commodities. Even Wilson's work eluded any real dialogue. While some performance pieces (Acconci, Oppenheim) were more successful in creating an exchange between the performer and the audience, this work was only part of the larger output of the artists—conventionally exhibited graphics, photographs, and drawings. Most attempts at dialectical exchange within the gallery were ill-fated: the gallery was just too loaded as a marketplace.

The question is this: how can an artist continue to work, aware that particular pieces are subsumed by the economic framework? Is it possible to produce work that is not subsumed into the economic framework but that doesn't simply stand back and analyze the situation?

NARRATIVE & ART.

It is more than a coincidence that most of the interesting contemporary work from other countries are films: from Cuba, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. And that many of these films are somewhat "narrative" in structure, often didactic in presentation, and tied to place of origin. The myth of universal abstract art —that the artist anywhere could continue the grand march toward innovation in the medium — looks more like the ubiquitousness of Coca-Cola than the neutrality of culture. Not only has art been Americo-centric, but it has been white-male sexist.

It seems essential to get over the high-culture contempt for narrative based on the Western tradition of modernist abstraction. Narrative (defined simply: a tale, a teller, and an implied audience) puts the question of "mediation" right out in the open. The tale is mediated by the teller. It comes from a particular point. The biases and identifying marks are all there. Narrative doesn't have to mean a simple linear thread (as in a "story"), but can take over where novels left off. Some of Godard's films are good examples: "Le Gai Savoir," "Two or Three Things I Know About Her," "One Plus One."

While the mediation in film seems novelistic, TV seems more like theater—the straightforward presentation of theater to audience is "unmediated" in relation to film-no camera, just the audience watching the stage.

It is the illusion of non-mediation in TV taken from the stage that permits invisible propaganda to continue on television: the "you-are-there" atmosphere of news reports, the anchor man sitting in front of a screen on which the viewer watches events: as if the newscaster is

presenting actuality as it exists. The viewer does not take the position of the camera. The station is not recognized as the "mediator," or party politics as the judge of what reality is shown. Even the TV camera seems to be less subjective than the film camera: perhaps because of the combination of "live-coverage" and "video-space" (the real space of the events and of the newscaster in the TV studio). The awareness of this kind of mediation by politically conscious youth in the 60's led to nationwide paranoia: remember when everyone was sure that the moonwalk had been staged?

Next to the possibilities of communication through TV, film might seem backward, reactionary & even naive. (I hate using that word: you've used it so much and I keep thinking of its opposite, "sophisticated.") But until the means of production are in everyone's hands, TV is not only reactionary but repressive. Even socialist countries are not willing to take steps toward de-centralization, and TV remains within government control. But films are a good way of spreading information & attacking forms of repression (many of the films from the Third World are made covertly.) Magazines are also effective and maybe better in some ways: distribution is cheaper, wider & more pointed through mailing lists.

Both films and magazines can provide contexts for the ideas contained within them—the editorial frameworks. But films are more powerful: they can reach many people at once: the mode of presentation is more dramatic. But film is only one medium that can permit the simultaneous expression of its context (how it is mediated) and its particularity as a thing with certain textural qualities. When this occurs, the presentation of social context is the grounding of the form through which content is expressed. The form itself is the political context and the vehicle of radicality (Godard and Brecht, for example). Narrative is only illustration unless it works at the level of deep organizational structure.

The problem with most "minority" work (I'll talk about work by women, because I feel closer to it), is that it grafts narrative subject matter onto conventional art structures (as well as seeking acceptance within the conventional economic art world). The discussion of content particular to women (centred images, grids, female sexual imagery) merely lays a sexist reading on ordinary stock art vocabularies. It seems that the most radical thing women artists can do is to break away from the grid. No matter what they do to it (sew it, fill it, weave it), the grid is the overriding content. And women have continued to use the journal form in very personal ways—as confessional, diary, autobiography—but it is such a known structure that the work can only be illustrative. The same holds for work within any institutionalized form, even The Fox. The very adequacy of the writing by women in your magazine suggests an insidious form of oppression. (In the acceptance of certain ideas, in the decision to *perform* within these concerns, and, maybe most important, in the use of language. This is similar to the funneling of energy from the women's movement into the anti-war activities organized by men in the late 60's. The argument was that "freedom" of women was only part of a larger struggle against capitalism, and that only after the struggle had been won could women's liberation be continued: this was a way of relegating women's independence to a secondary role.)

> "The problem that many of us face is that our women's movement has not yet developed a sense or complete strategy of what is 'right.' It then becomes too tempting to accept—or feel pressured to accept—what someone else says is right, whether or not we believe it. The current mood produces enormous pressure from Weatherman to do what they have defined as 'correct work.' Even though most of the Women's movement has believed that an intellectual understanding of what is wrong is not enough to compel people to act, to take risks, to become revolutionaries, many women find themselves accepting a political position that does not stem from their own understanding or experience. "
>
> Weatherman Politics and the Women's Movement, Bread and Roses Collective, Women, Winter 1970.

The last sentence is crucial: it is the experience of the minority artist (or

revolutionary), one's particularly biased historical and psychological understanding, that can provide a structural, analysis of the art or political situation (and a way of operating within it) that might be unavailable to the white western male. These various cultural histories could "transform" each other through interaction, if not subordinated to the dominating ideology. Minority work must contain entire contextual structures if it is not to be immediately appropriated. (The articulation of minority histories compels the recognition of more dominant groups. for example, white radicals learned a lot from the black panthers; not only organization and attitude, but a powerful style of rhetoric, a true black art form.)

Back to you: your work as a group since 1973 (the *Handbook*, the *Anti-Textbook*) has been the most radical attempt to create an independent context within the art world. The trans formative interactions among yourselves, necessarily social, surpass the ability of any medium to acknowledge point of reference: the group is the only non-mediated context that doesn't (or can't) pretend to be objective. And visual work always remains bounded by its materials, which can never fully escape self-reference. An extension to the audience was possible with the *Handbook*, where the language itself was the joint product of many mouths, and revealed forms as methods to be used by the reader:

> **"Blurting in A & L: an index of blurts and their concatenation (the handbook) constitutes a problematic; that is, you can't (at least not without deliberation) ignore possible pathways without losing embeddedness (idiolects); deliberation (here, the issue of going-on becomes a self-conscious construction for the reader) admits broader reflection of a context of our/your/other activities: namely, the structure of our/your language/culture and (the prospect of) revisability of our/your language/culture."**

But in *The Fox*, you seem to have fallen back on easy integration. All your values (the primacy of intersubjective dialogue, the product as collaborative exchange) evaporate as you hit the presentational formats of the art world. In the *Handbook*, you were approaching a deep structure of learning/teaching/organization of material. Now you're beginning to adopt the early A & L style again, that objective-sounding prose entrenched in individualism and value judgment. Authorities are being summoned, whether Marx or a McLuhanesque collage of anthropological opinion. (Mel and Andrew' are exceptions: they use self-doubt as critique and literary conceit, although Andrew's attempts at "literature" are occasionally forced.) It seems like a step backward for you, a conservative move.

Because your processes and methods are not visible, what outsiders see first of all are the contradictions: how can you continue to put work out in an economic system you criticize so severely and how can you justify accepting rewards from it? The demand that the audience trust the work is too great: everyone has had too much of "necessary evils" in art and politics, the recognition of social realities and the dilemmas of presentation or actualization that lead to compromise. Are you still serving as a barometer for the adjustment and appropriation that has modified the entire political field? If contradiction plays a part of some wider dialectical scheme you have in mind, why not give people something substantial by teaching them, through your own practices, how to pragmatize their own situation?

New York, New York

MEMO FOR THE FOX[1]

SARAH CHARLESWORTH

I

There is something about the nature of public dialogue, as well as Art & Language's semi-public high style letter writing, which often produces under the guise of argument, a real gap of understanding. Rather than consolidating, articulating and refining the basis for mutual support/criticism, joint practice, opposition becomes increasingly emotional, extremist and block-headed. I often feel that Art & Language participants deliberately misunderstand, misinterpret and distort the work of others solely for the sake of manufacturing an argument of one's own. The New York/England split has become so dehumanized in a way, it's really frightening – something like the structuralist conception of the situated language bespeaking the person, rather than the person using the language to speak. One of the primary reasons that Joseph Kosuth and Sarah Charlesworth see eye to eye as much as they do, or Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, or Michael Corris and Andrew Menard and Preston Heller, isn't just because they are ganging up, hopelessly dependent on one another, or not thinking for themselves but because the dialogue is a daily affair and mutual criticism, opposing views produce the real conditions for learning, understanding and solidarity, not just a platform for so much narrow-minded and self-serving position taking. Some of us go on about organization as though it's some kind of mechanical overlay stencil design or just so much beating one another into line. How can we talk in one breath about building solidarity/sociality and then turn around and chastise, ridicule and misunderstand those with whom we are supposedly feeling/building solidarity. These are the tactics of the meritocratic society, the teachers of competitiveness. Obviously the alternative (or an alternative) is not that artificial *de jure* democracy which we all find so awkward, artificial and abhorent but perhaps a bit more socialism in the form of responding to each others capabilities and needs. One thing we *all need*, (and'l refuse to see this as simply the internalization of bourgeois individualism or personal psychological shortcoming) is a little credibility, a little space—must we wait for Utopia/Comrade Hard Liner's Brave New World before these intersubjective relationships can come into being or can we perhaps employ them in the building of that world? To realise that we have been reared in a society which divides individuals by encouraging individualism and competitiveness is not to deny the individuality, the problematicity of individual lives, but to try and find in those lives the commonality, and the power to combat the divisiveness of our society. Some of us are quick to spot self-interest in our fellows but rarely can come to terms with genuine needs for community, for learning, for work, for effecting change. To reduce all individual endeavor on the part of one's fellows to careerism, opportunism and self-interest is in one respect to be continually reinforcing such behavior, to be continually sowing the seeds of suspicion and deceit (BAD FAITH). Which in turn just produces more prove-myself-ism.

I have no fantasies, as some do, of playing the working-class hero and very few of being an Art Star, but I do have fantasies of living in a world where one is not compelled to play hero or star, where to act with integrity and good faith with my fellows is enough, where to be a poet, or an artist, a mystic or a philosopher is not to be in poetic hiding.

II

It has been argued that "Cultural Criticism must be replaced by 'activist' work" ... "Praxis, which)s activism of a sort, may be embodied by exposing the contradictions of capitalist culture and, less negatively it should follow from that exposure, *advocating a socialist society*. " It has also been said that we need to sort out some strategies enabling us to "participate in the socialist struggle. Join with others ... "

Who exactly are we going to "join with" for instance (not that I am not sympathetic to the sentiment)? The C.P. or the S.L.P.? If (your, my) goals really place us in a negative relation to capitalism and the capitalist state it seems one might better further ones cause by allying with a potentially more powerful group (movement) than *The Fox*?

You can't quite obviously overthrow the government by showing what's wrong with its art. The question of whether or not we are indeed ready to make this commitment and whether this (as yet utopian) socialism can indeed provide the conditions for a culture free from the domination of a bureaucratic state is not quite clear. Is first to realize and secondly to oppose the profoundly destructive and repressive character of capitalism to assume a socialist or communist state will logically provide a socially and spiritually tenable alternative? To cease to be involved in a kind of practice which involves cultural criticism means we jump out of one static ideological black hole and into another.

'Praxis,' in the Marxist sense, means we do not discuss or interpret the world but we seek through our actions to move towards real structural change, to alter the social frame and not just the content which occurs within that frame. The absence of 'critical margin which is implicit in one sphere of practice however is not to be remedied by a non-critical appeal to various readymades within the 'political' domain. Why is that you can never really have a conversation with a hardliner? It's like having a conversation with a worn out old textbook.

My feelings of alienation and despair at the stupidity, cruelty, and mindless soullessness of American culture are not entirely assuaged by the rhetorical dronings of unsensitive, unthinking revolutionary spokesmen. Some people have spent so much time on the picket line and so little worrying about the theoretical basis for their practice that they understand Marx's notion of contradiction to have something to do with false advertising (ideology), and not the contradictory character of capitalism itself—the contradiction between the means and relations of production, between material production and a production which proceeds under value imperatives, which correlates with a class division of labor and the recurrent crisis of production. This doesn't mean we sit back and wait but we ain't exactly working in a factory either.

The Modem Art factory doesn't exactly function along the same lines. I'm not sure whether "assailing the Imperial Art showcase from the top" doesn't just mean we destroy the showcase rather than the imperialism. It has been said that the organization of *The Fox* exists in order to expose the contradictions inherent in Imperialist Art and hence to "dialectically" reflect a socialist society. I'm not quite so sure what's so dialectical or socialist about exposing the contradictions of art. "Art is a device, bare the device." I just keep wondering whether some way we might use the device (this is what we mean by making ourselves into some kind of a Trojan Horse) and whether the "contradictions" of Imperialist Art are really what most needs assailing. "If we want to move from a theoretical curiosity to informing the actions of everyday life (activism), we must re-think a lot of Art & Language." But let's keep the thinking caps on. I'm ready to fight but I'm not about to follow a headless horseman into battle.

I am wary of the breed of mechanical materialism which assumes that history is determined by dynamic necessities totally impervious to the subjectivity of its constitutive elements. The positivistic approach to social theory has always involved/involves viewing social phenomena as determined primarily by 'atoms 'of society' (individuals/individualism) *or* by 'social facts.' Social reality is either reduced to a psychologism or re-structured as a sociologism or an economism. The reciprocity of the self-forming process of a society-group-community cannot be organized

by a single generalized principle (economic, technological, religious, etc.). One cannot speak of "activism," "radical praxis," "becoming political," "exposing contradictions" and so on, as though this act of becoming (radical, political, engage) bore some absolute or objective relationship with an equally absolute or objective dialectical unfolding of history. (Socialism is a "consequence of history" and not an "idea"). To speak in such absolutist terms recalls a kind of sophomoric "becoming aware" (of Literature, Art, one's sensibilities) and "taking a stand" (against football and junior proms). We can construct a community, or model for socialization, only within a framework which permits and embodies both a critical and dialectical relationship vis-a-vis a changed (since Marx for instance) and changing social-reality (structural, ideological, technological) on the one hand, and the self-forming praxis of the individual on the other. One does not escape from personal, cultural, social entrenchment or impotence simply by becoming a good Marxist (any more than a good Christian) and joining the party (or church) in an act of blind faith.

According to some of us "There is in worker solidarity the chance to fight the Capitalist bureaucracy with worker power." But aren't we romanticising to fancy ourselves workers—members of the working class in any Marxist sense? Is it not possible that we have a role which is distinct from the real working class as well as from the "activist revolutionaries" of the intellectual bourgeosie? I am not even sure whether class struggle in the traditional (capitalist/labor) sense of class is necessarily the struggle that may beget revolution. A master/slave dialectic to be sure—but exactly who and what is the oppressor and who are the oppressed is no longer quite so apparent. The American Dream may still hold a ray of hope for the oppressed American worker who still takes upon himself the burden of success or failure in corporate terms, but what of the nature of the oppression of the "privileged" youth who lives without hope, knows the shallowness of the life that is the reality behind that dream, who is privileged to be morally, physically and psychically incapable of working in the factory or the office, for whom there is really no work, no dream; who had the privilege of opposing rather than fighting the war in Vietnam and hence really knows the nature of his impotence? He who was beat over the head by his working class peers and yet knows it's not the cops who are his enemy but he who called them—he who sat home and watched on tv his working class peers murder, rape and pillage at capital's command; he who had the privilege of the education to see that the enemy was not the gooks and imperial warfare not the road to freedom. What about the nature of the oppression of those of us who knew this *and watched*?

Is it not true that I might have a role in the class struggle which is distinct from yours? At times *you* appear my comrades-in-arms, at others we are each other's enemy within. You "working class" family men act like you have some kind of a critical purchase on discontent. In terms of real human oppression the gulf between the nature and degree of your social class background and mine is fine in comparison with that of your sexual class (male) and mine (female). In this mapping, you are the "bondsman" and I the "slave." You and your class hold all the strings, you are the technocrats and bureaucrats of capitalism, you are the artists, the dealers, the critics, the lawyers, the judge. You who are waiting for Sarah to prove herself—Who's Sarah, what has she done—why must we deal with her? The standards of our revolution are high:We don't just let anybody in—it's not that we don't like women, it's just that no strong, intelligent, intellectual, sincere, determined, well-read, persistent, well-directed creative amazons have been applying lately.' Our strong, intelligent, well-read wives prefer washing dishes. Talk about the internalization of bourgeois economic relations!

In the process of exchanging criticism on the first issue over the summer someone suggested that my article looked like "radical chic via Bloomingdale's." Bullshit! I won't use the popular Art & Language gambit of feigned misinterpretation, of exploiting for the sake of my argument the superficial sexism (chic, Bloomingdale's). My article was far less chic in that sense than most of yours, you who are so facile with language and humor, who can search your souls as though off-the-cuff, you for whom the language of soul-searching comes off as so

much chatty banter. What was meant, I think, was that it *looked* like something other than that which it was. The struggle didn't show through. It wasn't in the latest Art & Language New York style. It did not, in your terms, "fully serve the inevitable negative relation to Capitalism." But those are *your* terms.

The Fox was not conceived of as a weapon to "fight Capitalism." It was not at first even initiated as a project of Art & Language. It emerged in part out of my struggle to come to terms with a very stagnant, alienated and alienating art culture of which Art & Language New York at the time was very much a part. It had a lot to do with Joseph rethinking and needing to rethink his relationship to the world. It had to do with the frustration felt by Andrew, by Michael and Preston with the extremely oppressive nature of a very elitist and rather irrelevant (in terms of effective practice) theoretical debating society which was Art & Language.

I won't belabor it, the point is that the standards for serving that "inevitable negative relationship to Capitalist culture" are not all that objective. Those standards do not stand outside ourselves, the ongoing material and spiritual problematicity of our lives. It has been said that we must "posit an enemy outside." I say you can't "posit" the enemy, you uncover it, discover its real nature, and combat it by an ongoing process of work (practice) which is both personal and social (communal), both theoretical (heuristic) and activistic (propagandistic). The particular nature of the enemies we find within reflect to a large extent the enemy outside. The reasons for all our various alliances and disputes are not all that pure. The anti-psychological, anti-sociological (somewhat) attitude which prevails in the group means we miss the boat a lot in understanding one another, understanding how we can work together and how we can't. This goes for Art & Language New York, Art & Language United Kingdom, ALNYUK ⟷ other human beings. There are a lot of problems and issues that cannot be resolved on the plane of pure theoretical discourse and a lot of time is wasted trying to do so. The same might be said for all this blood and guts, nasty name calling, bully and shame. We can't just bargain with one another, "well you give up some of your ego cause I gave up some of mine." *The Fox* is a product of our sociality. The nature of our sociality, the model for, and the vehicle of a process of socialization can never be more than a response to the needs of the individuals located specifically in terms of history and locale. Okay that's not quite right, it can in a sense transcend any of those particular individuals. It has a life and momentum of its own but that objectified body Art & Language and *The Fox* must and need be specifically tied to the needs of the individuals, the community which it serves. This means that our particular individual interests can never be entirely consolidated.

What "historical necessity" doesn't need is, say, six more Marxists. (Or even six more Marxist artists or a Marxist art group fixed on "exposing contradiction "). I think there is something more to putting yourself on the line than self-sacrifice. I think putting yourself on the line has a lot more to do with some kind of personal emancipation than self-sacrifice, correct behavior. Egos are good tools for "proving yourself" and it's only when you can no longer respect, accept the conditions of that proof that the ego fantasy loses some of its charm. Personal emancipation in the

sense in which I'm using it doesn't have to do with perceiving the problems in the self as compared to the objective social world, but more to do with consolidating and focusing one's own ambitions, ideals, desires and needs so that they aren't continually in conflict. So that one can begin to see the constantly changing "totality" of one's self in a more clear, specific, and positive relationship with the changing "totality" of one's world. This doesn't mean that relationship is static, or that one's life ceases to be problematic but that one begins to discover a more clear and positive relation with that problematicity. This very same clarity and focus in terms of a group dynamic is what we have been calling "organization. "

III

Indexicality is' obviously a relational kind of phenomena. It has to do with who, where, when, whence one is speaking, arguing, practicing. The "world" obviously looks different

depending on where you are and where you're coming from. Although the dynamics of history may be "objective," there is obviously no objective view to be had. The point is just this—that the "issues," the "problems," the "strategies," the good and the bad, ought and ought not, points of mindlessness and clear sight aren't fixed stars by which we can navigate. We don't/can't learn, demonstrate, reveal change nearly so much if we simply insist on pegging ourselves and each other and continue to believe that there is some abstract social and concrete personal good to be obtained by simple good faith, right politics. Our problems are not *simply* located *in the world*, in the system that oppresses us, in the friends that fail us, but in ourselves also. When people say we must posit the enemy outside they are obviously right in a sense, in terms of coalescing the group, the seriality of its individual parts. But I suspect that complete cohesion can only occur at specific times, in relation to specific issues, threats. We exist in a dialectical relationship to one another and to the "culture" to a large extent because of our differences, our conflicts. Indexicality then is not just a question of anchoring our practice in relation to specific issues, a specific locale, but realising just how we ourselves as individuals and as a group move/can move in relation to each other and these "issues." *The Fox* is not a tool for "revolution" apart from ourselves, it's a tool for changing ourselves and the circumstances of *our* lives. This means that we work within a specific context, with specific attitudes, skills, etc. We don't just happen to find ourselves working within the context of the "artworld," but that there is something particular about the nature of our lives, histories, talents, etc. which locates us here, something perhaps—excuse me—to do with "the nature of art," something to do with our relation to a particularly positivistic vanguardist tradition. This is the context through which we have come to know, to recognize our predicament, our alienation and perhaps one place wherein we must begin to find, create, mobilize the force to combat it. *The Fox* can never exist as a *model* of socialism so much as a modest vehicle for transforming the social conditions which inhibit and block human emancipation and the emergence of socialism as a social dynamic; as such it is not a model of a community transformed but a transformative activity/community which is (perhaps?) one model of art.

New York, New York

NOTE

1. The following was originally written in response to an internal *Fox* editorial document written by Mel Ramsden which assumed a "fictitious." extremely hardline, doctrinaire Marxist stance, Such a stance could not ordinarily be attributed to members of the editorial board. The (somewhat) "reactionary" attitude expressed in this memo stems to a large extent from the fact that it was indeed written in reaction to one extreme projection of our current beliefs. Perhaps the point in publishing it here is to show we "haven't all just turned into Marxists," Also, maybe it shows that we do not pretend to offer "solutions." in fact we most likely only create more problems. By confronting our impotency however, we begin to move toward creating the resources, the recognition of the *commonality* of our "problems"from which we may derive power, ...

REVIEW

'CITY ARTS WORKSHOP-PEOPLE'S ART IN NEW YORK CITY' BY EVA COCKCROFT AND JAMES D. COCKCROFT (LEFT-CURVE, SUMMER, 1975)

MEL RAMSDEN

There seem to be two ways of approaching this article: (1) ask whether it is a useful account of the community art produced in New York City under the auspices of Cityarts workshop and (2) question what business I have farting about with it—a member of the lofty-minded bourgeois avant-garde, it is often alleged.

I

Eva Cockcroft is mainly known for her contra-MOMA and especially well researched article "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War" in *Artforum*, June 1974. The present article, written together with James D. Cockcroft, is equally sound and well documented. It concerns the outdoor mural movement on New York's lower east side. It carefully articulates this so-called "public art" in its context of social struggle and underlines its antagonism to what the Cockcroft's sweepingly condemn—not without some justification—as "elitist formalist art. " This antagonism is not only personally very real for members of some communities (as the article points out, "art, artists and the art world are viewed as unsympathetic even hostile forces")—it is also expressed in some of the murals themselves. In this sense, the murals have an overriding polemical thump.

The Cityarts murals are socially instructive and have a raw impact. Though the most frequent themes—technological progress and the destruction of natural resources, heroin addiction, police corruption, prostitution – usually strike *me* as truistic, they're quite obviously not for individuals less blase or "sophisticated." That is, it is indicative of the murals' ability to embody the problems of the ethnic minorities of lower east side New York City that frightfully-learned-me regard them as truistic. But it is probably just this "obviousness" which makes them so "political" from the viewpoint of more affluent wasp residents. In this they preserve many traditional essentials of popular art: the emblematic presentation of the fundamentals of a social situation or ritual.

The article insists the murals' "style is intelligible only in terms of the *interrelationship* between artistic creation and the perception of neighborhood people .... " This can be viewed as antagonistic to modernism's radical isolation of artifacts from their social context. According to the legions of art-administrators who do this

sort of thing and the artists who fall for it, such isolation consitutes the apex of "great art" since only "masterpieces" (which are "universal" you see) could survive such isolation. In contrast to this, I think certain of the Cityarts murals come close to the practice of art as a social act.

The social or "public" visibility of the murals is sometimes, as for example in Chatham Square in Chinatown, also in competition with commercial advertising. There are differences too numerous to go into here between people, community oriented murals, and the cynical manipulations of Madison Avenue. U.S. corporations spend 20 billion a year on advertising; on a product designed to generate a relations to things, possessions, people, based not on reality, but on pretense. Nothing could be further from the relations between people and the sense of a reappropriation of art by the community engendered by a real "public art."

It is silly to read the murals formally and ignore their polemical content. I think their "naivete" increases this, possibly because the "naive" question or remark is often the most embarrassing one and probably frequently yields quite interesting results. But this class compartmentalized society is geared toward excluding real world-transforming *participation*. Thus my review here and my interest in "people's art" becomes detached, an infatuation that maintains everything as it is. Infatuation inevitably assumes the role of an escape from the real. What "the real" constitutes for me, lies first in determining the concrete parameters of *my own* life-world and, then, mounting a critique of what I have come to understand, gradually, as its institutional mystification. Class background, living style, education, race, all separate me from a real participatory relation to the murals. For example, my participation in the murals is mediated by *reading*, something I can do without leaving the comfort of my own loft. The fact that I speak about these murals only after they have entered *my own* print world media transforms participation into infatuation. There is a petrification of class-ethnic boundaries keeping me *external* to the murals. To ask therefore, whether the murals are "useful" to me, whether I can "get anything from them," these are primarily questions with a deeply problematic class background. Their resolution is not the point, it is rather to see the unresolved contradictions.

According to the article, the Cityarts workshop is an attempt to produce public art that involves the community in every phase. The full participation of the community is paramount. Techniques have been developed—for example, the use of opaque projectors and photographs blown-up and projected onto walls—making it possible for people with "no talent" or no special training in art to create concrete images corresponding to their conceptions. The article further reminds us that this was a development of importance, enabling community people to create their own murals as well as deflating the idea that art is a special domain for special people, one removed forever from their own world. Hence art is seen far less as one more thing which reinforces feelings of individual inadequacy and low social status.

Funded by the City, Cityarts began in 1968. Recently, after a mural had been censored by the City, they have sought funding elsewhere—from corporations and national funding agencies. It is obvious—as the article points out—that the municipal government sees community involvement as an insurance against the vandalism that so often befalls City "improvements" imposed on the ghetto from above. It also diverts the ghetto dwellers' energy, without, as the article puts it, "making concessions toward the basic problems of urban poverty." The City is of course happy with such an arrangement, so long as the murals lack coherent meaning or political message. But apparently the murals have recently moved from an artificially connected series of individual statements—like the early murals—to "visually coherent and visible symbols of the hopes and struggles of the community as a whole." Apparently, use of opaque projectors and visits to older inner city mural groups were largely responsible for the increased political coherence of the designs. Such content also arises from the fact that the central and situated nexus of ghetto residents' problems—welfare struggles, landlords, junkies—are, if dealt with realistically, explosive in themselves. Their mere depiction apparently causes a flap amongst City officials.

That the community mural movement is antagonistic to the culture of the dominant


FOR LEASE


© CITYART
WORKSHOP

classes is well summarized in the article:

> " ... no valid criteria for criticism of these works yet exists. Most contemporary art criticism is molded by the elitist formalist concepts against which the mural movement itself is a protest. Contemporary abstract art is a movement that is understood only by the educated elite toward which it is directed. When it is taken out of the museums and put on public walls in the city, as for example is done in New York by Citywalls, it does not by this fact alone become more relevant to the City's poor. Instead, when put in the ghettoes, these colorful abstractions serve a meaningless cosmetic function, merely covering up the decay of the city. Often they don't even do that. Rather, these abstract murals may serve to actually heighten the visibility of surrounding poverty and to insult, demoralize, deceive or anger the residents of a teeming ghetto. Only when Citywalls murals are themselves looked at as an expression of a specific community within the city, that of the wealthy minority and educated middle-class—and located in their appropriate neighborhoods, Wall Street and modern corporate buildings—do they attain anything resembling legitimacy or authenticity. Otherwise abstract art might better remain in the museums. [Anyone who doubts the increasing territorial confidence of recent Cityarts murals should compare the expressionistic pathos of the gigantic Cityarts mural at Chrystie and Rivington, just off the Bowery, with the fatuous 'minimal' wall relief at Houston Street and Broadway.] "

The article cites further evidence of antagonism to dominant class culture:

> "Murals like those of Cityarts workshop deny the 'individual creator' in favor of group creation. They place meaning' before artistic technique, although the process of creation—not only *how* but also *who* –often becomes as important as, and inseparable from, the result. Permanence for 'posterity' is irrelevant, since beauty and death are now, and even the best paint placed on crumbling brick has a short life span. Immediacy and social impact are crucial ... valid criticism of community murals must deal with a number of supposedly 'non-artistic' factors. For example, an obvious factor of great relevance is the impact on the community, measured perhaps by the amount 'of external opposition or the degree of community protection given to the murals, of the number of subsequent projects stimulated by an initial mural within a community."

This reads like a negative index of modernism. A denial of individual creators a fundamental modernist myth; success measured instead in terms of people working together, a process of friendship and solidarity over and above the permanence of the object. The *interrelationship* between the product and who, what their makers are like, what they want, fear, believe. Unlike "high" museum art we don't alienate and take from the artwork (a reificatory process reflecting key entrepreneurial principles of capitalist society) but instead learn *with* the murals. That is, some of the Cityarts murals almost fulftll the demand for an art which makes co-worker's out of spectators.

II

The "community authenticity" of the murals is something antagonistic to the competitive individualism/careerism of high art. It is *competition* which fulfills economic imperatives, keeps the artists "stars," and keeps its collection and accumulation to an official moneyed elite. Not everybody is delighted by the class vectors of this art. There are those of us who were educated in such a way as to encourage addiction to what the present article justifiably describes as "serving the wealthy minority" but who then find themselves in the intolerable state of possessing a modicum of what may be called working-class consciousness, who do not consider Wall Street an "appropriate neighborhood."

The kinds of class-crossings, the juxtaposition of "official" and "folk" styles, accomplished, say, by Gustave Courbet's "The Meeting," do not seem realistically available

today. Class-compartmentalization is reified and crossovers are prohibited. Today class crossings become armchair infatuations or radical chic—and the status quo preserved. It will continue to be preserved unless we realize that we can't change anything unless we first begin to change the ways we *participate* in the world.

It has been pointed out many times that high art has become increasingly autonomous. Anything taking place in this domain can be and is controlled, is structurally neutered by the capacity of the bourgeois audience to now absorb *anything*. The educated middle-class who prance about SoHo on Saturdays (occasionally I am one of them) are supremely confident that all art exhibited there is *made for them*. In fact it never occurs to anyone to even question it. If class antagonism were indeed to provide a material base for our going-on, we would firstly need to allude to a different audience, more or less. I say more or less because I'm not really sure of this. I am sure though that audience is *constitutive* to doing art and that such an observation is far from truistic.

The power of the institutional framework neuters embarrassing or disturbing imagery by simply transforming everything into the institutions' own taste guidelines. The art audience which is today also institutionalized assumes everything is made for their own titivation, and even love to be occasionally terrorized since they possess the institutional controls to turn even such terrorism into an object of contemplation. This is aesthetic "distancing" finally gone bananas —a corrupting and poisonous world-view.

The problem isn't a matter of dashing off a few "political artworks" though if you work hard this may get you a minor niche in the required study of art-historians. No, it is more a question of politicizing the category, the situation. Anything that may constitute a reference point for this politicization should be consulted. The murals form such a reference point. There are others. One in particular shows the vectoring of "official" art becoming class problematic—in 19th Century France. One neglected factor of high art's steady drift from everyday life is its institutionalized and stereotyped public—it's like inbreeding. "When the public becomes too fixed and concrete a presence or too abstract and unreal a concept, a radical sickness of art begins." Thus writes T.J. Clark in his book on Gustave Courbet, *Image of the People*. It is to 19th Century France that we can look to find a moment when it was feasible to exploit "folk" imagery, not to revitalize the art of the dominant classes, but in fact the reverse, to "drag art through the gutter," to index art not to traditional middle class taste, but to "folk" taste, especially and above all its emancipatory antagonism to the dominant classes—including their taste.

The salon audience during the period of the second French Republic was bourgeois, bohemian, industrial proletariat, shopkeeper. Courbet's work deliberately jumbled this class hierarchy: what was the picture of? Who was it *for*? Critics in particular (as one might expect) were panic stricken at the thought of a public not amenable to their own taste and guidance. Is it conceivable that a critic or an artist be so uncertain about his or her audience today? No. Today allusion to other class interests is virtually impossible. That is, the "sickness of art" is due in part to the society changing from a (relatively) flexible overt hierarchy to a more invidious atomization. Social divisions are now compartmentalized. In France, and for a time, the art-context was penetratable by a wider, more diverse audience. Today the sickness of modernism is a sickness of specialization. *All* who participate in art today are subject to this specialization—it isn't just an "art problem" resolvable only by *artists*, it's a *social* problem manifesting itself in all sorts of ways. It's a problem of critics, historians, pundits and laypeople.

The politicization of the category means it must be related to "the 'whole," that is, the class-cultural struggles in the rest of the society. Either it means solidarity with these struggles or, as far as I can see it means cynicism, *politikkunst* opportunism, in short, very little. But there must be recognition of social realities as well as an articulation of ideals. The exploitation of iconography from "people's art" within the framework of high art and given that its "normal" audience has been excluded from high art, would mean it falls mostly on indifferent ears. The social reality is bizarre. Since the seat of ultimate authority now lies

less with a particular class' iconography and more with its *institutions*, the problem now is to forge an *institutional critique*. It is not so much a question of variation and juxtaposition of imagery though this is not to say variation and juxtaposition of imagery couldn't provide some sort of institutional critique.

My obvious confusion over this is, I think, in part due to the fact that present social realities are so obviously looney that most rationalization has become suspect—if not downright phony. In between social reality and ideals there lies at least for me a field of paradoxes where—being paradoxes—choice is not possible. Paradoxicality is my "bit of nature" so to speak. What is vulnerability to some will instead be impenetrability to others, and such splits may not be a matter of voyeuristic aethetics and idle taste but *ideological* concerns, having to do with the various publics' aspirations and identity. But today the high art audience is largely petrified, so de-institutionalizing it means placing faith in fringe individuals and loose ends. The taste of high art is ideological too of course. "Liking" Anthony Caro goes hand in hand with a particular set of—repulsive I think—assumptions about life-style. Instead people call it "having a good eye" and this of course mystifies ideology, disguising it as "nature."

Clark reminds us that the exploitation of folk art by Courbet, Manet and Seurat, was on their part, a crisis of confidence, of identity. Since the priesthood of art-criticism has seen fit to yank art out of history itself it is difficult to recover traces of this "folk" index. Only when seen within its contemporary history do Seurat's industrial vistas and Courbet's *Burial* for instance regain a part of their original intention – which it has been historico-criticism's task all these years to remove.

Clark points out that the forms and structures of popular art were needed if "below a certain social plane people were to see at all." The utilization of this iconography was vastly problematic of course. Did one use it to reanimate the culture of the dominant classes? Did one strive for a fusion between folk and dominant class art, even trying to destroy the dominance of the latter? These are utopian ideas essentially, but they do connect art to ideology and stand out as evidence of class- consciousness or, at least, anti-bourgeois feeling.

There are many questions which can be raised here. What, for example, qualifies as "folk art" today? Advertising? Compare the ideological awareness of the artists mentioned above to Pop art. It lacked even the slightest hint of such anti-bourgeois feeling. Its plundering of ennui-conducive supermarket items and "everyday objects" managed to turn the entire world into a critically vacuous, ideologically empty, object of contemplation. Messing about with all the urban imagery never enabled Pop artists to *see below a certain social level*. Instead they just reclaimed the whole world in the name of middle-class contemplation. The Andy Warhol cool, an influence pervading the sixties, is not much more than a fatal celebration of the alienation of consumerism. Opportunistic slumming means an infatuation with junk foods—or their visual equivalents. Infatuation, or *camp* in the case of Pop, is the manifestation of the desire to ignore reality.

The work of several of my friends over the past few years has courted some "cross discipline" ambiguity and made a lot of people hysterical. What has modal logic got to do with the appreciation of art? Who was the work for? What's intended by it? This kind of socially resonant categorical anarchy was however seen by most as a new style: words as art! The often hilarious, frequently foolish, sometimes embarrassing mixture of specialized disciplines, with the final emphasis falling somewhere between specializations, has engendered and/or (perhaps) been the result of ambiguity concerning the work's public.

It seems to me that an attempt to unfix the institutionalized public, to deconstruct art's congealment in a narrow, ossified art public, is essential right now. Art & Language has assailed compartmentalization, the removal of "the whole," by utilizing Analytic philosophy, Formal Logic, Set theory, Anthropology, The Philosophy of Science, Sociology, and so on. But all of these are so terribly terribly learned and class respectable. We now seem congealed not so much within the art-context but the context of cultural academia. The art-going bourgeoisie are made uncertain but very rarely

uncomfortable. There's a lot of overt and covert power exerted to discourage the allusion to "other" class vectors. For example, people will often tell you the work is "embarrassing" and the merest hint of "popular" elements brings stern warnings from some. The rather tentative steps I have made in this direction have brought even from my friends charges of "opportunism" and as a "public figure" I have been told not to indulge in "exotic gestures." It is important one not be thought unsophisticated. Thus there are covert pressures and prohibitions that only an evil and invidious society could produce. It is a pressure whereby even the "radical" or the "revolutionary" contribute to the preservation of the stability of that society. That is, you may be radical or you may be extremely conservative, but you still find yourself contributing toward stability, consciously or otherwise, by insisting on compartmentalisation and keeping-everything-neatly-in-its-place. If you can put an activity in a niche then the order is preserved. It doesn't matter what the niche is, it could be the revolutionary or the conservative niche—just so long as it is a niche. Juxtapositions, ambiguities, false trails, will naturally appear "unsophisticated" and "embarrassing"—and so they should: they do not proceed from a base of fixed certitudes and "rationality."

Perhaps I chose to write about Cityarts and review the Cockcrofts' article because, as is well known, quasi-religious Marxist zeal means you have to find a surrogate proletariat to somehow act as your "victim." You can then side with the victim—students, ethnic groups, provincial artists (to mention one appropriate to this journal) and together write yourselves into the historical drama of utopia, which is the future. But I don't think this is why I chose to write about these things. Cityarts, Courbet, and the sociology of institutions may provide some of the reference points helping myself and others see better unresolved contradictions. For only in seeing these do we glimpse our power to change the inner and outer worlds.

New York, New York

CONVERSATION PIECES

MARK KLIENBERG

1) What about publishing in non-trade journals? Throughout our society, the operating methodology with which the non-specialist mediates his/her relationship to the specialist is the suspension of judgments and deference to the professional's expertise; an obviously myopic condition which is predicated on limited, incorrect, or mythicized information.

This state of affairs—in museums-spawns an unfortunate instance of being alienated from one's own culture. Such is the result of a public facility becoming an extension of vested interests in a specialist's domain—fine art (painting, sculpture, and its art historical extensions), and then exhibiting such products under the guise of being 'public culture'. The question could be: In a specialist oriented society what qualifies as 'populist culture'? The intention here is that any consideration of alternatives—whether it be macro or micro—must insist on a populist notion of audience. The non-trade journals I speak of as alternative non-specialist information sources are *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, etc. Essentially, I'm referring to magazines that are already considered populist oriented.

2) Could there be someone capable of writing a science fiction thriller based on the intention of presenting an alternative interpretation of modernist art that is readable by a non-specialist audience? Would they care?

3) Among the many examples revealing the absurdity of the present situation, one of the most glaring recent contradictions is the *Artpark*, located in Buffalo, New York. It would appear that the operating methodology is to present specialists' work (the result of a specialist education and history) in a populist setting – thereby 'demystifying' (*New York Times*, 8/10/75) fine art. The mistake is obvious, it is not the park context that defines the work, but the context of origin, in this case the domain of fine art. Therefore, the result will not be 'demystification', but rather the further

alienation of a non-specialist public (not only from 'their' culture but from *their* park as well). One reason for moving out of the galleries is not to continue fine art to new heights of adventurism, but to completely alter that which is being presented, in addition to operating with a new (expanded) notion of audience.

4) Is it possible that the comedian is one example of an anthropologized artist?

5) Museums, can we afford them? Isn't it the case that *Artpark* is really based on the same principle as modern museums? Museums as extensions of the domain of fine art (galleries, etc.) should not be considered public facilities since they are not populist oriented. They are really Halls of Fame of Fine Art—Painting, Sculpture and its art historical extensions. Therefore, our public tax dollars are being misspent. What would one put in a 'populist museum'? Some examples suitable for such archives would be: (1) The Dick Cavett television show with the four 'heroes' from the sixties – Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Tom Haydn, and Rennie Davis (it could be on video records); (2) Hank Aaron's baseball bat; (3) All Watergate related information; (4) The Who's On First routine of Abbott and Costello. It should be apparent that what I am prescribing are museums as important resources of information in our culture.

6) What if—our notion of museums is that they be archives and all their information be in computer banks? As part of our access to public information (meaning all), we receive directories listing information in the banks and their code numbers. Our television sets are really receivers that are equipped with digital numbers for dialing the code. Then we just sit and watch the transmission from the banks on our television screen. (The reverse of Big Brother and *Farenheit 451*, in a naive sense.)

7) The overdeveloped ego of college academicians (individuals not living in the 'real' world) lead them to believe that their tutelage will be more beneficial than a multi-based education. Of course students only make art about art, i.e., painting about painting, etc., it is all they have studied and therefore haven't the capacity for a more comprehensive view to inform their work. The result of such specialization is obvious each time we see the Whitney Biennial.

8) Institutions have a bureaucratic propensity for self preservation as a result of their autonomy. Thus, the role of the 'subversive-deviant' (Lenny Bruce) becomes mandatory, and the signal of effectiveness is the immediacy of repression. (Hence the stupidity of declaring the Toche affair an artwork.) My only concern here is to point out that quite often the middle-readers (persons seeming to be in agreement with the ideas of the 'subversive') force him or her to become a martyr (in order to fulfill their fantasy). Hence, they (indirectly) destroy what they admire.

9) It is ludicrous that many fine art artists receive grants that are funded by public tax treasuries, and yet their work bears nothing for the public paying for it. The work that results is specialist oriented, and is exhibited in an elitist domain, e.g., SoHo, under the guise of the misconception that it is popular culture. (Remember museum and *Artpark* absurdities.)

New York, New York

A PROPOSAL FOR PRICING WORKS OF ART

ADRIAN PIPER

1. The proposal is that exchange value be identical to production value. Production value equals the sum of

   i. Retail cost of materials used.

   ii. Labor cost:

   Labor is a function of actual work-hours, i.e. time engaged in thinking about, planning, and/or physically producing work. This can be computed either on an hourly or a weekly basis, according to whether or not the artist orders his/her art production time along the lines of a full time, "nine-to-five" -type job (i.e. with regular hours spent per day per week at the

office, studio, library, factory, etc.). In either case, this ,amount should not exceed the wage/ salary scale of an average blue- or white-collar civil service worker (the ABW).

iii. Residual living expenses:

This is intended to accommodate those artists who cannot think about or do art full time, for financial or health reasons. Since the labor cost in such cases will be less than the ABW, a supplementary means of self-support is suggested in the following formula:

(1) ABW—Labor cost = Residual living expenses.

iv. Secondary labor costs:

This supplements ii., above, if necessary. It provides for special accommodations expenses such as needed long-term materials, working space, tools, equipment, etc. Ideally these should be provided by government or community agencies, just as work space and adequate equipment are provided for other civil service workers. In this case iv. would not be a factor in the production value of a work at all. But realistically assuming that at present, the buyer of a work stands in the employer role relative to the artist, let

$$(2)\ \frac{\text{Special accommodations expenses}}{\text{Total number of work-hours/week}} = \text{Secondary labor costs,}$$

to be charged with labor costs (ii.) on a fractional basis per work sold until special accommodations are paid for.

II. Production value is a necessary condition of aesthetic value.

i. Although the translation of production value into aesthetic value cannot itself be computed on a monetary basis, the aesthetic value of a work clearly has its prior production, or material history, as a necessary component. This is just to observe that a work of art is at least a created artifact, and the economics of its production contributes to important aesthetic facts about it.

ii. This suggests the possibility of incorporating the computed production value of the work into the work itself, e.g. by inscribing it somewhere on the work. It might, for example, appear as part of the work, or be added to the artist's signature, date of completion, or title of the work. Provided that I. is adopted, this inscription could function analogously to the date of completion of the work: it could be recognized as binding on the buyer as a condition of sale of the work, and accorded the same kind of significance as relevant aesthetic information about the work. This would prevent any fluctuation in the market value of the work, since the exchange value of the work (= production value) would then be constant.

III. Exchange value is not a sufficient condition of aesthetic value.

i. This just reminds us that the degree of our aesthetic appreciation of a work of art is not supposed to depend on how much one must pay for it . In fact, it is theoretically not supposed to be influenced by the price of the work at all. It may be less obvious that the aesthetic value we accord a work is also supposed to be independent of how much one may contemplate selling it for.

ii. III.i. could be proved false by one possible set of consequences of adopting this proposal. That is, it might happen that since under this program neither the artist nor the dealer nor the buyer stands to make a substantial profit on works of art, interest in producing and acquiring art might die out. Art, as well as art-as-speculation and art-as-investment security might disappear. This would demonstrate that exchange value is a sufficient condition of aesthetic value; that the increased economic availability of art is directly antithetical to its perceived' aesthetic desirability; and thus that the production of art depends on a capitalist economy after all.

iii. On the other hand, adoption of this proposal might not have these consequences. It might happen that such a program facilitated producing art as a modest means of self-support for more artists by making it more economically accessible to more people. If this program, voluntarily undertaken, turned out to be a valid mode of survival for artists, it would both demonstrate the truth of III.i. and, more importantly, bring out more clearly the *de facto* viability of conceiving artists as workers rather than as constituting a privileged class. It might also make possible a greater solidarity with other workers.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

BOOK REVIEW

'ON UNDERSTANDING ART MUSEUMS'- WHAT IS A CAMEL BUT A HORSE DESIGNED BY A COMMITTEE?

ANDREW MENARD

Another book on museums just came out. Its title is innocuous enough: 'On Understanding Art Museums (Sherman E. Lee, ed., Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1975); the sort of prefabricated writing that has seized the academic imagination recently. The book is noteworthy on two accounts, however. First of all, it attempts to summarize much of the information—books, conferences, statistics, etc.—which has been produced by the recent "crisis" of museums. Secondly, its contributors seem to have been more successful than most at rising to their respective levels of incompetence, from Darby Bannard (Professor of "Quality," The Greenburg Studio School) to Charles Parkhurst (apparently there's not much difference between being president of the College Art Association and president of the American Association of Museums, since C.P. has been both) to Robert Coles (the exception to this unkind scenario, having written some interesting accounts of ghetto kids). But that is all the book is noteworthy for, that is, it lives up to its title. And I think that, in the long run, the book does a great deal to demonstrate the failure of liberalism.

The book was compiled by Lee as "background" for the Forty-sixth American Assembly, some sort of organization affiliated with Columbia University. But as the president of the Assembly immediately makes clear in a preface, the book "represents no official position of the Assembly but rather the opinions of the individual authors." These opinions run the gamut from "conservative" liberalism (the museum as a pedestal for visuality and "quality") all the way to "radical" liberalism (the museum as a pedestal for visuality and "quality").

Of course this is simply reducing the book to its essentials, and perhaps I'm not being fair. Actually, there's a lot of hair-tearing, a lot of hemming and hawing, a lot of, well yes ... agonizing before these startlingly divergent opinions emerge. There is, for instance, the extended discussion of "the museum and Conceptual art." This discussion is carried on, at varying lengths and with minimal understanding, by several contributors. The most ingenious conclusion, though it is presented somewhat by implication (no definite stands, please), is that the museum itself is homologous to the aims of Conceptual art. The argument supporting this conclusion is a classic of bourgeois mystification, in this case not because the man is wrong, but because he is right (!) for the wrong reasons—which might lead you to believe his conclusion is also wrong. (For more on this particular point, cf. my article in The Fox, vol. 1, no. 1; for more on this point as well as some others in this review, cf. "Media Madness" in this volume.) For the most part, though, Conceptual art is given its due and then politely ushered to the basement by our Friends of the Museum; as several of them stress, the I museum cannot be "all things to all people."

While Conceptual art seems to cause the most indigestion, another bone of contention is "education." A couple of contributors discuss what happens when a docent conducts a tour of the museum's art, both of them waxing rather pessimistic. The problem, you see, is that words get in the way of the art, they get in the way of actually looking at the art, of achieving a "primary" (pre-linguistic) experience. One of the contributors even goes so far as to say (jesus, he probably broke out in a cold sweat as he wrote it) that museums should actually cut back on their educational

services, citing financial as well as aesthetic considerations. In general, it is agreed that the museum itself, merely being in the museum, provides sufficient "context" for looking at art; though there is a little mumbling about livening up the way rooms are divided into stylistic periods (I leave it to you to discover these exciting suggestions). So tours are out, lectures are out, little cards helping to explain the art are out, even the catalogue raisonne is suspect.

Unfortunately, all this moaning and groaning is only the sound of the world being flattened by mystification. There is almost no penetration of museums, merely a long concatenation of platitudes (which, unintentionally, do provide material for penetrating museums, however; cf. Joshua Taylor's article). Conceptual art meets knee-jerk rejection because the contributors are so entrenched in the ways of visuality and "quality"; they are synaptically unequipped to see that most Conceptual art is simply formalism-easy-over please, that while Conceptual art may depend on reproduction (especially print and photography) most of it sits quite well in museums, too. By the same token, that is, by presupposing visuality, they are unable to see that museums do not create a "context" for art but destroy that context. By this I mean that the neutral white space of museums completely isolates art works from their social and historical context, creating instead a place where art works become self-contained worlds, existing outside of place and time; even William Rubin, a curator of the Museum of Modern Art, admits that the neutral space of museums makes art works into discrete objects. So "education" becomes more necessary, not less so. (How many of you went to the "Age of Revolution" show at the Metropolitan Museum, and came away feeling as if you missed seeing a lot more than you did see—and that you'd have missed even more if the short explanation beside each painting hadn't been there? I did anyway; I needed to be "educated" in order to really "see" the paintings to begin with.) Moreover, the contributors are so enamored of the museum as a "neutral" institution that they refuse to admit it necessarily has an effect on the art market, which means that it not only "contains" art works but helps determine the kind of art that is made in the first place.

The point is, this list of structural malapropisms could go on and on. But the gist of it is that everyone is running in place. It is typical of the book that Lee should single out the contribution of Darby "Dogg" Bannard (speaking to us from Room 222) as perhaps "the most controversial of the seven," since Bannard has the guts to suggest that museums should show new art too, perhaps even "bad" art (art with no redeeming formalist values, art without "quality"). (Of course Bannard also says the museum shouldn't endorse this art—shades of the American Assembly.) In this manner the book is able to generate "controversy," to "present all sides," while perpetuating formalism as the exclusive model for museums. No one fundamentally questions exhibition policies (neutral space); in fact most specifically reiterate it. No one fundamentally questions the way museums have been maintained as the single most important art world institution; in fact, by wailing that museums cannot be "all things to all people," they give us the impression that museums are a persecuted institution. No one fundamentally questions the way neutral space and the museum-as-a-rarified-institution combine to isolate art from our lives, making it something most of us contemplate rather than do ("prelinguistic experiences" notwithstanding). So thank you Clement Greenberg, Clive Bell, Edouard Manet, and all the other charter members of the Friends of the Museum Society.

Liberal quorums almost invariably fail in this way, they almost always become laissez-faire, one more excuse to endorse the status quo. When in doubt, form a committee. In fact, the American Assembly had nothing to worry about; being affiliated with Columbia, they're bound to be a liberal institution themselves. But then they should have known from the start that everything would be O.K.: I mean Lee simply follows the time-encrusted tradition of assuming that a specialized field is best criticized by those most renowned in that specialty. In otherwords, the best criticism of museums is criticism by those most dedicated to preserving museums; who, after all. is more "qualified"? (Once again Coles is the exception,

but he still endorses museums in a relatively conventional way. How liberal!) Is it any surprise that the real "crisis" of museums isn't aesthetic but financial (a question of self-preservation)?

New York, New York

REVIEW

IAN WILSON'S DISCUSSION AT THE JOHN WEBER GALLERY

MICHAEL CORRIS

I want to write a review of Ian Wilson's talk at John Weber's. I want to do it like the news. You know, if it's important it gets more coverage and, of course, comes first (on TV or in the Review Section).

But I don't like Ian Wilson and I thought his discussion was boring. As well as unimportant to anybody's idea of discourse.

So I want to make it as short as possible. On the other hand, I think that my thinking he is unimportant is important. So the review can't go last.

What to do?

Perhaps I can review his 'show' in several places throughout the magazine, each time exposing another facet of his banality. But people will think: "If you don't like him, why devote so much time and space to him"? I am faced with a dilemma: I can't even register my contempt without appearing vain or defeating my purpose. Maybe I've said too much already.

New York, New York

ART-LANGUAGE VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2

IAN BURN

(The journal Art-Language has been published ten times since 1969, edited by some of those involved with this magazine, and by some who are not.)

Once more, a confusing issue of *Art-Language*—but along somewhat different lines to past numbers. On the surface (what else is available?) of this *Art-Language*, many of the problems appear to have been generated by self-aggrandizing squabbles a·mong some of the contributors. Squabbling may well appear incompatible with—what one hesitatingly calls—'a shared impulse of the dialogue'. 'Shared' if only in the sense of impulse-away-from…

In this number, nothing is too simple. Probably the best way to approach it is as an in-hand lesson about the hazards of presupposing community … in societies which demand individualistic consumeritis.

Most of what's published is an expression of *intra*-community 'conversation'. Working in a group in this society meets a lot of difficulties. On the other hand, presupposing the *priority* of community is flying in the face of most present-day social imperatives. A salient example, constantly faced by the Art & Language community, is the pressure to atomize the group in one way or another … that is, the tendency to treat the group as a thing or unit, as 'one individual', or else to single individuals out of the group for special cultural 'bonuses' (money, fame, management of public relations, etc.); both of which raise the specter of exploitive hierarchies developing. (Surprisingly, the first tendency is reflected in some of the writing by people who do participate in the work of Art & Language; see elsewhere in this magazine.) As long as a community accepts an '*of* the world' responsibility, it has to accept that such

pressures will persist. Given that, needless to say it's impossible to avoid periods when the psychological dimensions are in conflict with social hopes, when teleological points of reference become openly threatened by extant friction.

To aspire not to have psychological conflict reeks of utopian romanticism. It is *unreal*. So, given the thoroughness of bourgeois lifestyles (and who, especially with a modern art background, can escape that?), disputes tend to be psychologized, rather than socialized. Or, rather, *before* they are socialized. This suggests a sort of 'communal drag', in which the steady state is *crisis*. However, the 'good faith' has it that we socialize each other … because finally, our sole weapon to contradict the abstract pressures of the market is the social base of community. Moreover, it is only) through the construction of social (structural) contradictoriness that (the prospect of) 'space' in which to work becomes real.

(I'm not making a fetish out of 'community', as perhaps was the tendency *of some writers in the last issue of* The Fox. It can only be a means, not an end. The point (hope) of community is that we can and do socialize *each other*—and this is in contradistinction to how we are 'socialized' (or arbitrarily individualized) by the circumstances of commodified art production.)

That the Art & Language community thus far has survived (admittedly with a few losses) the 'hazards of its own existence' says something for its spongeous nature. However, spongeousness gives rise to abuse by individualistic licence. Given the *Art-Language* under review, we might want to mention the potential, at every stage, for psychologized (rather than socialized) personality coming to dominate community. This is manifest in various ways—for one instance, in a broad acceptance of a 'house' style—and thrusts alienating factors into personal relations: one is suddenly faced with psychological black holes. Were such a state to persist, it would lead directly into a bureaucratized notion of a definable, exclusive group, with formalized relations, and where issues like what constitutes 'membership' and the group 'proper' become topics of major concern, concluding in the hierarchical assignation of functionaries. The absurdities of this hardly need going into—but that it is a prospect at any given moment is 'normal'.

These are aspects of a social world, often more 'possible' than 'actual'. (A number of similar points are made in this *Art-Language* by Mel Ramsden and myself, see "Brainstorming—New York," pages 31- 40.) The problems raised tend to be iterative ones, denying facile solutions. But relations remain *personal*, so that critical dialogue among contributors exists also as 'personal'. Concatenation of 'critical/personal', not 'critical/impersonal', is obviously problematic with respect to *public* surfaces, since the transformations are often too defined by the form of media utilized. This problem is partially effaced by the reader's self-image … does the reader passively conform to the cultural determination of his role, or does the reader develop a *self*-(re)constituting reading (in which 'cultural determinants' are merely points of reference in a mediating process but don't form the process itself)? How are access modalities available (constructable)? In what sense do you as a reader reconstitute yourself in relation to writings not addressed to you and to a large extent don't even presuppose you?

As we well know, the distinction between 'the individual' and 'the public' is a triumph of bourgeois ideology, a trap which compels you to reproduce the separation of culture and politics. Immediately we try to break out of that we are 'compromised' but how we approach that state is crucial. A complaint I would make against some of the writings in *Art-Language* and (especially) *The Fox* (not necessarily excluding my own) is that, regardless of ideological orientation, the tendency is to approach issues as if the existing systems were here to stay. This is a function of presupposing an audience, a particular 'public'. By addressing yourself *to* an audience, can you avoid your remarks serving to *define* that audience? Of course, there are situations when it is not only important but unavoidable to utilize this as a strategy . . . for example, when you are trying to polarize certain prevailing social conditions along a different axis than is presently available. In such cases, you can't avoid defining that 'audience' since you are, in effect, 'creating' it

... or presupposing it as a *possible* audience. But, at the same time, taking an audience as given is one way of guaranteeing its perpetuation, since to a large extent that means accepting as given the social relations of this audience. The idea of working to change those social relations means treating this audience as problematic, it means (I think) not trying to define the same audience but presupposing a different audience. (Lizzie Borden tries to make a similar point elsewhere in this magazine, but ends up somewhat off-target.) The paradoxes are obvious: in a cultural world sustained (intellectually and economically) by the distinction between individual and public, you can't go on as if 'a public' didn't exist (why bother publishing) —at the same time, you can't blithely presuppose a public since that reproduces the very conditions we're contesting.

In the *Art-Language* under review, several articles are addressed to only *one* other person. Sometimes with an inclusive (and opportunistic) eye on other potential readers/participants—but also sometimes in an *exclusive* sense, in the sense that any (all?) access modalities are *too discrete*, which is likely to have an intimidating effect on a reader. On these occasions, it means the writing is symmetrically impenetrable. Hence, the excluded reader should approach some of the articles with a profound yawn! *And why not*—given the pragmatics of 'intersubjective' relations? To demand of all writing that it be equally readable by all, that one write with an assumption of an abstract but *normative* audience, merely entraps us in the ideologies that have acquired the prerogative and power to define what is 'normal'.

So, either reading this stuff is an intensely self-conscious process, or ... it is a waste of time. The reader, where possible, should mediate or reconstruct himself in relation to a concrete writer and that writer's local, social configurations. In this light, the device adopted for indicating 'authorship' in this number of *Art-Language* glosses over lines of exchange and is just cockeyed in most respects. (Instead of giving the particular author or authors, you are given instead a list or set of people asserted to be sympathetic to the argument of the author. In one particular exchange between two contributors, the first is indexed to five persons, the response to three. In this review, I have ignored that and referred to the actual authors.) Of course, it is a truism that when we write something we do pick up a lot of things from our friends … and the problem of indexing that is both gross and profound. That we do *try* to deal with this is important in reflecting the intentionality of the group. But does it, work in this *Art-Language*? No, the device chosen here *de*-authors the array of articles and achieves, by different route, a neutered result similar to the de-authored articles of corporate academia. It is very poorly thought-out, given the work we have done on 'logics' of pragmatics and which (hopefully) inform much of what we are doing currently. (It is also, I might add, potentially divisive since attributing authorship collocations sets up political divisions and rankles of corporation policing, the tyranny of the majority.) But enough of that.

Needless to say, it's misleading to reduce the jumble of 'conversation' to isolated issues, however certain points of reference do recur in diverse contexts. One, though often disguised, is: *how should we go on*? The margin of disagreement generated by this question might appear, given the frequency of petulant asides (!), to reveal fundamental divisions. Temporarily, these are fundamental ideological disjunctions and it's important they are taken as such (how else can we deal with them?) ... but, at the same time, it would be foolish to *reify* social exchange, debate. revisability, persuasion, change, along such lines of disagreement.

The issue of how we go on involves our 'totality', it means how do we, individually and communally, *exist* in the world. Does anyone still think it enough to merely 'express oneself differently', more controversially? One must begin to *live* differently. Only part of that (I'd rush to remind myself and many of my friends) is reflected by making what one does *function* differently. Or better, to concentrate your hopes on that end turns the values upside down. The first problem is ... how do we make community, that is, ourselves, exist differently in the world?

On that point, there's presently little accord. One line of disagreement in the *Art-Language* being reviewed is (superficially) accessible in an exchange between Michael Baldwin and myself (pages 68-86). The source reference of this exchange was an article I wrote in *Artforum* (April, 1975). As a retrospective comment, I'd 'say that the latter article was useful in surfacing (not resolving) certain contradictions embodied by my incompatible (?) intentions: on the one hand wanting to indicate a way for a socially-penetrated criticism of modern-art-NY-style, and on the other wanting this to be expressed in terms of references identifiable with the 'experiential'/'mythical' form of life of an artist in New York today. To some extent it was an attempt to deal with why these are 'incompatibles' Baldwin's response amounts to a demand to resolve the 'contradictoriness' by the exclusion of those 'experiential" references, inasmuch as they reflect a 'false consciousness' (sic). His result offers greater coherence for a critical overview, but at what cost? The cost of existing on a more abstract or 'theoretical' level, at the cost of losing the realness of the transformatory problems. (To what extent in this case is abstraction an expression of alienation?) The argument becomes a mockery, a world of scholarly luxury, isolated from real life practical consequences. (While Baldwin may disclaim this intention, others feel very comfortable with it. See, for example, Charles Harrison on page 29—where he linguistically reduces the possibility of "having an effect" in the world to "individual ambition," ergo one oughtn't to try to have an effect (!). Being uncertain of "how one would assess his status as a contributing 'cause' is not an excuse for eloquent footshuffling. As it stands, his statement is a defense of true blue English do-nothingness, one of the more astonishing I've seen for a long time.)

Advantages of abstracting an argument are that it allows you to remain expressively innocent about the actual cultural conditions you meanwhile are reproducing. It is non-strategic, it becomes a *surrogate* for acting *in the world*. It is this which encourages the continuity which, in countries like England and America, exists between "bourgeois" and "left" scholarship ... the possibility of continuing to *live the same sorts of lives* (see, as an example, the new publication *Praxis*, "A Journal of Radical Perspectives on the Arts"). Social conflicts exist abstractly and become a matter of academic debate which still projects the implicit criteria of bourgeois intellectual life. (In some sort of contrast, a few of the less lofty articles in *The Fox*, while perhaps riddled with some theoretically-unforgivable "experiences," might be partially defensible because of their crude and often-clubfooted attempts to reappropriate some of the more "abstract" questions into concrete cases ... even though, in this respect, failures are more illuminating than "successes.") The point is, in some pragmatic "world," you are faced with bridging the chasm between a theoretically coherent (and luxurious) realm of ideas and the contradictory and sometimes violent phenomenon of everyday conditions. (Even Baldwin's "An initial expression of the actualization of ideology"—page 41—doesn't emerge but remains hiding in its box over in the corner.) Do we need to point out the diverse pressure these social realities put on the articulation of ideals or notions of "going on"?

The real question is: can we consider what we are doing as having the potential of transforming anything? No-one is in a position to answer that—they would need to have already transformed the world. A few might pretend to have already transformed (socialized) themselves, but even that is bullshit if they continue to live the same lives. I'm not even sure that at present any of us would know a "transforming praxis" if we fell 'over one.

One recurring discussion in this *Art-Language* focuses on "micro-cultural" assumptions in respect to what is geographically-diverse everydayness. A vector of this discussion concerns the adequacy (or really efficacy) of framing American society in terms of "classic" *class* structure. E.g. "Avoidance of, or ignorance of, the class issue can conduce only to an elite-fixated insistence on the modification of "control-relations," etc. as a modification of the consumption modality within de facto consumption-conditions" (Baldwin—page 68). This is

misleading. It isn't an analytic question about *whether* class conflict exists in the U.S., but is directed to … if you talk about American society in class structural terms, *what kind of audience are you presupposing?* Okay, this is an important strategic point. Won't you simply be "convincing" to those who know it already, and still remain "unbelievable" to those who don't know it? Are you left in a position capable of absorbing the insights and experiences of people who don't agree with you? Of course, it is more complex than this—but the point I'm making is that anything practical is going to be compromised (which is not to say it is wrong, or even bad). It is sometimes too easy to think of "capitalism" as an abstract concept rather than a concrete way of life—can you disregard how it has developed differently and is at different stages of development in various countries? Isn't it also progressive, destroying old methods of production and developing new productive forces? But doesn't it, at a certain stage, retard the growth of these forces? However—if, at this stage, the working class has been integrated into petty-bourgeois thinking, you no longer have classical marxian condition … Aren't you faced with an essentially different set of contradictions in which the working class movement (insofar as it having a broad social base) has "withered away"? This integration as wrought in America has been perhaps most destructive to any developing socialism. It is *not*, as Baldwin intimates, that some writers in *The Fox* "think the class struggle is an old-fashioned problem"—that just puts a mucoid gloss on the question. Baldwin obviously feels more comfortable ignoring the very conditions which reveal 'why socialism has never gotten much further than the "lunatic fringe" in U.S. politics. Romanticizing about the working class may still be a viable academic pursuit in England (at least Sandra Harrison thinks so, see page 15), perhaps it's harmless enough, I'm not sure—but *here* you are "compromised" by having to deal with the material conditions of what has happened and is happening to the working class. You're wasting your breath otherwise.

Several of the contributors (mainly Baldwin and Philip Pilkington) "defend" their "class analyses" by heaping derision on what are called "new left" views. This derision is evoked by having a "proper" understanding of Marx and disdaining his interpreters. (People who won't question Marx often forget that if Marx were alive today he'd still be living in the nineteenth century.) I suppose one can identify some elements of "new left" with "interpreters" like Marcuse, for instance, with his argument that advanced capitalist society "succeeds in absorbing all revolutionary potential" of the working class and that "the majority of organized labor shares the stabilizing, counter-revolutionary needs of the middle-classes, as evidenced by their behavior as consumers of the material and cultural merchandise, by their emotional revulsion against the nonconformist intelligentsia." That will do for the time being. The dilemma here is: how then does one go about identifying with a working class? Through the trade unions? If trade unions today are merely organizations which serve to integrate workers into the capitalist system, what then? And similar questions.

On the other hand, traditional hardliners, disturbed by the elitism implied by such questions, argue that the shaping of socialism has come about *as a result* of intense workers' struggles. To them, the above position turns everything on its head; to them, socialism is *only* a force because it is an integral *part* of the labor movement.

The "new left" position generally involves coming to a commitment to socialism *independently* of any commitment to the labor movement or struggles of the working class ... essentially the failure to see the commitments are inseparable. At this point, it's perhaps illuminating to look at the extent that Baldwin also is caught in the dilemmas of the "new left": "Our tasks will be (1) to establish appropriate forms of contact [sic] with self-active groups in working class movements (not necessarily 'official' ones), (2) the attempt to integrate the resulting dialogue, in a reciprocal historical practice … " and so on, page 41. In other words, how to be "radical" and not lose your place in the professionaldom of art.

However, it's no isolated problem, it's everyone's. And it is just bullshitting to pretend you're in some way wondrously immune to

it. Little or no consideration is given, in this *Art-Language*, to the questions of how do you "defect" from your own class? or even, can you? or do you just end up isolating yourself within your own class (the malaise of modern art)? This is always the trouble with paper solutions, ours or anyone else's.

Another "sore" point between several of the contributors is the reference to economic "crisis" as a factor to be taken into account in respect to socializing strategies. E.g. "But what about the search for 'value' in a collapsing economy? And did anyone see any miraculous effects of any kind in the depression after 1929?': (Sandra Harrison, page 16); "The process is historic; it is not founded on 'crisis' incantation" (Baldwin, page 74). This has involved odious misreadings and distortions of the particular writings they are commenting on—in essence, isolating out the "crisis" factor as if it were being, claimed by others as the prime mover. (Perhaps it needs remarking that the writings Baldwin and Harrison are criticizing are writings from those of us in New York. This *Art-Language* contains eighteen contributions, some nine of which assail—directly or indirectly—work we have done in New York: *The Fox*, no. 1; *Art-Language*, vol. 3, no. 1; and so on. Sixteen of the contributions were written in England.) It is a bit tedious to have to remind people of the role that crises of capitalism have played in the success of socialist revolutions. It's also a bit obvious for chrissake that crisis hasn't been the only factor. The value of crisis is the changed context it proffers—since an organization (e.g. like a trade union) which is conservative and integrative in stable times *might* play a revolutionary role in a time of severe crisis. But *emphatically*, this is not independent of *many* other factors; nor is it to stress the role of organization as an end in itself.

The problem is that, in the context of the American way of life, not enough people believe in the existence of a viable alternative. There is something standing in the way of revolution, of which "capitalist hegemony" is an extravagantly feeble description. We don't need any more abstract rubbish about an abstract society. It becomes clear that the structures of capitalism are only a particularly obdurate part of what is being fought against—*we don't need* a socialist counter-hegemony. In this light, scholarly opiates are merely grist for more "government from the top."

Unless you are trying to imaginatively and practically deal with questions in this sense, what do you think you are doing?

A number of such points are also raised in Rushton and Wood's article (page 7), which incorporates comments on a paper by Roger Taylor. Taylor sees some of the issues discussed above in the following way: "One can say art is nothing over and above what the bourgeoisie classifies as art—that is its meaning; but from inside the category such a thought is intolerable because it dismantles the intentionality of the category, which posits the objective superiority of those things singled out as art, and thereby the superiority of the form of life which celebrates them." This is well-taken, but as Ruston/ Wood put it, it is unfortunate that, "in trying to sort out alternatives, Taylor subsides into echoing Duchampian/ Dadaist gestures; he maintains an orthodox delineation of class conflict, and does not approach the possibility that oppression might, in some contexts, reside importantly in control/monopoly of information." Rushton/Wood then go' on to suggest how some of these postures are manifest and reinforced at certain levels of art education.

Rushton and Wood's present concerns (cf. their paper elsewhere in this magazine) are, I think, particularly worthwhile here and instantiate some of our more general aims. If we talk about breaking away from the exclusive formalism of art education, we're going to be faced with the problem of *teaching* "content," and not "form-as-content ... But we first have to develop possible "contents," indeed relearn and reorganize our resources in order to become aware of "contents" and be able to integrate them in a social sense. And, given present circumstances, this has to be done *in relation to the existing educational forms*.

Some of the stuff in this issue of *Art-Language* is good, indeed penetrating, but it depends on what sort of relation the reader can form to it. On the other hand, some (e.g. page 13-19 and 87-88) is silly, just revealing

a lack of information. Also, some of the more obsessively-compulsively pathological debate should be quickly retired to the funny farm. Even considered as exploratory stages, a lot of it is too theoretical, too *anti*-practical, too self-doctrinal certainty, and *far too dependent on leaving the writer's own problematic circumstances out of the picture*. That is, only "other people" have problems (or their problems are the only ones you are prepared to discuss in public). Michael Baldwin's posturing, inconceivable as it frequently is, and parroted by several other contributors, might be regarded as symptomatic (certainly not diagnostic!) of the confused dimensions of what comes up for discussion. (His Kautskyan apologetics for imperialism, on pages 91-92, are either surprisingly ill-informed or a plea for bringing back the British Empire.) I trust no-one takes this as an argument for a more "objective" criteria for publication of material, that would be idiotic—we *need* the silly along with the penetrating, we need to *learn* from both. And that isn't saying everything is hence equally defensible. (Look at *The Fox*, there is stuff in here that I have nightmares about.)

Finally, the reader should tread carefully through this *Art-Language*, many of the articles are riddled with mistakes, attributing opinions to others on a basis of opportunistic misreadings. (One oughtn't to be shocked, I suppose, since reading is cultural—it's not an unproblematic "objective" process but a way of indexing *oneself* into a resource or body of opinion.) Maybe, in sounding off like this, I don't sound like a "good member of the community." *Maybe* that's just the point.

New York, New York

CORRESPONDENCE & NOTES

To *The Fox*:

We read and enjoyed your first issue very much, especially the Sarah Charlesworth article which was an excellent introduction to the problem. We know how difficult it is to get people to articulate their response to published work. We will try to send you our critique as soon as we all have read the first issue more carefully.

Our first issue will be out in September. There is an enormous need in this country for a political theory of film and we hope to partially fill it. We are attempting to evolve a theory of film using tools that are relatively foreign to the ideology of this country: Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, semiology, etc. We would like to have an exchange subscription with you. We look forward to your next issue.

Sincerely, Constance Penley
for the *Camera Obscura* Collective
Camera Obscura
A Journal of Feminism & Film Theory
P.O. Box 4517
Berkeley, CA 94704
P.S. you look good, too!

Dear Foxes,

We hope one day you'll eventually wise up and receive the knowledge of Guri Maharaj Ji and begin an actual alternative instead of dithering around epistemological banalities, red herrings, partial critiques and domestic absurdities. The new game requires at least nine senses. If you (and everybody else) insist on using only the five ordinary ones then you're

just asking for trouble. The beginning of the solution is free on request so why not include it in your search for alternatives?
Art Research
17, Sefton Park Road Liverpool 8,
England

To The Fox:

Having been upstate for the past several months, I was only recently able to get to read *The Fox*. Hence this letter some four months after the fact. In any case, I am responding to "A Note on Art in Jugoslavia" because I feel there is a great deal of overlap between their situation and ours, but unfortunately the authors didn't go far enough into it.

Zoran Popovic and Jasna Tijardovic have specified some of the problems they and other artists face in working in a transitional society. They identified one of the sources of their cultural alienation as the way in which administrators "must purchase from each artist once a year with no personal taste involved." They say that some artists try to sell to private buyers in an effort to counteract that bureaucratic unreality. But it does not seem likely that the lack of taste is a very major source of their alienation, or that selling to private buyers will help them very much with their problems. It certainly is possible that this attempt at an alternative gives some artists a feeling of eluding that bureaucratic unreality. Maybe it's similar to the way co-op galleries here permit some artists an alternative. Maybe they believe that the personal relationships involved in selling privately will be less alienating. But in fact selling privately does no more than exchange one impersonal unreality for another less impersonal one. Being supported by a Leo Castelli would be no more of an answer for them.than our being supported by the Purchasing Commission would be an answer for us.

Popovic and Tijardovic don't mention that state control of the means of production doesn't dispose of (a form of) class domination. We exist in a bonafide capitalist class-society where accumulation, according to the laws of profit maximization, balances and perpetuates class domination. They live in a non-capitalist class-society, where the private appropriation of the surplus of society no longer exists (?). But we all know that private appropriation only serves to stabilize and reproduce class domination, *not* to form it. That power is constituted in the separation of workers from the means of social production (basics, basics, basics), and that's true whether you have private ownership or state ownership. In both cases you have alienation; but in neither case do most of the workers act as if that is particularly relevant to their work. My assumptions about artists' consciousness here are based on the fact that I continue to see an absence of political consciousness in almost everyone's work. My suppositions about Jugoslavian artists are based on limited information and may be completely erroneous; but the tone of some sections of Popovic's and Tijardovic's article lead me to believe my assumptions are fairly accurate. What is particularly disturbing is the fact that at times they sounded as if they would be fairly content if the "new art" were accepted by the state. Don't misunderstand, I don't deny the possibility that artists in Jugoslavia are more politically aware than artists here (though that isn't saying much, is it). But that consciousness doesn't seem to be reflected in work or in this article. We do agree that social realism is not an answer. Yet what they seem to designate as the "new art" (land, process, conceptual) is no more of an answer than are co-op galleries.

In the good old US of A it's hard to ignore the fact that there's a very strong economic base for class domination (mechanisms such as firings, blackballing, lockouts and so many more) as well as a strong political base. (Sometimes I wonder why I get hungry when someone mentions freedom of choice.) In Jugoslavia however, there seems to be a very weak economic base and the ruling class maintains itself by stronger and much more overt political means (hard-core vs. the old soft shoe). Their government is as acutely aware as ours of the need for ideological legitimation, as well as of the ideological forms of securing class domination. This follows almost naturally, since in countries where you have an extremely weak economic base for stabilization, the political sphere becomes more important, as it is the only theatre left. While they may have a greater "politicization" of their public sphere, it isn't

any less illusory than here. Our propaganda as well as theirs serves the same end of depoliticization, support of the status quo.

The point I've been trying to get around to is that it doesn't matter whether you're an artist or worker here or there, what's important is that you're still faced with the problem of your alienation and all that entails. It might have been much more useful to myself and others had Popovic and Tijardovic spoken about their alienation in terms of their separation from the conditions of their production, as *producers*. Blaming their cultural alienation on bureaucratic *taste* simply does not take the issue far enough.

In New York you can beat your chest and shout out your Marxist sympathies, be socialists with a high art world visibility, and still put out crap like Andre; you only get into trouble if you try to realize (something approximating) socialist ends. But in countries of the "socialist bloc," where freedom of opinion is frequently forbidden (whenever possible), a real articulation of working class problems might actually have some repercussions. The Polish dock strike back in 1971 comes to mind as a good example. In any case, it seems reasonable to assume that until artists begin to actively confront the problems of that separation, as an essential aspect of their work, they will continue to produce more of the same garbage, without understanding why it continues to leave them flat.

Sincerely,
Michael Karczewski New York, New York

To *The Fox*:

I have not yet finished reading all of the material in No.1 of your publication but I am compelled to write while the issue is at hand. I am always astonished whenever I come across work which in some fundamental way parallels my own. I suppose that I should not be so surprised, as there are at least as many precedents for the activity in which I am involved as there are implications to it. However, I am still amazed that your publication should so neatly coincide with the series of seminars which I have recently organized (and with social activities being initiated by others in the Bay Area art community) at this particular time. I believe, from the tone of some of the articles in *The Fox*, that we also have similar goals. I will attempt to explain.

"Floating Seminar #1" came about as a direct result of a series of lectures held at the San Francisco Museum of Art last fall. The series, called "East/West," was an attempt to educate artists in this area ("West") through the importation of various art-related individuals such as Gregory Battcock and Lawrence Alloway from New York ("East"), and to ideally provide the basis for some kind of exchange between the two communities. That the representatives of the "East" were eloquent (although usually aloof) was not surprising. What *was* striking was the realization at "question time" that the Bay Area art community was totally lacking in any kind of recognition of itself as a social unit, except to uphold the stereotype of the community here being made up of apathetic individuals who have no idea of what each other is doing. The artists in this area, myself included, naively continued to toil away blindly (or rather deaf-and-dumbly) in our studios producing what we hoped would be considered important works of art. It was revealing to gather together and actually confront our lack of community consciousness when, at a panel discussion at the University Art Museum in Berkeley early this year, the topic of which was the possibilities of "Post-Minimal Art," all we could find to talk about was the problems that museums have showing this new "conceptual" work.

My feeling (having been steeped in Formalism at a Mid-Western Art Institute) (and to reiterate a comment by Sarah Charlesworth in *The Fox*) was and is that art's primary function is to influence other art, and that therefore the artist's primary function is to influence (and be influenced by) other artists. The art community in San Francisco is fortunately small enough so that the possibility of dialogue between artists still exists. The reason why this dialogue so often fails to materialize is precisely because we have been trained as visual artists to *express* ourselves through artwork rather than to *communicate* by whatever means. Thus when we are given

the opportunity to communicate with each other, we not only don't know what to say, we wouldn't know how to say it if we did. (This is where critics, writers, and some "language" artists have a definite advantage over those trained in the visual arts.)

In order to begin to remedy this situation I proposed, in early April, to organize an open seminar series which would be held on a regular basis at different locations in the area. I was not, however, motivated to do this work entirely by my social conscience. In fact my primary reason for spending considerable time and energy (as well as a substantial sum of money) on this project was to provide myself with an activity which I could justify as a work of art in and of itself. I saw the activity as yet another example of the many forms that art (and artists) could take. "The artist-as-social-organizer" seemed to me at the time to be at least as valid a role as the artist-as-any-other-character (therapist, educator, mathematician, psychotic, philosopher, or whatever). If this activity also happened to initiate some self-consciousness in the art-community, then so much the better. But my role was to set up the system of organization (as outlined in the proposal) and to then "turn-off" and act in the capacity of the "dumb instrument" of that system.

In order for the seminar to be successful on both levels, I had to not only make it accessible to the general art-public, but I had also to make sure that certain individuals whom I respected in the community were made aware of my full intentions. I discovered that I could use my organizational role as a good excuse to talk to artists who had interested me in the past but with whom I had rarely or never come into contact. After a number of private interviews with various artists I gradually began to realize that what was important about this activity was not my expression of a further role of an artist, but the actual communication between myself and others, as well as the gathering of experience "in the field". What was begun as virtually a *satire* on artists' feeble attempts at societal relationships gradually became the primary motivation for continuing. I was being affected by and was affecting artists in personal contact *while the work evolved*, something which rarely happened in my previous work.

The seminar itself continued to develop more or less according to the original system, however. I still cling to many of the trappings of the "artist-as" syndrome, for (in concordance with Joseph Kosuth's observation about the artist-as-anthropologist) it is necessary for me to remain within the realm of "artist" in order to best study and affect that role. As art, the work is designed (often unconsciously) to fit models which applied to previous situations and other intentions but which serve to assign the activity at least in a preliminary way to the category of "art-work". (For example, the preparation of two different statements to open the seminar, one of which was to be recited depending on the number of participants present in order to control the direction of the meeting, relates to innumerable examples in "late-conceptual" work based on arbitrary perimeters of control. Also, the automatic transcription of every "uh" and "you know" from the tape disclaims any censorship, aesthetic or otherwise.)

I do in fact see a definite "strategy" for art-work (as Mel Ramsden put it). It is as opposed to "expressionism" as any formal work of the past, but with a content which can educate both the artist in the execution of the work, and the community in the exposition of it. I am thinking specifically of the "aids to communication" on which I am now working. While the seminar format may only work in a smaller, more provincial community than New York, there are numerous other formats which may be employed. (A publication such as *The Fox*, while rather impersonal, seems to work best in reaching a wide audience.)

I am in the process of compiling a list of the definitions of "big-words-used-in-art-criticism-which-I-never-really-understood" as an "Aid to the Understanding and De-Mystification of Critical Art Writing"; a rather trivial activity, I'll admit, but educational nonetheless. (Could one possibly see oneself, lacking extensive ideological background, as the guerilla in-fighter between the "Strategists" and the even less informed masses? I don't think at this point that I would be offended by such a classification.) Jose Ortega Y Gasset wrote, in an essay called "The Dehumanization

of Art" in 1925, that "It is not that the majority does not *like* the (new art), and the minority likes it, but that the majority, the masses, do not *understand* it". He was speaking about the relationship of Cubism to the general public, but I think that the statement applies to much of the recent critical writing in relation to artists as well. It's not that we don't agree with verbose theoretical discourse, it's that in order to understand it we need a hell of a lot more background than is generally supplied in art schools.

At any rate, I do feel that many of the ideas presented in your publication clarify the direction in which my own work seems to be moving. I anxiously await your next move.
Sincerely,
Paul Kagawa
San Francisco, Ca.

FLOATING SEMINAR #1

PAUL KAGAWA

On May 5, 1975, Floating Seminar #1 was held at Malvina's coffeehouse in San Francisco. It was the first in what was to be a series of monthly open forums on different topics to be held at various locations around the Bay Area. The location and time of Seminar #1 was announced in *Artweek*, as well as in the *Bay Guardian* and the *Chronicle*, and 1,000 printed announcements were placed in many galleries, museums, schools, and supply stores around the Bay Area. There were about 50 people present at various times throughout the two hour period although no more than half that number remained at the end of the session and only about a dozen actively participated in the discussion.

The talk began at 12:15 p.m. with an opening statement by the organizer. A few people had come prepared to speak on the announced topic, "Art as Theory as Art," and the discussion concerned the pros and cons of "coherence" in artwork for perhaps 30 minutes. The importance of "retinal activity" to art was also debated by several participants. Many people spoke on the topics of "money" and "politics" in the art world and the session ended with a plea for support of neighborhood art projects in the community.

Each participant was asked to fill out a questionnaire to determine their relationship to art and to solicit comments on this and future seminars. Of the 35 people returning question sheets 18 considered themselves artists, 10 were students, 1 was a critic and 4 were not related to art. 12 had some comment on that day's seminar ranging from "shut up and paint" to "would have liked more control" to "felt free, not intimidating". 23 expressed some interest in future seminars and 30 people gave their names and addresses to be put on the mailing list.

As organizer I personally contacted approximately 30 artists and art-related individuals prior to the seminar. Of these, only six were present at the entire seminar, with three others appearing briefly toward the end of the meeting. The remainder declined to attend. My interest in organizing this seminar lies in two general areas. First, of course, I am interested in the possibility of creating a self-perpetuating, loosely defined organization of artists and interested individuals who will themselves control any discussion in which they participate. By the response to Seminar #1, I am convinced that there is a real desire for this type of non-institutionally affiliated situation in the Bay Area.

My activity as organizer of this seminar must necessarily conform to my activity as an artist. I am interested in the possibilities of an art activity which can exist outside of the gallery/museum system and still be visible to the art community. The most important aspect of any work of art is the way it affects and is affected by other art work. Galleries and museums provide an essential showplace for visual art, yet they cannot provide continued support for art which is not marketable or which may not be appealing to a wide audience. Thus an important channel of communication between artists, i.e. through the work itself in public display, is limited by factors which are irrelevant to the importance of the work.

The control of the "art climate" of the city is largely in the hands of non-artists who may make sensible choices and who may be very concerned about promoting a dialectical ambience in this area, but who must always temper their choices to some extent because of self-interest.

My interest in the organization of the Floating Seminar series was not solely to provide a neutral meeting place for artists. The work was designed to provide myself, as an artist, with an activity which would involve a number of direct confrontations with members of the art community. I was able to discuss at length the process of the organizational activity with artists whose work had interested me but whom I had never come into contact with. The actual seminar can be seen as a residual product of that activity. Decisions as to the structure of the seminar were left open and they were revised as opinions were gathered from various individuals.

I would like to present a case, through the work, for the possibility of an art which is not based on the concept of "personal expression". All art produced in a society is necessarily a collective endeavor. Art survives and changes because of continuing dialog, whether verbal or visual. The art activity can incorporate and be incorporated by that dialog, to affect and be affected at the same time. (The feedback inherent in the organization of the seminar enabled the work to evolve as it was being performed. Thus the work is not entirely the product of my sole personal expression, and I do not take credit for the limited success of the meeting. What is important is that since the content of the process of the work is dialog, the fact that the work itself is nonsaleable becomes irrelevant as its reason to be, the promotion of dialog, is incorporated in the work itself.)

My involvement in this activity as artwork will end at the time when a transcript of the tape of Seminar #1 is distributed to each participant whose name was received for the mailing list. The seminar series does not have to end at this point. However, due to a lack of financial support, Floating Seminar #2 will be postponed until further notice. Anyone wishing to donate funds or energy to help to continue this series can contact me at 513 Valencia St., San Francisco, Ca. 94110,431- 9832. I would like to thank all those involved, especially *Artweek*, for their support in this project.
Paul Kagawa
San Francisco, Ca.

ODE TO AN ARTIST

He who travels to New York
Is probably just a starter,
But the thing he'll surely learn
Is to put on his avante-garder.

Looking high and low for fame,
Waiting for the bid,
Transform one's work into the "same"
Letting thoughts go rancid.

Pick me, pick me,
I am he.
Pay the fee
And I'll set you free.

CHORUS:
New York, New York, New York, New York
New York, New York, New York.
New York, New York, New York, New York
New York, New York, New York.

You seem so coy oh Joey Beuys,
You've duped those ritzy gallery boys.
Your scenes with that God-awful rabbit
Have proved to be an obnoxious habit.

Burden, Burden, soak your head,
Spend twenty days in your bed,
Try to be the next Duchamp
And end up doing the gallery stomp.

Oh closet comedian in your trap,
Traveling incognito,
Watch him nap, hear him rap.
Poor unconscious Vito.

CHORUS:
New York, New York, New York, New York,

New York,. New York, New York.
New York, New York, New York, New York,
New York, New York, New York.

Oh SoHo sages of the north,
Who finds your work not boring?
How can you justify your worth,
When you hear the whole world snoring?

You all got mad at poor Tom Wolfe
And said he was only joking.
Whilst your heads stay snug in their beds,
He's still at your ribs a-poking.

If you stay asleep too long
You'll find your myth a-smoking.
Your destiny you can't curtail,
You'll be one by one a-croaking.

CHORUS:
New York, New York, New York, New York,
New York, New York, New York.
New York, New York, New York, New York,
New York, New York, New York.

You try so hard to be avante-garde
Only to end up racy
As a senior citizen playing cards
And working nights at Macys.

I hear you scream "Oh critic!
Your ass oh let me lick,"
You irresponsible little brat
Leaving everything up to the bureaucrat.

Ian Bum, what's the score?
I hear your name no more.
Everyone's either disappeared
Or is playing the role of whore.

CHORUS
New York, New York, New York, New York,
New York, New York, New York.
New York, New York, New York, New York,
New York, New York, New York.
New York—Relay
Miami, Florida

To *The Fox*:

I've still not had chance to guitar-boogie-shuffle through your entire first issue though I think the editorially refined position comes quickly into focus. The gossip Marxist drift I dig though any para-political motifs are clearly eclipsed with your frequent allusions to "praxis". Class struggles within knowledge notwithstanding, art-historians as author have traditionally succored a long, continuous labor of thought from period to period as their own security has been hinged on this jive teleology. What we have seen passing for art criticism in most publications is weakly mimetic as postscript to painting, sculpture ... whatever, the cultural crib death of a considerable stake in logical historicity, all of which necessarily distinguished between creative and critical impulse by citing only extant criticism and attempting to guarantee the legitimacy of its own being through perpetuating a self-serving aesthetic continuity (if there be one source material conspicuously absent from your bibliographies, it's been the savy circle jerk of art history ... nice!)

Even *Art-Language*'s attempted transpersonality of text was handmaiden to archeology ... becoming obsessed with "art propositions" presented with linguistic allure fluctuating from erudite forms of illiteracy or macrononsence (while coining a term close to the jargon of their own lore) to truncated language scientism. *The Fox* seems to favor those same prolixities but, significantly, directs the discourse to a burning in on "here" rather than the "there" of art history.

With a distinct structuralist bent, I dig meta-positions (It's not things which have the greatest capacity to signify, in my mind, but the relation between things see knowledge as this system of distances … viz. as one phase of contemporary idiom pushed arthood and its idiomatic languages in the direction of intellectual comprehension, analytic philosophy's self-referential syntax offered a mere handy analogy to the formalist merits circumscribed by the evasive mystery of art status. Thus, the distance between art and philosophy as discipline were closer than they had been ten years prior yet still surrounded by a set of general boundaries, the *épistéme* articulating an actively populated expanse of knowledge-acts.) Though like most "practicing" artists, I don't have a particularly

difficult time in severing myself from the flatulant hosannahs of art historians who seem satisfied to catalogue everything and experience nothing.

But I deal more upfrontly with all this in my artwork proper which is probably closer to current French literary mannerisms than anything I see going down in the artworld. I moved back to the source of the signifier as an anchoring point for all organized utterance and in so doing, am constantly thinking object, instrument and this particular isomorphism. My work, then, thinks itself and becomes, in turning back upon itself, the poetics of the science that it is. There is nothing to be found save the basic ideological gesture of the work's own movement. Although the work represents something of an art-like documentation which may be foreign to your journal's trajectory, I can't make distinctions between display systems proper and the manner in which a particular meaning is being generated ... and how it proceeds. I regard the two as inextricably wed ... as part of my position that an existing system of signs is a judgement, distinctly, that those particular signs shall be. Characteristic here is that which is given and the how of its being given ... performance as tract, no doubt, but more of the imposed demonstration of rarity. Rarity is the last word ... dig it, the last word about affirmation!
Annson Kenney
Philadelphia, Pa.

To *The Fox*:

"IT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR JOURNAL TO TRY TO ESTABLISH SOME KIND OF COMMUNITY PRACTICE"

What does "community practice" mean? Is it to try to establish an "art-method" to be used to uproot the "culture-makers" (the cats with bread)? A METHODOLOGY!?

Gadzooks, what will that lead to?

It appears to me, after reading (muddling) through that linguistic maze by Baldwin and Pilkington, a glimpse of the future of your journal can already be seen, just by the way they concluded their dazzling rhetoric: "We are led to the conclusion that a revaluation of ideology is overdue." And they add a few hints as to what should be considered. Bullshit! or as they would put it—feces of the sign of Taurus!

There are a lot of things that are overdue and even more theories as to how to go about getting them done. Anyway ... your magazine will no doubt become an interesting playground of theoretical ideologies.

How many of you are under contract to an art gallery? How many of you have accepted grants from those "all-embracing cultural institutions"?

What you are aspiring to cannot remain in the limits of the art-system. It's like "pissing in the wind" if you remain on one side of the fence. However you are sure to get a lot of literature applauding your platform. Can't you already hear those romantic artists screaming down the streets, looking for a Method; revaluating the Ideology of Art, "finally we've got our own struggle".
N.B.B.B.
Toronto, Ontario

To *The Fox*:

Your journal is very striking. From what I read I believe that it will express some valuable information (has already) (goes without saying?)

I hope that a "community practice" (in whatever form) can happen.

To see art not only as an ideology will be a "giant step for mankind" itself.

To give it a new or at least revised meaning is not like adding another title to it but to compare it to all other influential ideas in its society.

I look forward to reading your next issue.
N.B.B.B.
Toronto, Ontario

To *The Fox*:

Some comments on your first issue and some suggestions for further developing your "editorial thrust". As one of your journal's purposes seems to be to promote a heightened criticality in the art community, I hope you will understand that my remarks are meant to be supportive and constructive. Though they may be harsh as well, bear in mind that I agree completely with many of your positions and would not even be writing if I were not fundamentally sympathetic to your goals.

I hope that your future issues increase in "trenchancy" and in readership.

Let me begin by relaying some comments made by an artist-friend shortly after your first issue appeared. He noted that when Art & Language first began publishing, its stance *vis-a-vis* the art community was, essentially, "We will bury you". Now, only a few years later, having established itself as something of a highbrow Thought Police, Art & Language says, "Come, let us form a community together". What, my friend wondered, does this complete reversal *really* mean? Why should we take it at face value? Do they think we won't have noticed the inconsistency?

I, too, could not help feeling skeptical, but for reasons unrelated to your previous public stance. A few details, such as J. Kosuth's gratuitous and utterly self-serving assertion that his brand of Conceptual Art was the "original" and only "legitimate" work to emerge from the "break with the Modernist art continuum" (p. 25), or the equally gratuitous, kick-em-in-the-shins tone of several of the other articles, especially Baldwin and Pilkington's, suggested that more was involved than altruism and positive community development. But these are minor matters. Let me move to a deeper level.

Ian Burn's excellent "Pricing Works of Art" described some of the assumptions and psycho-social consequences of current art marketing practices. I have never read a more lucid account of the situation. Only Raymonde Moulin's "Living Without Selling" (in *Art and Confrontation*, New York Graphic Society, 1968) even comes close. And yet, at the same time, I could not help thinking that Burn was seizing on a problem, knowingly or unknowingly, that was already well on its way to resolution. If one laments the grip which the market mentality has on the contemporary practice of art, just sit back and watch, because that grip is rapidly loosening—and not because hordes of irate artists are rising to reclaim their souls, but because all that "excess" capital generated by the twenty-year boom in industrial production is just about gone. How opportune that Burn should stand up to the power of the market just as its base of support collapses.

Elsewhere in the first issue, I had the distinct feeling that your writers were going after straw men with elephant guns. Armed with some very high-powered insights into the nature of bureaucracy, cultural imperialism, hidden ideology, institutional legitimation, etc., it began to seem absurdly myopic, if not downright perverse, that they would expend so much effort sniping at the rickety-quaint art superstructure, and let the big game go free. If you want to talk about cultural imperialism, why waste time on travelling painting shows? Talk about the dumping of American television programs on foreign markets at artificially-low prices. If you want to talk about hidden ideologies, talk about the news-packaging operations of the national wire-services. *Apply your concepts to cultural material that demands and justifies that level of criticism!* If in "transcending" the "naive" object-fetishism of Modem Art you have not gained insight into the all-embracing metabolism of cultural communications, then you have gained nothing at all. By expanding your critical methodology and yet remaining within the context defined by the institutions of traditional art, you create an implosive situation, one in which your tools turn against each other (and yourselves). You already know this (cf. Mel Ramsden). I can only underscore the point. The only explanation I can come up with for your continuing fixation on the meaning, production, and distribution of art in the narrow sense is that you would rather be big fish in a small pond than small fish in an ocean. This is highly irresponsible and elicits the kind of skepticism with which I greeted the first issue of *The Fox*.

But enough criticism. I would like to quickly layout some of the issues that I have been preoccupied with lately, in hopes that you or your readers might be able to bring some of their intelligence to bear on them, and then I'll sign off.

Television: if you think the commodity fiction has wrought havoc with art, take a look at what it has done to our society's dominant medium of communication ... It is not that television could be "better," more "elevating," more "stimulating," than it is. (I for one am relieved that it is not more effective. If it were, we probably wouldn't even be able to converse with one another, though that condition may be

fast approaching, anyway.) For when one looks at television through the eyes of esthetics, one learns virtually nothing. In fact, that only obscures and complicates matters: esthetic models are grounded in assumptions about origins and end-uses that are completely false for television. I am becoming increasingly convinced that television is an *anesthetic*, rather than an esthetic, medium. Anesthetics, in the sense that I mean it, involves notions of inhibition (as opposed to *exhibition* in art), depth psychology, de-individuation, dream narcosis, and many other notions that are quite foreign to our usual perspective. (I hope to develop a more comprehensive view of all this at some later date.) The subject is vast, too vast for any one individual to encompass, and must be tackled while we can still read and write.

Surveillance: the increasingly important, but still under-discussed, complement of oneway communication. I'll just leave it at that—take it where you may.

Professionalism, Amateurism, and Vandalism: many of the insidious sub-currents that *The Fox* has exposed in art are associated in my mind with professionalism. Historically, the notion of the professional has developed in parallel with the notion of private property (specifically, the professional claims to *possess* a unique body of knowledge that he alone is qualified to exercise and for which he alone is responsible). Bernard Shaw's quip that the professional is a conspirator against the laity is as curate in direct proportion to the difficulty of evaluating his performance objectively, and reaches a climax of sorts in the art-world's favorite sons, the avant-garde intelligensia. The immanent collapse of the art market will mainly benefit the amateurs among us (as well as increasing their number): when you talk about freeing the artist from market values, you're talking about dismantling the profession. Amateurs are, at any rate, the overwhelming majority and the social pool from which professionals emerge. The dynamics of the amateur class are radically different (that is not to say that they are radical) from those of the professional class, and so we can expect to see a shift in the equilibrium of values that leads us to call some art "good" and some art "bad". Amateurs work in an audience of intimates and can therefore presume a highly specific and informal frame of reference. The abstraction, schematization, and restless style-change that accompanied the rise of the modem art professional will probably be undone, giving way to art which is much more expressive, precious, and inefficient. Operating outside of both classes, and outside of bourgeois society in general, is the vandal. He is important for his hostility to property and will be the focus of much institutional concern as the number of property-less individuals rises. He may again replace the avant-garde artist in the mythology of cultural rebellion and can be counted on to continue the reductive and nihilistic traditions that now no longer satisfy the esthete. Lord knows we have enough overbuilt environments and hardened values to keep him busy for generations. We ought to begin preparing his case. Best wishes for the future,
Robert Horvitz
New Haven, Conn.

To *The Fox*:

The Fox is interesting. I notice a word that crops up in a number of articles: "internalization". By virtue of your "remove" from the mainstream, your relative isolation from the everyday world (and I am basing this statement on the statements made by Karl Beveridge in his article) you don't see that there is no internalization, but that there is constant real pressure to do certain things, to act in certain ways. One acts in certain ways because one is punished for not doing so. No struggles have been won at all: women, minorities, people who work are pretty much where we always were: at the bottom of the heap. And we're there because we're being kept there. *We are not keeping ourselves there*, which is the meaning of "internalization".

It's really too bad that "radical" artists like yourselves should have swallowed the myth of internalization. Artists haven't internalized anything, either. We're subjected to daily real pressures and threats to act in a certain accepted way. You at *The Fox* are, too.* By not seeing this you're exhibiting Marx's "false consciousness" (p. 2).

I'm enclosing a relevant article written by Carol Hanisch, a feminist, which appeared

in the newspaper "Women's World". This is the best discussion I've seen of the myth of internalization.

*Perhaps not in your capacity of editors/ writers of *The Fox* but as individuals. If you indulged in a bit of consciousness-raising you might see that as individuals you're subjected to quite a bit of coercion.

Joan Mathews
New York, New York

MALE PSYCHOLOGY: A MYTH TO KEEP WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE (EXCERPTS)

CAROL HANISCH

THE CREEPING "TAUGHT" ARGUMENT.

Let's take a look at some of the things that are being said about women-and men. "Little girls are TAUGHT (conditioned, brainwashed) to be feminine and little boys are TAUGHT to be masculine and that's why things are the way they are."

This "taught" argument creeps in everywhere. I think I was taught two things: what was DEMANDED of me by the MAN's world and HOW TO DO the things I have to do to survive in it ...

... *Being taught something doesn't mean very much unless there is something in the circumstances of one's life to enforce it.* For example: I grew up in the rural midwest where there were severe penalties for having sex outside of marriage. Most men (the good catches) wanted to marry "nice girls" (virgins) and marriage was one of the few jobs available if a girl couldn't go to college or vocational school and being an old maid was a disgrace even if she could. Birth control—except rubbers—was little known about and hard for a young woman to get, so sex carried the extremely serious risk of pregnancy.

So I grew up with many forces upon my life against having sex before marriage. Some would say I didn't have sex then because I was "taught" it was wrong. *I would say the lack of birth control and the attitudes of the young men forced me not to have sex.* I think the women, like my mother, who warned me not to were trying to protect me (and themselves, since mothers are always blamed for everything) ...

... I was supposedly TAUGHT to wear make-up, and I wore it for years. I was supposedly TAUGHT to wear uncomfortable bras and girdles that gave me indigestion and high heel shoes that hurt my feet and to shave my legs and underarms no matter how painful it was or how much it wasted my time. At that time I actually FELT more comfortable in uncomfortable make-up and high heels because people either stare at you disapprovingly or don't notice you at all when you're not wearing them. *Men and bosses that I knew then demanded that women do these things. I was forced to do them or lose the job and/or man.*

Some people will even maintain that boys/men are oppressed, too, by what they have been TAUGHT or by the "male role". *They often point to the fact that men aren't allowed to show their feelings. Do men fail to show their feelings because they are kept from it or because they GAIN something by not showing them? I think they don't show their feelings to women because it means control over women and men know it ...*

... I think little boys learn very quickly the benefits that come with being a man ...

... And why didn't I stand up for my rights and demand to play ball with them? Sometimes it was because they yelled at me and once even hurt me by twisting my arm for "bugging them". Often the "force" was the knowledge that they wouldn't like me AS A GIRL if I insisted. Either way, I got the message.

And so we are not "taught" or "conditioned" to do what we do. In men/women relationships, women do what we do to survive, to get what we need and what we want and deserve, and to avoid being punished ...

WHO THE HELL ARE THEY DISRUPTING SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT THE GALLERIES? EVERYONE KNOWS THAT GOING TO THE GALLERIES IS POLITICAL

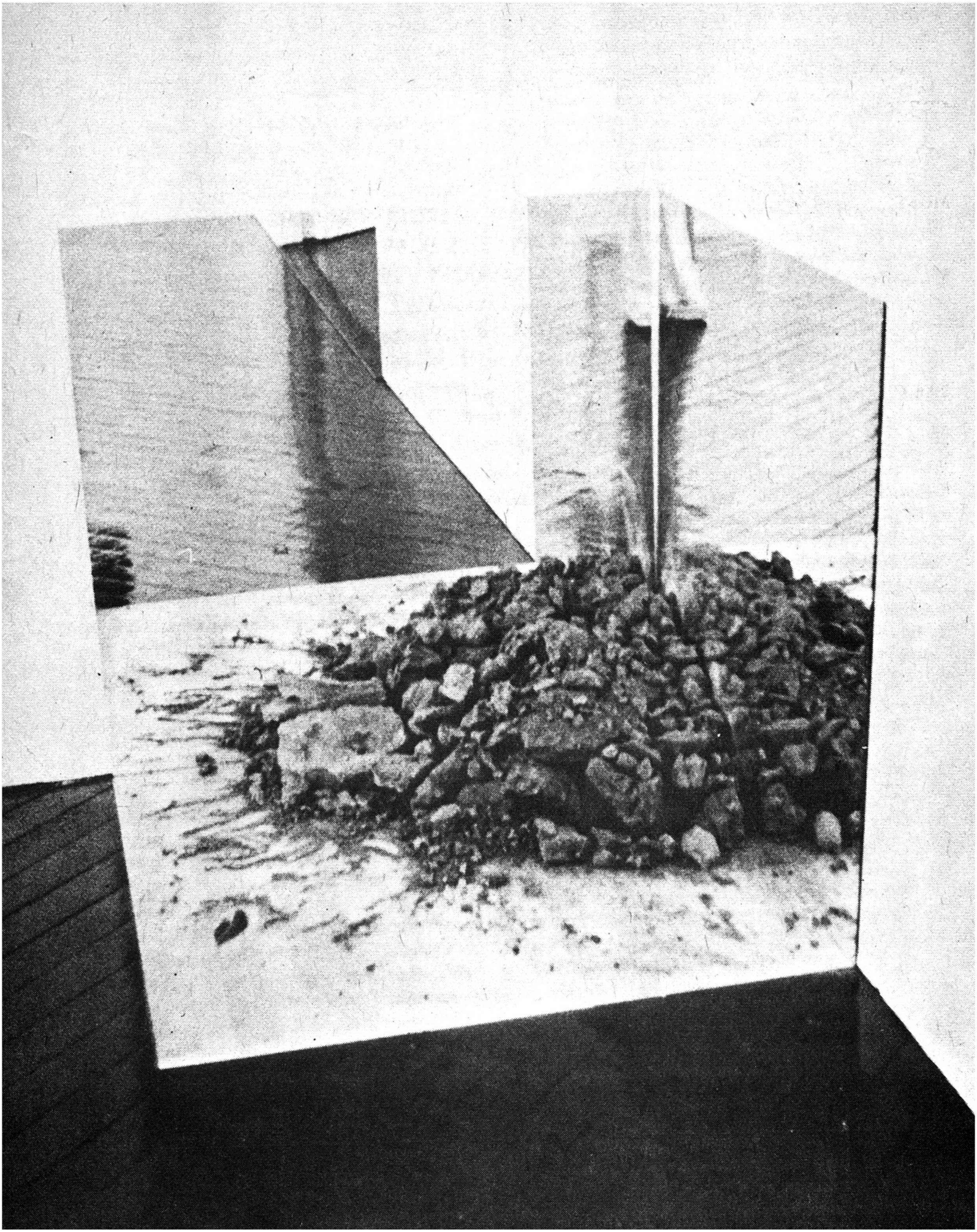
As long as art is controlled by the institution of private property, artists will have little control over what they make as art or what happens to that product once they make it. Isn't it possible that the elimination of private property would also eliminate this separation between artists and their work? Aren't galleries simply private property on display? Aren't artists simply on display as private property?

LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE ISN'T IT DISGRACEFUL? EVERYONE KNOWS THAT NOT GOING TO THE GALLERIES IS POLITICAL.

Artists! Closing the galleries is the best thing that could happen to us. Galleries isolate us. Galleries force us to compete agatnst each other. Galleries give us the illusion of freedom without the reality of power.

THE GALLERIES WILL OPEN AGAIN!

Why not use this time to reconsider our social practice? Of course we're all victims. But if we continue to ignore alternatives we will remain helpless as well.



... But that's what I mean," some WL women will say. "I mean that women are forced." Then they go right on saying how women are "taught" and "conditioned" and "brainwashed". This is where all those words CREEP in.

THEN WHY DO THEY KEEP USING ALL THOSE SOCIAL SCIENCE WORDS TO DESCRIBE WHAT IS HAPPENING? THEY MUST BE GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF IT!

1) IT'S EASY. It's much easier to resort to this way of explaining things than it is to do the hard work of figuring out what is really going on.

2) IT KEEPS THEM FROM ADMITTING THE AWFUL TRUTH THAT MEN ARE OUR CLASS ENEMY. If men are just "taught" or "conditioned" to be male supremacist, then re-education alone would solve the problem. If a woman would just "straighten out her head" and quit doing all those things she was "taught" or "conditioned" to do, her problems would be solved. She would be a liberated woman, merely by getting a "positive attitude" about herself.

However, if we admit men get real benefits out of dominating women, it means a real struggle against men to force them to give up these benefits, to take their power to control us away from them. *Force does not respond merely to education; force responds to force.*

3) IT GIVES THEM INTELLECTUAL CONTROL OF THE SITUATION. These words and ideas are so broad and so meaningless and so wrong that they can be used to cover up what is really going on and make the woman who said it look "intelligent". Vagueness and meaninglessness are much more difficult to challenge so she ends up carrying more weight in the groups.

4) IT MAKES THEM LOOK GOOD IN MEN'S EYES, AND THEY CONSEQUENTLY GET REWARDED FOR IT. Men don't like to be called the enemy. It's the truth and it means THEY will have to change, not US. They would much rather hear women say that women's situation is the result of learning and conditioning. It lets them off the hook and blames women or some vague "society" at the same time.

5) THE WOMAN WHO USES THOSE WORDS USUALLY (MAYBE NOT ALWAYS) BELIEVES OPENLY OR SECRETLY THAT SHE HAS ESCAPED MOST OR ALL OF THAT "CONDITIONING" OR "BRAINWASHING" SO SHE GETS A FALSE FEELING OF BEING BETTER THAN OTHER WOMEN.

6) SHE HAS A DIRECT STAKE IN THESE THEORIES BECAUSE HER JOB OR HER MAN IS IN ONE OF THE FIELDS THAT DEPENDS DIRECTLY ON MAINTAINING THESE IDEAS. This is always connected with having a college education. I think these jobs—psychiatrist, psychologist, sociologist, anthropologist, etc.—are set up to oppress and divide women (and working people, too, for that matter). They are built around the assumption that people's problems are personal and not a matter of power relationships between men and women, black and white, rich and poor, educated and uneducated ...

The complete version of this paper can be obtained for 25t from Carol Hanisch, P.O. Box 12452, University Station, Gainesville, Florida 32601.

To *The Fox*:

Congratulations on your first issue of *The Fox*. I am enclosing a transcribed conversation with Bob Smithson from 1972 for your consideration. I think it is an important document because it has a lot to do with subsequent developments we are now witnessing. Smithson was well aware, for several years before his death, of the problems attending the production/distribution/exhibition, etc., of works of art, and he intelligently addressed them quite early. Even in retrospect, there are some very solid thoughts here which have not yet been completely explored. I hope you find the conversation of interest.
Bruce Kurtz
Oneonta, N.Y.

CONVERSATION WITH ROBERT SMITHSON ON APRIL 22ND 1972

EDITED BY BRUCE KURTZ

I'm not really discontent. I'm just interested in exploring the apparatus I'm being threaded through, you know, and to me that's a legitimate interest. I've always been interested in different sites and different kinds of relationships, you know, like the relationship in a white room as opposed to a quarry. I mean there's obviously a difference of intention there, and the whiteness of the room looks like a little neutral cell in heaven and the painting hanging on the wall ... you're supposed to not even think of the wall that the painting is hanging on. You're supposed to just respond metaphysically to the painting in terms of color, line, structure, you know, and talk about the framing support, but forget about where you're standing, where you are, and the ambience of the entire space. So I think that actually this is an investigation of some kind of space control that's shot through with all kinds of social, economic, political implications. Its interesting to me. I don't really see this as, you know, a complaint or anything …

… I think that's all of a piece. Dealers and museums are essentially intertwined, related, so I don't really see that as a big problem. That's just another reality. I mean there's value making, there's always been that connection and there again there's a fantasy that somehow the curator is disconnected, in some ivory tower while all these terrible dealers are running around. I don't really see that, I mean that's just a reality. Paintings are bought and sold. The artist sits in his solitude, knocks out his paintings, assembles them, then waits for someone to confer the value, some external source. The artist isn't in control of his own value. He is sort of waiting for the value to be conferred. And that's the way it operates. Some dealers are more like artists, really. See, what I'm talking about are relationships. Art has tended to be viewed in terms of isolation, neutralization, separation, and this is encouraged. Art is supposed to be on some eternal plane, free from the experiences of the world, and I'm more interested in those experiences, not as a refutation of art, but as art as part of that experience, or interwoven, in other words, all these factors come into it. Generally, to just break everything down into these little slots all the time, to see them as separate entities, mutually antagonistic, warring, aesthetic entities creates an atmosphere of competition among artists which is encouraged by the external value structures. In other words, whatever a painting goes for at Parke Bernet is really somebody else's decision, not the artist's decision, so there's a division, on the broad social realm, the value is separated from the artist, the artist is estranged from his own production. So I'm just saying that it would be nice if the artist could maintain a certain involvement with his production, and this is the great issue, I "think it will be the growing issue, of the seventies: the investigation of the apparatus the artist is threaded through. The artist withdraws into a more hermetic position, or at least a spiritualism, esotericism, and mystification ... and it's an existential position, too, the disembodied self, the artist as a disembodied self, doing disembodied work, in a disembodied world ...

... Well, like it or not, the art world is a separate world. But there are many golden threads, you know. The art world is dependent on either federal, state, grants, and on certain common bureaucracies which channel in the funds.

... I heard from Mr. Oxenar from the Kroller-Muller Museum that a show like that (Sonsbeek 71) would be inconceivable this year because of the change of government. They had a Liberal Christian party there, or something, and art was the first thing to go. Konrad Fischer also said the same thing, that the political pressures, from both left and right see art as the first thing to be axed out. In other words, that's not edifying. And the rumor was that Documenta was going to use this as a lesson, plan, after the show was over, for a kind

of lesson plan for German art schools. So it would have a practical/social value. I don't know about that, but the museums in Europe tend to be more integrated into the general political-social fabric. There's always that element. It seems less so here in the United States because the institutions are more isolated. In other words, what the Met does really would not cause a controversy throughout Manhattan.

BK: I think maybe one of the reasons is that it is already so completely controlled by political concerns which control public opinion. And so is the Modern. William S. Paley controls a communication network capable of effecting the entire world, and rather than using it toward goals which might effect receptivity to creative ways of thinking and doing, it is used to enforce patterns of the grossest kind of exploitation. The Modern has recently put on hopelessly patronizing exhibitions with the Idea of attracting other than the usual kind of elitist crowd, of course with the motive of higher gate receipts to balance a flagging budget. These actions don't have much to do with a real concern for art.

RS: That's just it. Yeah, because basically the museum functions as a bank. There's a heavy investment in there. And they don't want anything threatening that. In other words, we'll just reinforce our Picassos. Paley isn't going to be interested in an alternative art situation that would call into question the very validity of that whole institution. So, they're not doing anything for the masses, or whatever, and that's a big cop-out.

BK: The museum is an instrument of control.

RS: It's an instrument of control and it's like building Cathedrals. I mean that's really

an instrument of political control. And its silly to think that Paley is going to be able to understand. I think Arthur Miller wrote something about the problems of Lincoln Center. They build these giant edifices, these multi-million dollar edifices, Rockefeller's into that, and they don't have enough money for anybody to do anything in it. They build gigantic culture centers all over the country here, and then they don't have anything to put into them. Then they look for reactionary art to put in those spaces, which are really modelled after the Museum of Modern Art. They've grown like wildfire allover the country, these big fortress-like, Medieval, Bauhaus structures proliferate like crazy, and what that does is just reinforce the Rockefeller economic aesthetic.

BK: And it's a very effective way of control because it absorbs so easily any kind of radical tendency.

RS: Yeah, and that's why it's so silly for artists to try to overcome that, because they will just be absorbed. That's like what I said, they'll just be integrated into the whole thing, so there's no viable alternative. If there really was an alternative, consciously thought, then artists might do works which are radical but they are unconscious about why they are doing them. I'm just making a plea for more consciousness in that area and I'm not bitter about it, I'm just saying that that's the way it is. Artists are not apolitical. And artists are either being used to support another kind of political value, and if they're dumb enough to think they are on a cloud or something, that is supporting, actually supporting. In other words, that's their opiate. Their purity is the opiate, the reward that they get. While the external value structure is ripping them off, at the same time they are telling them how pure they are. I mean religion functioned that way, too.

If you are poor that is your reward, and we will encourage that, we who have the economic controls. It's another kind of banking mechanism ... super currency ... and all representation is currency. Warhol was calling attention to the production. Everything is a dollar: people, soup cans, so he was just representing something that was already just a disembodied product.

... Then another problem is the problem of what is known as nature. Most artists, and most intellectual activities, the culture itself, is completely separated, you know, has lost, any contact with the natural world. Architecture is built by computers. People have all these statistics going around in their heads, so that they'll do something based on that level, completely detached from any kind of physicality of the site, so that you're into ecological problems. I find a lot of artists completely confused, especially people working with sites. They don't really know what they're

doing there. They're imposing an abstraction rather ... than drawing out an aspect, or cultivating something in terms of the ecological situation. Very, very curious.

Anyway, I'm going out to Ohio next week to meet with Senator Armstrong and strip mining people and some conservationists. I'll try to do something practical there. I mean I can't do exhibitions like this (Documenta V).

BK: What are you thinking of doing in Ohio?

RS: Well, I don't know ... This was a projection for a future project, but I can't tell anything until I know what the situation is. Maybe it will fall through and maybe it won't. Maybe there's a possibility of taking some established area, it's like a big desert in some parts of Ohio, and conceivably I see a kind of dialectic between the ecologists and the industrialists. Curators, I mean that's on cloud nine. It's just the same old number allover again.

But, I thought your Sonsbeek piece was good. You talked about the Park. People don't think about those things. I mean, they think they just make something, you know, a thing in itself, a Kantian idea, it's just amiss. Things are not things in themselves. They are related to other things. You see already that gets you into a metaphysical dilemma. I would say also most Modernism is based on this Kantian myth business. And you know a lot of people just don't like to hear this sort of thing. They prefer the artist to be dumb and unconscious and self-destructive and isolated and basically crazy .

. . . I just want to be conscious where I am, in relationship to all these different parameters.

BK: I understand exactly what you're saying, and they're things I've thought about myself only not at all in the same way, and not as extensively. You're being much more ambitious than anyone else I know of.

RS: I think, though, it's there. I think there's a kind of awareness of it, but not articulated. I feel that myself. I really don't feel I'm adequately articulating. I think it would take somebody to devote their whole life to a kind of archaeology of the art world and all its different tribal states. It's just a very difficult thing, and I'm just trying to figure it out. There are no personal vendettas or anything involved in it, because I think the only way that things would be better would be if isolation were discouraged and cooperation was more a factor so that, you know, I would want to have dialogues with all these people. In other words I feel no bitterness toward any of the people involved, because everybody's involved in it, but I'm trying to make it conscious...

BK: In a way you could say that the importing of objects from a Capitalist country is not very different in effect from Social Realist posters, but its' propaganda is for the business ethic.

RS: Yeah, exactly, because abstraction essentially is what rules Capitalism, so that's the value, that's the value between production and the actual work, the process, and I think that that's why there's the concern with process, it's an attempt to link up the process with the actual result, so the two are actually one. That's why I have to go back to the Marxist thing about the division of labor, in other words the production from work. What is the thing that separates? It's the abstract value. So this abstraction … so art becomes ... especially paintings … become super currency for privileged groups. Then they manifest their institutions. They'll give this work to ... an artist can't give his works to a museum and get a tax write-off, but a collector can, and this is just another way of controlling. The artist as a class is put into that. The most class determined artists are the ones who claim they aren't a class. And they are.

... I know of instances where collectors have given, or attempted to give, a work of art, which they've in some way ripped off an artist, to a museum in order to become part of the trusteeship. So they get an in to a sort of cultural control, and the artist is just a hapless producer who is constantly making these things for this privileged value. That's why I say the artist is alienated from the value of his work. He cannot ... somebody else is determining his value for him. This artists take for granted. Their compensation is that they're spiritual, they're pure, they're mad, you know, any number of mythologies. In fact, there's a category of Personal Mythologies at Documenta. Personal Mythologies strike me as

another dream world. That's the compensation. Aesthetics too is very close to a kind of spiritualism, so the emphasis on aesthetics tends to mitigate the social relationships so that you just see aesthetic things in themselves. And I think the artists, like the protestors at the museums, just reinforce the museums, because these people really want to get into those things. Anything can be put into a museum, now, I mean its ...

BK: How do you deal with the problem of!the tax write-off? Do you give to the artist the same advantage of the collector, or do you eliminate the economic incentive altogether? And if you do then what happens to collecting? One of the strategies collectors use is to put one of his works in a museum as a promised gift, and by putting it in a museum the value increases, so when the value reaches the point the collector needs, or wants, then he gives it. The artist can't do that. The artist can only write-off the cost of materials to make the work. It's not the artist who confers the value but the dealer, collector, and museum. But then in a sense the government, the museum, the collector, the business machine, have the goods to deliver. Do you deal with that by saying, "I want the goods too"? That's a way of underlining the whole value system.

RS: That's the collecting situation. The Jetty and the Broken Circle really aren't collectables. They're supported through the cooperation of different groups that have no commodity fetish.

BK: But there's a commodity fetish in photographs, and the film—that sort of thing.

RS: Oh, yeah, but realistically speaking ... film is another area again ... the prices for photographs and film and that sort of thing are rather equitable. I sell prints of my film for $500. I'm not saying down with money or anything like that, I'm saying let's understand an alternative value system where actually artists might be more in control of their own value. The trouble is that most collectors and dealers will play on the artist's guilt in regard to the filthy lucre, and that's reinforced, so the artists are frustrated by their own guilt about economic considerations. And the retreat is to purity and spiritualism and esotericism and hermeticism … abstraction, all those things ... idealism … all those imponderables ... metaphysics. There's just a great storehouse, as I call it, at the end of this junkyard, metaphysics, you constantly dispense purity, ideals, spiritualism.

BK: In your thinking, where is the place for what Larry Poons is doing, or Stella.

RS: I don't think there's any place for it. I see them as different artists from myself. Society sees all artists as the same and they're not. They have different political attitudes. Some artists are more oriented toward cooperation, others are oriented more toward isolation. I would say those are the two kinds of political attitudes.

BK: Do you see the whole moon thing as another kind of ownership, another kind of currency ...

RS: I described the moonshot once as a very expensive non-site. It keeps people working, you know. To an extent I thought that after they got to the moon there was a strange demoralization that set in that they didn't discover little green men, or something. It's on that level. I was watching the one last night, and there was kind of a forced exuberance. There was this attempt to try to confer some meaning onto it, and to me it's quite banal.

BK: One thing that amazed me about the first moonshot was that you saw Mission Control in Houston with all those incredible computer stations, that incredible technology, with hundreds of people facing toward a kind of altar, like "at the movies, and above the altar was a picture of Snoopy. There had to be some way in their minds of attaching a mascot to the whole experience, in other words to symbolize the experience to make it more comprehensible, and the image was so regressive that it denatured the experience. There was no awareness of the meaning.

RS: That's what I was saying before about the computer thing, it's sort of like they're so abstracted that they ... their imagery would draw from Snoopy, or Porky Pig, or something.

BK: The idea that we can completely control the environment, nature, is, I think, what creates the interest in the moon shot, and it's something like Disneyland. You can make your environment however you want to make it,

but the way it's made is another kind of cultural control.

RS: Actually, I think Disney World is more of a Dream World than Documenta. In other words, it's more aggressive. And its also a big money-making operation. So these dream worlds start proliferating.

... The first public indication of the Earthwork thing was a show in '66 at the Dwan Gallery where I did a model of a tar and gravel pit (it's in that *Minimal Art* book, actually), and Morris at that time was interested in earth mounds and things. My feeling about de Maria is that de Maria comes out of La Monte Young, that there's no geological or earth consciousness there, that it's completely imposed. It's like making a painting on the ground. And then of course the rest of it, there's a dichotomy in his work. His other work looks like almost a kind of neo-symbolist theatricality, very swish, I think. So I discount him. I would say that Carl Andre actually has contributed more. I think his influence actually is not fully comprehended, because he did a lot of interesting things around that time, too. I was working on the airport project in '66 and the three people I wanted to work with, there was nobody around, and I hadn't written my articles yet so there was no contact, and the only people around that I knew that had real bedrock comprehension of the problem were Morris and Andre. Then Heizer and Oppenheim followed later on.

BK: Where were they then?

RS: Heizer was living here. He was doing paintings, actually. Sort of somewhat Stella, Andre oriented. Already at that time I just couldn't accept ... like Frank Stella doesn't talk to me. It's that kind of level. Also at that time Sol was formulating his Conceptual Art. Phil Leider asked me to edit the special sculpture issue and Sol contributed Conceptual Art to that and I did the Notes Toward the Development of an Airport Terminal. Sol also wanted to do something involving that. Sol LeWitt actually did a very early photographic piece of a buried cube, which was his only earthwork or documented piece. That piece is strangely overlooked. It's like a single piece. I am diametrically opposed to Sol's notion of concept, I feel that it's another move toward idealism, but I feel that there's a good argument there, and I feel that a lot of people are just stupid, that they just absolutely can't get their head together.

So then these strange kind of things happened. Like Oppenheim went into body art. And since the Double Negative Heizer rode around in motorcycle circles. I think that's a little too much of a personal mythology for my taste, the romance of the Hell's Angels or something.

BK: An Abstract Expressionist gesture

RS: Yeah, well he even called some of his pieces gestures. But I find the major bugaboo is the problem of nature itself, which is always a bugaboo. And everybody seems to have a different psycho-sexual formulation of nature. That's what I try to deal with.

Oneonta, N.Y.

CONCERNING AN ATTACK BY SANDRA HARRISON

STEFAN MORAWSKI

My introduction to *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art* (which I edited together with Lee Baxandall; it is published by International General) has been bitingly and even venomously attacked by Sandra Harrison, in the May 1975 issue of *Art-Language*. The matter certainly seems worthy of clarification.

The argument, as I see it, unfolds as follows. Sandra Harrison has confused *context* with *text*; that is to say, she is disturbed with the role which this book has started to play in

the art circles of London, and so she attacks it in light of this function, not analyzing the actual structure and the aim of the anthology and its Introduction. She charges that this *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art* appears as "holy writ," as "the last word on the matter" and a substitute for the reading of Marx and Engels. This has to be, in turn, sheer nonsense from my point of view. On the contrary: the book with its concise introductory apparatus and its extensive although precise selections is an invitation to students to read the classics, to pursue the controversies there to their ultimate implications, to refer to the broadest possible secondary literature on the problems presented …

A second quarrel with Harrison presents itself. I have to object to her ignorant misreading of the book. This is an *historical* study not a Handbook for the present-day Conceptualist. The purpose was to prove that the Marxian heritage in this area of thought is no closed field of ideas and of course not a worthless domain. One cannot test or argue for this position without looking into it closely, but here is Harrison lacking in knowledge that Marx was dependent on Friedrich Schiller (the *homo aestheticus*) and unaware that Marx didn't regard "beauty," "art," the "aesthetic sense," etc., as problematic questions, or that he did base his dialectical approach on a conviction of art's autonomy. Harrison's cocksureness and ignorance are so great that she admits not having read the *1844 Manuscripts* yet she dares "to frankly doubt" that a quotation (we didn't cite exact pages) is from Marx at all. (Incidentally the quotation in question is at the very end of the *Manuscripts* fragment on "Money;" she may check it!).

A third quarrel concerns the strategy to find the coherence in Marx's ideas and to extract his and Engels' aesthetic views. It is *not* distortion to find the coherence. Nor do I conceal that I "helped" the classics in bringing it forth. Rather this is a normal procedure; and interpretation commonly clarifies and highlights texts. The ultimate question here however is not so much in intervention as in the extractions. Yet I believe I emphasized strongly enough that the ideas on art of Marx and Engels are strictly dependent on their world-view and also the aesthetic and artistic patterns then current. On the other hand, it is only through stressing the *idiographic* aspect, which is to say the actual aesthetic views of Marx and Engels, that we see in the fullest way where we stand today, which is to say *what we may get from them*, what is dead and *what is alive* in their thought. Further, through seeking for the coherence of their strictly aesthetic thought we discover the *ambiguity* of the Marxian heritage (towards a "kunstlerischeproduktive Gesellschaft," and at the same time preserving the art of some potential Raphaels).

A final argument: Sandra Harrison wholly misses the point of my handling of the art and propaganda relationship. Ironically she calls me a *modernist* Commissar, and she sneers at my elitist intellectualism. But what she finds grotesque is simply the Marxist *humanist* tradition. Not to reduce art to a sheer trumpeting of dumb slogans, not to give up art for a stupid so-called-revolutionary hurrah,—this is the humanistic Marxist heritage, and to say so has *nothing* in common with a hermetic culture which despises the creativity of every single human being.
Warsaw, Poland

To *The Fox*,

I am sending you the enclosed pamphlet in regards to a very repressive Bill now pending in Congress.

The name of the Bill is S. 1. It is the legacy of Nixon and Mitchell. It is also known as the Judicial Reform Bill. It would in effect erase the Bill of Rights. Among other things it would restore the Smith Act, that other act written by Nixon and which was the *raison d'etre* of the McCarthy witchhunt.

A copy of S. 1 can be obtained through your Congress representatives or through the office of the Judiciary Committee of the Senate.

I do hope you can help publicize the danger of this bill. Time is running out.
Jean Toche
Staten Island, New York

Washington Report

S. 1 must be stopped

By Jay Miller, ACLU Legislative Director

Described as the "Criminal Justice Reform Act of 1975," Senate bill 1 is a 753-page attempt to codify, revise and reform the United States Criminal Code. While the stated goal might be desirable (the present criminal code is an inconsistent maze in need of reform), the cost is too high. For S. 1 has some 30 provisions, which if passed, would turn back the civil liberties clock to a time before the Warren Court.

The following are highlights of the ACLU's analysis of S. 1's most objectionable features. These and other features are explained in more detail in the ACLU pamphlet *Stop S. 1.* (Copies cost $.05 each.)

- A government official who leaked "national defense information" or "classified information" to a reporter or any unauthorized persons could be prosecuted and, even in peace time, get up to seven years in prison. (§1122 & 1123)
- A reporter or publisher obtaining and communicating such information to anyone not "authorized" to receive it could be similarly guilty. (§1124 & 1125)
- "National defense information" is loosely defined; Congress and the Executive branch are given broad power to declare what is "classified information;" and the bill drops present requirements that the government prove some intent to hurt the nation. The Pentagon Papers and much Watergate information would clearly come under this definition. (§1128)
- Restores the death penalty for murder under a wide variety of circumstances and for treason, sabotage or espionage. (§2401)
- Maintains government authority for wiretapping or other electronic surveillance for up to 48 hours without court order. (§3101 - 3109)
- Restores the Smith Act making it a crime to advocate revolutionary change in government, however remote the likely impact of that advocacy. (§1103)

• Makes "physical interference" with the government function a felony, with broad discretion to define "interference"—peaceful picketing of a government building, sitting in front of busses, or what. (§1302)

• Provides 3 years imprisonment and a $100,000 fine for "inciting" or leading a "riot," including "movement of a person across a state line" or for even the use of mail or telephone in "the course of planning, or promotion" of a "riot," which is defined as "an assemblage of 5 persons" which "creates a grave danger" to "property." (§1831 - 1834)

• Broadens the definition of sabotage in such a way that it could include public demonstrations against war or defense activities. (§1112)

• Creates a new crime of "impairing" military effectiveness by false statement. (§1114)

• Frees federal officials from criminal penalties for any illegal acts so long as they believed "the conduct charged was required or authorized by law"—a provision tagged "the 'Watergate' or 'Nuremberg' defense." (§552)

To help stop S. 1, you should:

—Write or call your Senator and ask for a copy of S. 1 indicating that you have heard of its repressive nature.

—Check through the bill yourself (you can use the highlights as a guide).

—Write your senator a second letter about those sections that you feel most strongly should be eliminated or changed and ask that he work to amend or vote against the bill.

—Write your representative pointing out the anti-civil libertarian features and indicating your concern.

—Contact your local newspapers and urge them to run stories and editorials on the bill.

—Send the ACLU, Washington office, 410 First Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003, copies of any newspaper articles that are printed in the area.

DIRECT SPEECH

DAVID RUSHTON AND PAUL WOOD

Direct Speech *is excerpted from a report entitled 'Art & Education' to be published this Autumn. The report considers some ways in which working inter-institutionally might be set up. The report includes a survey of the use of a microfiche based distribution service. Those involved in this report assumed that any concerted revision of art education would require a platform that provided a relatively inexpensive access to the working concerns of students and teachers throughout art education in the U.K. Although each college has some autonomy in the running of art courses, each course is ratified by a central degree awarding body. This organization of the administration of courses is not matched by any cross institutional forum in which a more critical practice can be fostered. At present course criticism emerges as an internal feature of a particular course within a particular college. Thus such criticism is often personality based rather than oriented at the similarities in working context and educational aims between courses.*

The development of a platform on which critique of the present moribund set of reinforcements can be circulated, and on which alternative working intentions can be articulated, would seem to be a precondition of any structured revision of art education. The events at Guildford and Hornsey were frustrated because they were piecemeal attacks on particular personalities implementing and devising policies which were not—as policies—examined for their wider social and educational implications. Subsequent 'examination' has tended to be liberal and 'bookish', i.e. successfully divorcing the theory of 'change' from the present practice of stagnant indifference to which such authors contribute in their day-to-day activity. Insofar as, in education, one is dealing with more than the 'means of production', any radical revision has to be consistent with the development of student consciousness rather than with panaceas of the lecturer's conscience: learning, thinking and action must be provided with a framework that has sufficient authority to prohibit inter-institutional repercussions on the individuals involved.

(The Art & Education Report *is available from David Rushton and Paul Wood, Bothy Flat, Fairnilee Estate, Galashiels Scotland, U.K. The price is $4.00 but add $1.00 for airmail postage.)*

Whichever way we look at the silence over art—as indicating trivial irrelevance or powerful conformism—the implications are not enjoyable. In either case there would seem to be grounds for a shift in perspective, an increasing self reflection, or a wider set of resources being admitted to the sphere of art education.

The question of educational structure has both an internal and external aspect. The external part is probably the most fundamental, because obviously the form that a particular college course takes will follow from governmental and bureaucratic demands; but it is the internal sense of structure which is the most immediate conditioning factor on the possibilities which are open for work. It may be the greatest mistake of all to neglect to take account of the role which being in a college has on the resources and opportunities which are available—the influence of being, as regards working conditions, in every respect institutionalised. But this is precisely what often does occur—largely because institutions maintain a broadly passive role. But simply because colleges do not usually thrust themselves to the front, as institutions, does not mean they are without this effect, or even that authority is unaware of it.

Regarding internal relations, one's primary concern is from the point of view of the kinds of activities which college divisions foster, mediated by the constraints on activity which they entail. Thus the usual factors are the divisions into studio activity and history of art and general studies. But additionally one has to take account of the library, and also the avenue of students union work. There is another factor which is slightly at a tangent but which becomes important for many students, and that is the relation between art college courses and art teaching courses.

Looking first at art history and general studies: It is a truism that there is a disjunction between these aspects of a course and studio work, and it is widely recognised that the problems which exist come up around this disjunction. But reactions to this problem tend on the whole to be very much just that—simple reactions away from the academic tenor in which these studies are normally conducted.

It backs up what has just been said about the influence of structure when we recognise that this academic character is ordained in the official policy which set up general studies departments in the sixties. But there are two other things which must be realised. Firstly, that this model of art history and general studies activity is not the only one—it may in fact be a dramatically erroneous one. And secondly, the justifiable distaste which is felt for the form of these studies must not be understood as justifying a disregard for them in their totality. In fact the flight from general studies and art history, which in a sense only mirrors the peripheral status they are accorded, could be taken as a major case of the criticisable state in which art studies presently find themselves.

The paradox of general studies is that it presents itself as a specialism. The whole idea upon which they are founded is that of a definite and separate *kind* of work, which is only to be practiced for a small amount of the time available. Small wonder then that many people would like to see this fragment of time, which cannot possibly support a full grown and healthy branch of study, dismissed altogether in order to provide that much more time to activity which is striving to be deep and full scale. Unfortunately this elegant solution rests on a mistake; shared by those who designed courses in this way, and by those who so perpetuate them; and not at all resolved by students who fly from what is merely a stupid arrangement as though these problems were part of the unalterable nature of things. The present constitution of art history and general studies, and the relation they hold to studio work, is a parody of a false picture of activity: now do something—and then go away and think about it. In the very structure of this education we can see mirrored the idea that thought is passive and contemplative and divisible from action, that criticism is something which always comes after the event.

The problem with art history and general studies is not that it intrudes on work, but that we, and the educational structure in which we work, are suffering from a pathetic model of history…

Imagine an account of work which failed to take account of the relations into which it fitted; and closer at hand the colleges within which that work emerged—the conditions exerted by its facilities and structure, and the intellectual climate within which the possibilities for work are sorted out. And surely, if some work bears apparently no relation to all these factors it would be grounds for regarding it as boring and irrelevant, not at all for looking on it as the absolute pinnacle of interest, which is what seems to be expected by art history as it is currently studied.

For a student, or at least for someone whose work is carried on within an institution, it would surely make sense to embody in work a notion of general studies and art history not as something complete in themselves, which have only a contingent and external relation to working, but as something internal and necessary to work. To articulate this activity in such a way that it forced a revision of the present moribund alignments—by taking them seriously, pointing out their restrictive influence, and—in working—trying to approach a synthesis of these considerations in the fabric of one's working conditions; rather than simply registering a superficial dislike of the way things are, and flying away from them in negative fashion.

It is here, in turning towards a conception of an activity which among other things would be sensitive to historical and cultural methodologies, rather than just historical and cultural objects; and which would incorporate a sense of criticism into itself rather than as something external and half dead; an activity which would attempt to promote a wide-ranging comparative examination of cultural predications, that another aspect of college structure comes to the fore.

Because an activity of this sort, one which was not ostrich-like in its disregard of everything around it, would require a relationship to information of a wide ranging order; and this access too tends to be truncated, to travel along narrow lines instead of across them. If a salient point about education, and the generation of a critical as opposed to a passive attitude, concerns the complex nature of the relation of individuals to information, the importance of libraries cannot be over-emphasized.

It seems to be a feature of the contemporary ideology of art education that book-bound information is inferior to immediate sensory information; and it is one of the cliches of McLuhanism that it is inferior to electronically transmitted information. But it would seem to be the case that if such a hierarchical ranking of information channels were dogmatically followed an instance of the kind of narrowness which we are criticising here would, no less debilitatingly, be transferred to their potential resources. With the expansion in the number and kind of potential information inputs one would expect richness to follow from their syncretized utilisation—rather than from an a priori ranking of their efficacy—irrespective of whatever information may be being conveyed in some particular instance. Of course, on this basically quantitative issue, libraries are expanding their resources to include microformed and video-taped information; not to mention the greater availability of exhibition catalogues, small journals, etc.

However, the major problem which concerns us is not this basic issue of realisation—of understanding the potential of the library as a resource of ordered information in all its manifestations. This is rather the presupposition of the main point, which concerns the feasibility and difficulties of a broad critical practice able to range over specialisms and to combat their institutional perpetuation. It is taken for granted that the library's importance as an organ of access to information is understood. The problem it presents for this kind of critical activity is its constitution as another of the disjoint factors in the present constitution of the college. Librarianship is a specialism. It is conceived as such where it is taught, and so the college library becomes the collision point of several specialisms; and simply because it organises information for the use of many, does not make the library less of one.

Though the libraries have an obvious function in serving the complementary and historical branches of activity, the conception of librarianship is more generally determined by the theories of classification and indexing which libraries have received as a consequence of their generally increasing specialisation. Again it is a question of structure influencing the possibilities of content. The prevailing system of classification is wholly oriented around the conception of relatively watertight disciplines. And so the pursuance of such disciplines, of which art is in danger of becoming only one, is reinforced by the way in which the available information is ordered. An orthodox art historian, writing a history of—say—Impressionism, in the way in which we have described, will eventually have his book classified and shelved in a particular set. Its own index is likely to be predominantly internal anyway, mostly referring to other books on the same (or nearby) shelves—which of itself will tend to concentrate further research rather than broaden it. The point is of course that this will be echoed in the larger indexing system of the library in which the book sits. There is hardly a chance, as things currently are, that a book on Camille Pissarro would be cross-referred not only to Courbet, but to the contemporary state of anarchist theory, the Franco-Prussian War, and the notion of imperialism. To turn to such information, and even then it is only an outside chance in an art college library, one would

have to plough through many books and their individual indexes, and perform this operation of reconstituting the relations of activity wholly oneself. (And only then provided the fabric of the books concerned were sufficiently open to be able to make such connections.) And the effort required for that may well be outside that information's significance for the activity you are pursuing. The point is that libraries are ordering systems, made concrete; and as presently constituted their ordering systems in this way reinforce the trend toward specialism evident in the various substantive parts of the courses they serve.

Obviously, to rely on resolute and dogged individual investigation to perform this work of synthesis, is in practice to ensure that it seldom occurs. And even when it does, since ex hypothesi, there is no general synthetic ordering system(s) into which the results could be fitted, the synthesis remains locked within the particular work.

One other problem then which could well be sorted out in a realistic critical activity, and which would in methodological terms be a very subtle integration of the dilemmas prompting such an activity and their attempted resolution in practice, could be the construction of a viable cross-disciplinary index; granting the kind of relational access between activities in their social, historical and contextual integrity which would be essential to the articulation of foundational questions—with respect both to such items and reflexively upon one's own activity in its concrete situation.

There is no reason why two or more systems could not range simultaneously over the same body of work; and the interrelations between such systems would be a propadeutic for the whole complex of relations between history, general studies and the individual's own activity.

That work of course would not be as compartmentalisable as it often currently is. Students union activity is a case in point. As often as not, people's involvement in that arises out of dissatisfactions with the unreal nature of pursuing art activity in a vacuum—cocooned by the college and a grant from ever encountering the real problems which stem from being in that situation.

It is a tragedy, and one which holds the seeds, if not of its own destruction at least of its own triviality, when that orientation of activity is seen as leaving art behind in favour of a social or political involvement. Turning towards students union work often seems to proceed from an assumption that art is non-ideological, such that the domain of a political involvement is seen as the structure of an institution rather than the content of its studies. It is that 'either/or' which is debilitating, for what we have been led to remark on throughout this argument is the interrelation of structure and content.

One's activity is enmeshed in a whole complex of informational and social relations, the most proximate of which are those of the college itself. It bears the marks of escapism when an emerging consciousness of that state of affairs is turned immediately outwards onto the grosser ills of society, with no understanding of its implications for one's own location and activity. For the college, and the kind of activity it fosters, is a fragment of society, an increasingly significant one is post-industrial terms, and the rush to sort out the problems of others stands in danger of emptiness, if it does not proceed in step with an awareness of one's own. Who is to say—albeit in a higher sense than the commonplace, crudely reactionary, way—that privilege is not being misused if behind a facade of radicalism one is enmeshed in one's own context in the relations of an unexamined tradition. Heading for another context in the face of the subtle and intractable difficulties of this one bears all the ostrich-like qualities of the simpler flight from art history. Especially when the difference is based on a counterfeit assessment of art activity stemming from an unquestioned image inherited somewhere in our education.

This is the last of the special cases then—education. This is such a vast problem, touching on activity at all levels and in all branches, that we can only recognise a broad characteristic here. Extrapolating from only a few examples is a dangerous pursuit, but there does seem to be an overall tendency in the education of art teachers towards the didactic rather than the dialectical. That is, toward the classic role of the teacher as a provider of information and resources, rather

than preserving the problematic nature of the enquiry, and the questioning attitude required to deal with it which its study in college shows to be necessary. The fact that this attitude is currently under strength even in colleges, and the necessity to generalise it beyond present constraints, would seem to militate even more strongly against the reduction in questioning as soon as one operates in the context of teacher rather than learner. Obviously the younger the people one is working with the less one is likely to expect fluent and articulated reservations. But it would seem that that increases the burden to be libertarian, rather than diminishing it. The obligation to educate rather than merely train, to inculcate a critical faculty, is the most prominent job of the art teacher. And his own critical faculty must be included in that if he is not to lapse at worst into authoritarian conformism or at least into smug philanthropy. The business of criticism does not stop in the transition to teaching—the context merely changes. The real constraints on an art education in schools ate not the misty historicisms of 'culture', nor even the pseudo-freedom of available materials—but least of all are they the ossified demands of a bureaucratic educational system. If the libertarian tradition is not to be sacrificed in art teaching to a spurious liberalism the art teacher must be capable of generating, sustaining and organising an activity which is not bounded by pernicious and arbitrary material constraints; and which does not degenerate either into an area for 'letting off steam' built up under the school's more restrictive practices.

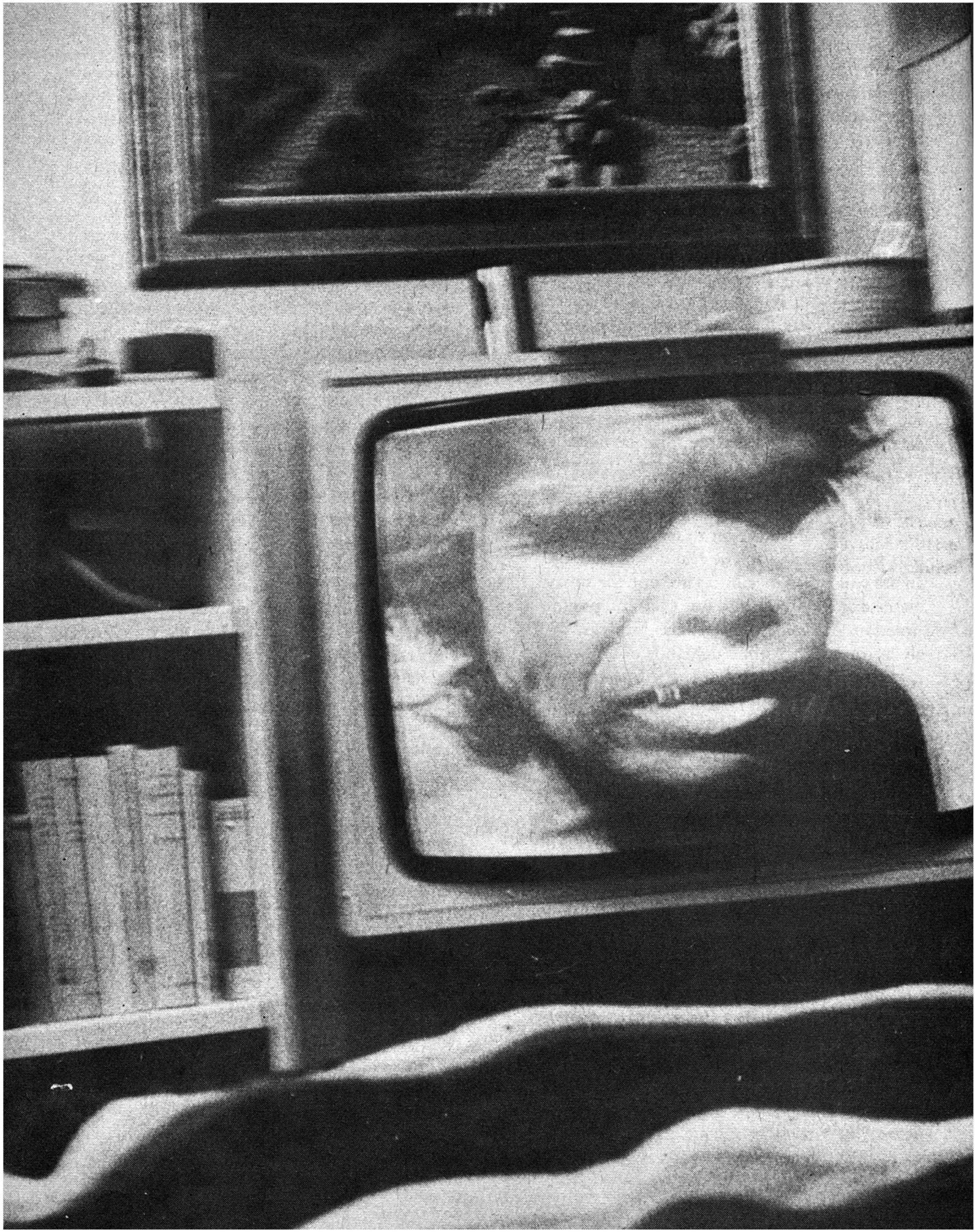
The parameters against which an art education must be measured are the realities of the education system of which it is a part. Its sphere of relevance is horizontal and contemporary across differing activities performed in the school, not vertical within some narrow historical conception.

However, in the training of art teachers it is not unusual for the tail to wag the dog. The relations of students to their lecturers in art teaching colleges can easily become modelled on the existing non-questioning teacher/ pupil relations in schools. Under pressure of the new techniques to be learned, questioning the foundations of that model of art education is quickly sacrificed. The point is though that if the study and practice of art in college were not so insular and restricted in its point of view, if it were more expansive and speculative about real-world relations, would there *be* such a shock of unknown techniques to be mastered on entering a teaching college? If communication, sociology, and history were not merely 'studied' in college but actively used and subjected to criticism—embodied *in* the work of individuals, then there would be no excuse for avoiding critical discourse about education at teacher training college in the name of a requirement to get through this and that and the other in the brief time available.

One returns then, with education, to the question of responsibility; not as a philanthropy born of a wish to do good for others, but as the responsibility to see that one's activity is not, because of the narrowness which its present constitution invites, reduced to triviality and rigidity when it is finally forced into contact with other practices in the real world.

Confined and restricted glass bead games, played out in privileged institutions, insulated against criticism by a belief in their own inherent value, will not survive long in contact with less precious activities; not even as the entertainment of elites—which is approximately the role they are presently shaping for themselves.

Galashiels, Scotland.



1975

JOSEPH KOSUTH

1

"Art changes only through strong convictions, convictions strong enough to change society at the same time." – Theophile Thore, 1855[1]

"Bolshevism, and later Nazism, offered avant-garde art the alternative of supporting a revolutionary regime through esthetic conformity (that is, through ceasing to exist) or attempting to revolutionize itself without any prospect of changing life, in view of the superior force of the 'professional revolutionists'."
"Either of these choices could only lead to the end of avant-gardism. Without its political shadow, the defiance of accepted social or moral norms becomes a game in which the old threats are turned into an insider's joke. Today, revolts restricted to the esthetic are welcomed by the middle class as a solace; they revive the aroma of the exciting times when hostility and misunderstanding between artists and the public were considered dangerous."
"With the door to politics closed by totalitarianism art has to an increasing degree affirmed its dissociation from political and social purpose. In the ideologies of recent art movements art-historical reasoning has been offered as a substitute for consciousness of history. In this parody of vanguardism, which revives the academic idea of art as a separate 'realm,' art can make revolutionary strides without causing a ripple in the streets or in the mind of a collector."—Harold Rosenberg[2]

The last *Fox* poster advertised " ... the failure of Conceptual Art," as part of the content of Number 1. The nature of that "failure" was only alluded to in various articles, and was left at that. But, in fact, I have reservations as to whether "failure" accurately describes the rather complex history of its diverse currents of artistic intent. Certainly the activities of the mass of practioners within what is now an (art) institution is a betrayal of the impetus of its original aims. Stylistic conceptual art (hereafter SCA) is to my view superstructure begetting superstructure: a formalistic hypostatization of cultural sleepwalking; as dependent on and as expressive of the institutions of the prevailing dominating socio-political-economic ideology as is the current practice of the more traditional modes of art-making (painting and sculpture). In this article I hope to underscore an alternative reading of the past, present, (and possibly future) history of an art-practice one might call, with certain discomfort, theoretical conceptual art (hereafter TCA).

This article is not intended to constitute some sort of "last word". Given its author such a discussion can be inescapably self-serving. (I will leave it up to the reader to decide on the relative usefulness of an article of this sort as opposed to the objectively cloaked creative work done by our colleagues, those 'neutered' artists, the professional critics and art historians.) No, quite the contrary: as this journal is the expression of a moment in the intersubjective space of those of us involved with it, so this article is a conversational cross-section of my learning and thinking. It is also a response to my experience of finding myself in the world in which I do—and realizing the vulnerability of my past context dependent work to 'mean' what to so many it appears to. My thoughts about the future are unsure;

certainly more unsure than this article implies. And this is compounded by the fact that in many ways I feel responsible—at least in part—for some of the current malaise in art-practice. My role, and the role of others, in disassembling the art-making opiate—as it is in its traditional mode—will only be appreciated if it is counter-balanced with a larger explanation of the historical necessity of our doing so.

*

Typical of most recent art "movements," conceptual art has had a relatively brief life. Had we known that its death would have come from acceptance, perhaps many of us would have appreciated (for as long as it continued) that the hostility and extreme defensiveness that marked its art public greeting was paradoxically its life-support system: the reaction from the vanguard establishment was itself a tacit understanding of its potential threat. The subsequent deterioration of the movement into a popular SCA pointed, at least on the surface, to an ultimate victory by the establishment. The form the victory takes is that of annexation. On a personal level for the practitioners what occurs is that the sense of authentic existence obtainable through a kind of struggle is replaced by an impersonal participatory role in cultural power brokerage and subsequent defense of that generalized cultural status quo of which, henceforth, your movement is part. The political implications of such a generalization is the identification of what you "mean" or intend with those institutions of society upon which your work is dependent.

The scientistic structure upon which I based my older work was intended to provide an arena in which work *on* art could *be* art yet leave behind the aura of profound personal moments reified and vying for recognition as "masterpieces." The *activity* was art, not the residue. But what can this society do with activity? Activity must mean labor. And labor must give you a service or a product. Only as a *product* could what I spent my time doing be meaningful in this society. But what it meant to *me*, and to anyone really interested in art had nothing at all to do with its existence as a product. The more recent work needed galleries and museums to provide the necessary context—and this is where the problems, artistic and political, begin. On one hand, one can rightly ask: where else is the audience for this activity? Certainly the museums, galleries, and art magazines provide the stage for the interested public to make contact with the "activity". Then, on the other hand, one realizes that the museums, galleries, and art magazines transform, edit, alter and obscure the very basis of one's art. 3 Just like the other institutions in America, these institutions in our world are bent on maintaining the cultural *status quo*.

In the late sixties and early seventies in New York there was somewhat of a "junta" atmosphere in the art world. The Greenberg gang was attempting with great success to initiate an Official History gestalt, and there wasn't much generosity toward us "novelty" artists that didn't happen to fit into the prescribed historical continuum. Fortunately there were very few younger artists that *did* fit into his historical continuum, which is what collapsed the movement—in spite of the tremendous appeal of Greenberg's brand of formalism to academics and other upper middle=class professionals. Exponents of the "party line" had saturated all aspects of the art establishment. There was Lawrence Rubin selling it in his gallery, and William Rubin curating it at the MOMA; Greenbergers were on the grant-giving panels, and were published relentlessly in the magazines—from *The Hudson Review* to *Artforum*. At *Artforum*, under Phil Leider, they decided that if they would just ignore us maybe we would go away—their hegemony being what it was at the time. We didn't. If one did get reviewed you could be sure it would be a hatchet job. The token coverage of "novelty" art was usually reserved for the weakest possible examples within any tendency deemed threatening enough to Official History to deserve coverage. Anything positive generally consisted of trying to reveal the "classic" lurking within the misfit—most of the "anti-form" artists were seduced, and their work affected, by such annexation. This annexing finally was forced on the formalists insofar as they were now forced to be formalists

theoretically, but had to liberalize their practice since there were too few non-"novelty" painters or sculptors of any merit around to keep them all working. Perhaps it was that or perish. So the art critical establishment began to consider the work of younger artists (Serra, Heizer, Sonnier, Nauman, Hesse, etc.) which could be embraced in some fashion by formalist criticism—regardless of the artists intentions. With the exception of two articles by Jack Burnham, Conceptual art was by and large ignored during this period. The recent appearance of articles such as "Artists as Writers" by Lawrence Alloway (*Artforum*, March 1974) in which TCA was totally omitted, increasingly made it clear the omissions were still (small p) political. My work has seemed to be particularly useful as a negative example, so much so that it began to get humorous in its predictability.[4] (Finally, I suppose to avoid admitting past errors, when 'Conceptual Art' could no longer be ignored Artforum came up with their own 'Conceptual Artists'. Sort of how the Russians came up with Husak to 'lead' Czechloslovakia. They've pretty much still continued to ignore the work which has been around for years and constituted most of the early and even not-so-early conceptual art exhibitions here and abroad.) [5] So much for provincial bitching.

With little exception the work which gets attention (SCA) has been made "cute" and palatable. The use of language is seen as "a new kind of paint". Most of the objections have been laid out years ago in *Art-Language*. What has been important about TCA has been that it has a theoretical force that recent movements have not had. It has allowed for the possibility of new work on a *collective* basis (with that "collectivity" being the product of ideological self-awareness), and not simply on the traditional stylistic tract of individual histories. What has emerged from an understanding of TCA's infrastructure (and obviously by extension art's) has been the necessity for an *alternative supporting social structure*. What began in the mid-sixties as an analysis of the context of specific objects (or propositions) and correspondingly the questions of *function*, has forced us now, ten years later, to focus our attentions on the society and/or culture in which that specific object operates. Our "radicalization" has, rather cold-bloodedly, evolved from our work. Such a recognition increasingly forces us to confront the high problematicity of participation with the establishment avantgarde in our work. As the Rosenberg quote above points out, the relationship between the present avant-garde and the historical role of the revolutionary artist is similar to the relationship between the forthcoming BiCentennial Celebration and what it meant to be an American and fighting in Concord in 1775.

To turn to the case of my own work, any description must appreciate its formalization through a stratification of 'overviews,' with these overviews operating as models of art. The initial study of anthropology was for me a way of viewing art itself as a context: though I found the lack of self-reflexivity in academic cultural anthropology seriously undermining its capacity to provide a model which wasn't *itself* an artifact. The 'objective' reality of the scientistic, architectonic model is, by construction, incapable of the sort of reflexivity mandatory of a real model of art. It is in this way that one can possibly see an evolution toward a more marxian and critical overview of American art and culture.

To the extent that one speaks of art in this century one understands modernism to have been authentic to it. I don't think that is controversial. The self-consciousness of modernist art-practice was a 'motor' for the complex unconscious mediation of social reality with human action as 'meaning' *internally*; beyond which—as a symbolic language—the *external* societal structure could support the contradictions; thus taking us to the present crisis. I think it is no accident that the art which I am describing in this article (TCA), as the first to address itself to a conscious self-reflexive dialectic with society /culture, is the one and the same that was so radically concerned with the internal or infrastructural mechanism of art. Whether *any* such concern would follow that direction is at best unclear, but what is clearly of paramount importance to such a trajectory is the particularities (methodological and otherwise) of a significantly altered conception of art-practice priorities.

2

" … A language is at the same time the product and the instrument of speech: their relationship is therefore a genuinely dialectical one. "—Roland Barthes

'Formalism' was at issue in Conceptual Art (CA) in more ways than the apparent ones. With Greenbergian formalism what is at issue is a belief that artistic activity consists of *superstructural* analysis (prominent traditional modes of art are taken as 'givens' and the issue is to attempt to understand the nature of art qua technical praxis of those traditional modes). CA, which might be described as a formalism of another sort, has as its basis *infrastructural* analysis, and it is in this context that one understands the endeavor to "question the nature of art". It is necessary to such an infrastructural analysis to locate one's activity in artistic endeavor since Abstract Expressionism, after which work began to appeal to *the logic of modernism* for art status rather than appealing to the tradition of western painting for art status.

In my past few articles I have tried to explain my activities, and the activities of Art & Language, in terms of my notion of an 'anthropologized art'.[6] An 'anthropologized art' in keeping with my previous discussion of it, must concern itself with exposing institutional contradictions and thereby obliterating art ideologies which presuppose the autonomy of art. The understanding is that such art is dependent on an even more embracing ideology which presupposes institutions of equally autonomous value. An 'anthropologized art' is an art which is not 'naive' towards its own ethno*logic*, and which has as its practice the construction of a model which, though tautological in the particularities of its own structure nevertheless functions dialectically *in situ*—that is, culture *qua* art. That it meets the demands of the ethno*logic* and alters existing norms of art is a demonstration of its dialectical functioning. *Its* alteration by the institutional supports of those 'norms of art' (galleries, museums, and magazines) is as well a demonstration. An 'anthropoligized art' must therefore accellerate the dynamic to such a degree that this larger (operational) dialectical model exposes and isolates those institutional supports on one hand, and thereby simultaneously articulates with clarity that dimension of western civilization's ethnologic we call art, on the other.

Painting has become a 'naive' art form because it can no longer include 'self consciousness' (theoretically *as well as* that of historical location) in its program. Such a self-consciousness necessitates that the prevailing 'language of art,' like any language, must be transparent to be believed. Sixties art was the dissolution of the language of art as painting and sculpture into opacity. With CA emerged (out of what was only implicit in 'minimalism') a *competitive* paradigm or model of artistic activity. The work closest in time to 'minimalism' *appealed* to the innate structure or 'logic' of western civilization, more recent work (TCA) has increasingly consisted of *revealing*, through praxis (action on the superstructural level), that 'logic'. The older scientistic, analytic model was *passive* (*relied* on institutions for meaning); whereas the dynamic of the new work must, in part, consist of *revealing* the contradictions, and as such has as its task the dismantling of the mythic structure of art as posited in the present day cultural institutions.

The motor of art is that it is engaged. That is, the notion of art coming out of art speaks exactly of this. Art's existence is on a level of praxis, and as such it is a continuous working model of culture. But our art, even if it is to be a model of culture, is not static, but an operating, continually changing, model. One of our tasks is to re-establish an equalibrium between its internality and its externality. It

must be *in the world*. By not being *in the world* it is culturally naive.

In some respects CA was a tacit recognition that visual iconography was "used up" for surface structural purposes. What then became the surface structure in TCA was *methodological choice* in the description of whether what was being described was art—which is in keeping with the understanding that this was not appealing to the traditions of art—making procedure (painting and sculpture) but to the deepest structure of the 'logic' of western civilization; that is, to *culture* itself. What was felt, I think, was the need for a radical surgery—a tracheotomy to bypass the blockage of meaninglessness that this society by way of its institutions (of which painting is one) had come to represent. [7]

(New) art begins with a reference to tradition (or culture, or '*langue*'). That is, it appeals to tradition for 'believability'; it then proceeds to exist in terms of being a *representative itself* of tradition—taking its meaning *from* while it simultaneously gives meaning *to* 'tradition'. Yet the dependency of perception to theory forces the work of art into a state of continuous change in meaning. In this way it functions as a cultural road map, appearing to exist isomorphically to human consciousness as a memory of it (with the experience of art more like the experience of memory than of an actual event); speaking of itself as 'tradition' it speaks of the institutions of society—the social reality—with such a specific static embodiment of 'reality' as to imply the possibility of transcendent 'conversations' on a cosmic level (contemplation) if only for a moment—while the *promise* of such conversations floats on as a ideology.

3

"Mythic variants and their contents may be progressively engendered by the logic of myth itself In all cases, however, they remain comparative and relational, either within the specific confines of their respective ethnographic settings or in those relatively autonomous instances when myths 'reflect,upon themselves and their interrelation'." –Bob Scholte

"No doubt everything in the folk tale originates with the individual, just as all sound changes must; but this necessary fact of invention in the first place is somehow the least essential characteristic of folk literature. For the tale does not really become a folk tale, given the oral diffusion of this literature, with its obvious dependence on word of mouth circulation, until the moment when it has been accepted by the listeners who retain it and pass it on. Thus the crucial moment for the folk tale is not that of the parole, that of its invention or creation (as in middle-class art), but that of the langue; and we may say that no matter how individualistic may be its origin, it is always anonymous or collective in essence; in Jakobsonian terminology, the individuality of the folk-tale is a redundant feature, its anonymity a distinctive one." –Fredric Jameson

It might be useful to consider certain aspects of my past work within this discussion of an 'anthropologized art'. Central to much of my work has been a somewhat special use of the notion of tautology. This notion of a tautology as a formal (art) model can only be understood *operationally* as a hermeneutic. The formal 'map description' of it forces us to call it a tautology, but an understanding of it as a dynamic (dialectic) sees it as an henneneutic. By hermeneutic here I am thinking of Scholte's notion of a hermeneutic approach as one which "considers a tie between historical consciousness and ethnological understanding—between experience and reality-to be fundamental to any textual

interpretation...” Its own paradigmatic foundations are re-constituted throughout the model in such a way as to offer (systemically include) an autocritique implicit in its own self-reflexivity.

The convenience of structuring models of art along the lines of a tautology have to do with the specific needs of a ‘non-naive’ art-practice. If the ‘artist-anthropologist’ has as his/her task the construction of models which ‘expose’ our ethnologic while simultaneously being ‘accepted’ by it and thereby mediating each other into a totality, an understanding of Modernism (in which the ethnologic of this civilization *qua* art has been most exposed) returns us in fact (though one might want to describe it differently) to my argument of artistic functioning—naive as it is—in “Art after Philosophy”.[8]

Both the usefulness and the inappropriateness of tautology as a description can be made more clear in the attempt to map out the functioning of my past *Investigations*. Consider the following: We first have the need to formally construct the. model so that, even if only perceptually (operationally), it can be grasped as a whole. Previous art did this literally in a visual way. Comprehension can be understood as ‘holistic’. In my models ‘operationality’ was pervasive. The smallest operational unit in each proposition was designed to function (operate “meaningfully”) in unison with other units. These units or stratifications of meaning were all totally dependant on each other. Shifts of meaning from unit to proposition to Investigation to all ten Investigations to contemporary art to Modernism to western civilization, etc. were structured to force *meaning* to be dependant on context *at every level*, and from the outside. And on the inside, the units (as well as the other ways they functioned) consisted of textual material, usually ‘theory’ but not always. These were self-referential in order to be self-reflexive of the model (and art) itself. Its space consisted of ‘psychological space’ at a unitary level (comprehension of the text) yet the construction from adding all the parts (units) to make a ‘whole’ had no iconic meaning; the model’s physicality was not rarified and made magical. Outside of the personal meaning of entering its ‘psychological space’ no specific proposition could be ‘seen’ any more or less than any Investigation could be ‘seen’. Indeed, its interdependancy from unit to proposition to Investigation meant that the act of ‘seeing’ my work meant ‘seeing’ art.[9] In this way there was a direct operational relationship between the particular (a unit) and the general (art and culture).

While I always considered my writing on art a part of my role as an artist-interdependent with the models—I nevertheless have maintained that to quasi-gesturally profer one’s functioning *as a writer* (this being the praxiological in-the-world agent) as continually the “model” (from the point of view of praxis) of art *qua* artist sets up too clear and in fact an inappropriate distinction between the meaning of the *activity* and the import of the content of what was being written. Further, in Art & Language, there has been the problem of mystification which follows writing so special as to be too inaccessible to be “influential” on generally applied conceptions of art-practice; thus furthering the notion that the artistic significance of the group is the generalizable “script-making activity” rather than what is actually being said.

Language when used within the context of a ‘model’ of art cannot be considered operationally similar to its use in explicated ‘art theory’. ‘Modelistic’ use of language is not the voluntary and full conscious literal content-communication which it is often mistaken to be. Certainly there is a level of specific meaning to what is stated. But its significance as a model of art is *relational*, not literal; though those relations cannot be understood in dependant of specific meaning—it is understood only when it is understood *in its totality*.

Throughout my work there has been a realization that ‘model’ must *clearly* exist as such, as internalizations and capable of a contrast to *external* art criticism or esthetics. (What separates the critic and art historian from the artist is his/her demand to have an external relationship to art-practice; the myth of scientific ‘objectivity’ has demanded this — in some ways one can define the artist as one

who tries to affect change from the *inside*, and the historian/critic as one who tries to affect it from the *outside*. There can be little doubt as to why the historian/critic is increasingly viewed as a 'cultural policeman '.) *Theory as praxis* to be more fully understood must withstand transformation in being reversed: praxis as theory-meaning what contextually (semantically) functioned as art was a *theory of art*.

The historically evolving unconscious rules of language were understood to have a homologous relationship to what I have called the 'logic' of culture. Thus, the attempt to formalistically disassociate our work from our society's iconographic surface structure (and attempt to arrive at some kind of 'non-style') partially explains the reasoning behind (in Saussure's terms) the attempted use of the *signifier* as the *signified*—what else could more clearly focus our attention on the *system of art itself?*

A TCA praxis which doesn't include a distinction between implicit theory ('models') and explicit theory (articles) is incapable of clearly establishing the interdependence between the two. Insofar as art-practice itself can only be historically understood as *model construction* then explicit theory itself becomes the model (with its meaning understood to be implicit—that is, as not being what is *actually* said in the texts themselves). The point perhaps being that unless one sets up the models as part of a conscious and controlled (relative to the endeavor) program inclusive of a self-reflexive and self-critical dynamic, formalistically functioning *explicitly*, then alternatively what emerges uncritically is a model arrived at via (social) practice. Thus one can begin to see that what has been Art & Language's weakness according to one mapping is its potential strength according to another.

Art & Language's role as an (art) model builder in the past is then subject to interpretation. What does make Art & Language extremely important is the implicit social critique in its methodology. I don't refer here to "collaboration"—this was in no way unique to Art & Language, and the unevenness of participation in practice makes "collaboration" a misnomer in signifying what's special about the group. As Mel Ramsden recently put it:[10] "I still insist on the social roots of the problem. 'The group' forced to compete in an individualistic antagonistic self-interested (Adam Smith you Scottish Bastard) world. For exampIe: "having a show" is a one or two man endeavor. You need impact and gestalt. The whole thing is epistemologically individualistic. That's that. One reason for the collapse of A&L was that it moved from the journal (which) was a "group effort") to gallery shows which suddenly meant 15 or 14 out of the 16 people were standing around pretending they knew what was going on. There's nothing wrong with leaders, it's just when others see them leading and you following that we get screwed up. Again, these problems are *social*, not 'merely psychological'."[11]

The importance of Art & Language remains as an ideological (art) collective. I say 'collective' and not community, but one could say the collective consists of two communities—one in England and the other in New York. The recent collapse of the spirit of Art & Language as *one* community has come about through work by the New York group which concerns itself with issues anchored in the specificity of their New York lives and the larger artists community here. *The Fox* is obviously one expression of this work. It has forced us into the real world, or to put it better, it has shown us that Art & Language spans two real worlds: and that the gulf between the two communities is, indeed, as wide as the Atlantic.

How can we make the transition from a praxiogical life-world in which our work *along with us* is commodified (i.e. money and fame) to one in which "payment" takes the form of an acknowledgment by the community in which one lives implicitly by the act of adaptation. That means seeing how one's work effects the world in which one lives, and learning *along with others* from its effect, and appreciating that effect not as simply an extension of oneself (power) but as a part of a larger historical complexity which connects the location of your life with that of others. Perhaps it is here where one begins to understand the import of the (artistic) ideological collective of which Art & Language is a proto-type and emerging model.

4

" ... with the events of recent years Marxism has definitely entered a new phase of its history, in which it can inspire and orient analyses and retain a real heuristic value, but is certainly no longer true in the sense it was believed to be true."—Maurice Merleu-Ponty

The shift from the individual craftsman to the "ideological community" has as its pivotal base an understanding of a changed sense of *responsibility*. It is one result of the *generalizing* aspect of theoretical work, paramount as it has been to Conceptual art. Initially, as Harold Rosenberg suggests, CA was self-consciously historical. Particularly among the early Conceptual artists, we were united not by a shared involvement in the technical issues of painting, for instance, but rather by a collective sense of a historical location: a view of art *overlooking* the flatlands of painting and sculpture. In thinking of artist's groups as a human community, one thinks of how painters are forced to underscore their from other painters; the struggles being how to maintain ones own identity within the generalization of painting. In CA what was felt, in the beginning at least, was not a sense of solidarity among technicians—that was wide open with everyone trying to stay out of everyone else's way—but rather a sense of solidarity in our sameness, what we shared: being members of the first generation to be young enough to be capable of breaking our ties with modernism. The myth of modernism, which includes painting and sculpture, collapsing at our heels, left only its shock waves—the sense of a more direct relationship with the cultural bias of western civilization, left for us to try to express in some historical way. It is impossible to understand this without understanding the sixties, and appreciate CA for what it was: the art of the Vietnam war era. Perhaps there is some interwoven nature to the myth of America and the myth of modernism, and when both have been sufficiently unwoven the autonomy of art may be seen for what it is: one colored strand and part of a larger fabric.

The particularities of art have, before modernism; made such a comprehensible depiction (if only a partial one) of the infrastructure of art apart from the traditional modes of superstructural art-making unthinkable. Those "particularities" of the mythic structure of art have in this century constituted a continuous and profound, even if indirect, critique of Marxism. The lack of accommodation of one to the other might in fact be characteristic, on a level of *post*-revolutionary societal facturing, of Marxism's *own* programs (as separated from its critique of Capitalism) as ultimately unworkable in profoundly human terms.

As far as any real politics are concerned I have no hope for the Soviet Union and her "satellites".[12] Like America, they have forgotten what their revolutions meant. A country that must look to its past for honor is not a happy place in which to live. I must simply refuse to accept, as well, the scenario which only allows for "bourgeois" thought or Marxist thought. I think the use of Marxism is instructive, and Marxism in general must be taken into account. The conspicuous inability of Anglo-American intellectual enterprise to do so is singularly significant and perhaps its major weakness. Yet any anthropology, "marxian" or otherwise, cannot avoid the realization that Marxism and Capitalism both are representative of the 19th century life-world, and both present day Russia and America exist as monuments to the unreality and unworkability of both as systems at this point at the three-quarter mark of the 20th century. Our task is now clear: our generation must assemble its knowledge from any and all available sources and find a *viable alternative* to Capitalism and Communism. *The failure of our generation continues to be its inability to do so*.

Our youth was spent in an environment clouded over by the prospect of a nuclear holocaust: our children face an equally

grisly, and more likely, prospect: life under the merged bureaucracies of multi-national corporations and Communist state capitalism—the "peaceful" world of which Kissinger's "detente" speaks. Such an arrangement is simply an accommodation among rulers to facilitate themselves *remaining* rulers. What is the *alternative* to this encroaching space age feudalism? I wish I knew.

Eventually, of course, I must return this conversation to art. It is my 'location' and in many ways how I organize my understanding of the world. (Perhaps that's what 'work' of any kind is all about). My attacks over the years on tradition must be understood as attacks on particular (and popular) *conceptions* of tradition. Art is a description of reality by way of an interpretation of tradition. It is in the interpretation that one judges the value of the activity—as a real depiction of the social reality. In this sense 'real' work is an historical fusion of an individual's (or individuals) lived reality with the constituted 'optimism' inherent in a civilization's ethnologic. One can begin to see the struggle of the earlier stage—the relationship of the active agent *in* history *to* history. The fight, too, is for the status of existence (meaning) that young art and the young artist in his/her tole as mediators between a 'past' and a 'future' understand as the confrontation with civilization and that here, at this stage, the artist-philosopher meets momentarily the artist-shaman and contacts the inherently revolutionary nature of art-praxis-until again that parent Society seduces with a further re-description of reality.

I have said that the artist 'depicts' reality by a description of tradition in terms unique for his/her historical location. My reading of art history tells me that I now find myself capable of seeing for art (out of art) a tradition independant of and unmolested by a social coloration (meaningfully mediated) which describes and *re-enforces* the presently unacceptable social status-quo. In this sense the Marxists are correct when they claim that art cannot be apolitical. When I realize this I must ask myself: if art is necessarily political (though not necessarily *about* politics) is it not necessary to make one's politics explicit? If art is *context* dependent (as I've always maintained) then it cannot escape a sociopolitical context of meaning (ignoring this issue only means that one's art drifts into one). For this it is necessary to make one's politics explicit (in some way) and work toward constructing a socio-political context of one's own in which (cultural) actions are anchored for meaning. It is in this sense that *The Fox* is a 'political' journal. The desire is to consider art, and the lives of artists, in relation to (a) social philosophy. One begins to understand, increasingly, how the notion of a 'category' of politics is at best a temporary device and at worst a naive relationship vis-a-vis the world. And further, an understanding of art is forced by a realization that a 'political' reading of art (as I outline here) is an integral aspect of the internalizing feature (of artistic activity) towards a rich and comprehensive (though 'located ') understanding of the nature of art. Such an understanding is necessary if we find that there is something in art of importance to mankind/womankind which must be preserved. A defense of art in terms of its current formalization is necessarily prescriptive, and politically repugnant.

New York, New York

FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted from "The Invention of the Avant-Garde: France, 1830-80" by Linda Nochlin, *Avant-Garde Art*, ed by T.B. Hess and J. Ashbery, Collier Books, New York.

2. Quoted from "Collective, Ideological, Combative," by Harold Rosenberg, ibid.

3. I count curators, dealers, and historian/critics among my friends, but I think non-artist art "professionals" are in an extremely problematic situation vis-a-vis the system. Particular individual efforts are noteworthy, occasionally even heroic, but a re-thinking of one's role in society is in order for everyone.

4. One of *ArtForum*'s more dismal chapters has been the James Collins episode. Collins' overnight conversion from an Art & Language sycophant to an *ArtForum* sycophant (and useful anti-CA hatchet man) attests to both *ArtForum*'s power and sense of expediency. Collins ended a response to Rosetta Brooks saying discourse " ... between the covers of magazines like *ArtForum* seems like a proper location to me. There, unlike self-edited Conceptual Art magazines, the Editor can always say 'No' .." Of course at *Art-Language* we said "No" too—to him, several times. Hence the fanaticism of a sour grapes convert. His naive belief in the absolute and legitimate authority of non-artist art magazine editors, by the way, is pathetic coming from someone whose opportunism has propelled him on to yet another career as an artist. This time around, though, "theory" has been replaced by sex appeal.

5. It's very instructive for artists to see which work the critics find most useable for their craft. Take a look at old *ArtNews*' and *ArtForum*'s. Since such magazines are usually in the hands of the prevailing art establishment the critics tend to act as lawyers for the maintenance of the status quo. The practice seems to be to use the weakest examples of any threatening new development to argue against, thereby facilitating a put-down of the whole movement. You can't expect these more malleable artists to object to the sudden windfall that's come their way, given the set-up of the art world, but by now artists at least should realize the myth of "objective" criticism/history to be understood for what it is: creative work *competitive* with the artist's, yet repressive and tenaciously self-serving in it's role as "administrator" for the artist's community.

6. "The Artist as Anthropologist," *The Fox*, issue 1; "(Notes) On an 'Anthropologized' Art/(Notizen) Uber eine 'anthropologisierte' Kunst," *Kunst bleibt Kunst*, catalog for Projekt '74, Cologne, Summer, 1974 (copy in English available on request, c/o *The Fox*); "Joseph Kosuth (Untitled Text)" *Deurle 11/7/73*, MTL, Brussels, Belgium.

7. The current re-interest in painting—perhaps best exemplified by Brice Marden and Robert Ryman—is a result, ironically of the "success" (taken as historically "right") of CA in Europe. Several intelligent dealers, supporters of CA, but dealers none-the-Iess, accepted the demise of painting sufficiently to pose the question: "So, then who are the last young painters?" Art market momentum, being as it is oblivious to "content," and fueled by a basic bourgeois preference of an art of decoration to that of an art of complexity, is rolling on of its own accord. Painting, which asks no questions—even about the nature of art—has its cultural neutrality at the service of the dominant ideology.

8. There are of course many, many problems with "Art after Philosophy." One of the ones that comes to my mind at this moment is that while objecting to the romantic paradigm of the artist—being as it is a device for rendering artists powerless in any meaningful social sense—I seemed to swallow whole the scientistic ideology which by necessity must relegate the artist to such a position in the first place. It is the same ideology that we see, when described economically or politically, as culturally eclipsing our lives of their meaning. Of course one *can* write alternate historical schema's to Greenberg's (or anyone else's) esthetic historical continums. We *shouldn't* because we end up, unavoidably, as formalist bedpartners. While obviously I still do not hold to the scientistic, positivistic epistemology that is exhibited in "Art after Philosophy," there is an aspect to my discussion of artistic functioning which, at least in spirit, I feel is useful—though limited as it is to our understanding at the time. The overall, somewhat propagandistic, purpose of that article was to provide an understanding of the theoretical basis for a great deal of art-making activity eliminated from the art historical schema of Greenbergian formalism. Those that have criticized my theory as a "continuation of the 'art for art's sake' doctrine, resuscitated by Ad Reinhardt in the 60's" unhappily miss the complexity of the argument, and rely too heavily on my acknowledged (and for that matter continuing) respect for Reinhardt. It's also pretty ignorant, come to think of it, of the significance of Reinhardt's work. Rosetta Brooks, as quoted above, has her own axe to grind. She and John Stezaker—the artist whose mission she identifies as her own—go to great lengths to dismiss "Art after Philosophy" for rather transparent reasons which might best be described as "Oedipal" (read Stezaker).

9. Or seeing *nothing at all* in the form of tables, chairs, and my "summer reading".

10. In a letter to me this summer.

11. The journal Mel Ramsden refers to, *Art-Language*, allowed for individual effort as part of a collective ideological front which it constituted as the "party organ". The *Art-Language* which has re-appeared more recently has been victimized to some extent by the "social problems" similarly manifested in as well as ascerbated by the group's participation in the gallery and museum system. My own relationship with Art & Language has been both a part of the problem, and (as I contend) a part of the solution.

12. Not that work isn't continuously being done to improve the Marxist model, nor for that matter that there aren't perhaps better working models; than the Soviet Union (Yugoslavia, China, or Cuba). One can only look longingly, and momentarily, at anarchism or utopian socialism.

DOING ART HISTORY

TERRY SMITH

Talk given at Westfield College, University of London, October 15,1974.

"Art history, at any rate as traditionally conceived, is complete when it has recorded the changes that constitute the history of art and, perhaps, gone some way towards offering an explanation of why these changes occurred."

This seems uncontentious enough at first ... until you start to wonder about its presuppositions. We see immediately that 'recording' is no simple matter: there are problems in the theory-ladenedness of all observation, in the indeterminancy of theories based on it, in the necessary incompleteness of all account-giving. That is to say, Hanson, Heisenberg and Godel apply here, as in science. Further, "changes constituting the history of art" has a double-sided difficulty: it assumes a history of art independent of art historians, and that this (or some) 'history' is constituted by 'changes' of some sort. As well, it seems that some very vexed questions about the nature of 'art' are implicitly begged-at least to the extent that whatever 'art' is, it can be said of 'it' that 'it' has 'a history'.

The characterization of "traditionally conceived" art history cited above is Richard Wollheim's, and is given in passing in the course of his 1963 review of Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* (see Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind*, London 1973, p. 263). Wollheim's aim in that article was to quickly reach a point where he could discuss the adequacy of Gombrich's answers to the question of why there should have been change in art at all. So we need look elsewhere for answers to the prior questions which we have just raised. And we don't, as it happens, have to look far: on a simplistic reading, *Art and Its Objects* appears as the building of a conception of art which is institution-dependent, that is, 'historical'. Part of his claim is that art is, very roughly speaking, just what it is taken to be by individuals at any given point in time. The 'history of art', then, is the history of various individuals' (artists', audiences ') concepts of art. (Wollheim's account is, of course, hardly as unsubtle as this, but the stress on the individuals' formation of a concept of art is an important beginning point for his theory.)

One relevant consequence of Wollheim's approach as pictured here is that, because these individuals include art historians, the image of oneself as an ultimately uninvolved (disinterested) observer fails. To put it provocatively: art historians *make* art, as does everybody who holds a concept of art.

The historical importance of Wollheim's approach lies in his elaboration of suggestions of the later Wittgenstein. Specifically, he overthrows all attempts at essentialist notions of art, those which seek to enslave us by insisting that art has x or y nature independent of any individual's conception of it. But the contrary liberalism has its own set of debilitating dangers. Above all, we become enslaved by conventions—an open set of changing conventions, as is obvious, but merely conventions nonetheless. The doubts I raised above about 'recording' could perhaps be settled by conceding them fullsomely but then adding: we can't proceed in any other way. Indeed, one could go on to say that our accounts (theories) would be 'better' if constructed in full sensitivity to the fragility which their inevitably relativistic status confers on them. Allusions to Popperian falsifiability could be made. But it seems to me that implicit in this approach is the pseudo-Wittgensteinism: "The world is what we see it as"—that is, the urge to objectivity takes a step back, gains scare quotes, but hangs in there grimly.

Art historians tend to mistrust philosophical critiques of their procedures. Ruminations by distinguished practitioners are read: Panofsky, Saxl, Gombrich, Wittkower, etc. But it is their practice which is more deeply noted and imitated, absorbed usually with little reflection on the presuppositions

informing it. Like criticism, history is something you do according to models, rules of thumb, the prejudices of your peers—its understructure, your theory of art and your theory of history, your ideology, your ontology and your psychic needs, habitually remains implicit, repressed even. The education systems set up by the distinguished—English, German, French, Italian, American, Russian models, concatenations of the inputs of various powerful scholars—have resulted in an intense pressure to practice as quickly as possible, as if art historical method were something conditioned, like learning a language from a tape constantly playing under your pillow. One result is that succeeding generations of students operate with increasingly less freedom and inventiveness than their teachers, their urge to theory usually embarassed out of them during their graduate years, as they agonize quietly with little or no response on that score from their supervisors.

The dreariness of much contemporary art history, its blandness, conformity, painful obviousness, amounts to a massive failure of praxis. Panofsky warned of it in his reminiscences, Leo Steinberg more recently in *Other Criteria* (N.Y. and O.U.P. 1972), as did Tim Clark in the *Times Literary Supplement*, May 24, 1974, but none quite in the terms in which I wish to put it. Outstanding is the sense of closed 'objectivity', the fake style of certainty adopted by everyone—from undergraduates cribbing to senior members of the profession speculating widely. One sniffs a scientism, a relieved sigh at each supposedly empirical utterance ...

The failure of praxis occurs in two main senses: (i) the maintenance of vague, but in practice hard, boundaries between doing art history and self-consciously questioning the methodological presuppositions of what one is doing, and (ii), on the other hand, all that is symbolized by a reluctance, growing to a distaste, for contact with the contemporary practice and theory of art.

The first, it might be said, is a tolerable state of affairs as long as the results keep coming in. One may not *need* theory—and, Occam persisting, it's perhaps better not to refer to theory at all. It can be disruptive of practice, inefficient. Current practice, the refutation continues, may have its faults but it does its job well enough, and will change if the need arises in response to the work of those few practitioners whose expositors will reveal the methodological innovations to the next generation of teachers. Or you might appeal to a humble conception of the art historian's task: to establish an artist's oeuvre, note the influences on the work, and say something about the uncontroversially obvious elements of his technique and subject matter. Others add small steps: make the occasional value judgment, paint in a modicum of content, suggest something of the artist's significance as a cultural artifact, point a contemporary relevance or two. Such an apologist might agree to wince at the monstrously complex apparatii which we have developed to perform these simple tasks of elucidation, but then (ah! well ...) such proliferation of resources is typical of the Century in every specialization.

Implicit in all this is a presupposition that the art historian's job is that of expositor, elucidator, explainer *only*. He sets out as fully as he can what he can grasp of what is the case with regard to a fragment (an artist, a school, etc.) of an overall whole, whose pieces busy little workers such as he are painstakingly putting together. Like the scientist who believes that science is an accumulative enterprise, the implication is that what the world *is*, how it functions in all its aspects, can and will be stated, at least up until yesterday—'human failures' aside, of course. But one need merely inject one ounce of relativism into this and the whole edifice falls. It is perpetuated, one often feels, mostly out of habit and a fear of disorder.

Asking the question: what is the value of art history? is usually extremely embarrassing to art historians. The answers I have encountered are normally of three general sorts: (i) the pursuit of knowledge is intrinsically valuable; (ii) the results of historical research, when interpreted relevantly, can tell us something of why we have come to be as we are –therefore the prior work of "getting the history right" has a second-order, but nonetheless important, value; or (iii) the brave few, history can (should) be of direct contemporary relevance—in doing history, we construct, according to our current needs, a set of limited projections into a chaos

of loaded information. Description slides in and out of prescription here.

Asking the question causes embarrassment at least partially because it is assumed that art history account for itself in terms of something other than itself, something the value of which appears self-evident or more widely accepted. Social relevance, for example. Or: art history enables people to see with 'an informed eye', to see more and see it better, such that they may be able to *use* what they see and how they see (in order to see other similar sights more fully, or some such). Or, the most fraught of them all: art history/criticism is important in a second-order sense to the value-full business of making art and responding to it. In this last case, art history need look only to its own lights (needs, purposes, criteria of efficiency, etc.). It is indirectly justified by whatever is taken to give art its value. *That* may be anything, as long as it's something. Whatever it is, it is not the art historian's concern. If nothing can be found to justify art—if art can be shown to be in principle unjustifiable—then art history is in trouble. A trouble, however, from which someone else will doubtless rescue it.

Take an apparently harmless presupposition: that at least one of the art historian's jobs is to organize a mass of material (documentary through other peoples' interpretations) according to a conception of the unity of the oeuvre of the artist whose work he is seeking to elucidate. But what is implied by this? The ontology is that of a world, at base, unified (subject to the unitary "laws of physics", i.e. laws constructed by particular physicists). The metaphor is one of organic coherence (a scientistic notion once again, i.e. regularity of behaviour is to be determined no matter how 'deep' you have to go to 'discover' it). The ideology is that of preferring to live in an orderly way, i.e. bourgeois, stable and closed. On the one hand, the artist is victimized by the need to write about him or her in ways acceptable to other academics. On the other, the paradoxicality of abstractions constructed in ways which necessarily preclude 'complete' (re) concretization is overlooked. The indeterminancy, the 'bits left dangling', are referred to the convenient myth that 'art eludes complete explanation'.

Art is hardly unique in this, we hardly need say. Here nothing can be 'settled'—if finality is expected. One possible response to such a situation is to press on regardless. Another is to ask whether or not the whole enterprise might be misdirected. Why not take a leaf from a Feyerabendian notion of science, interpret the work in as many ways as possible, falsify over going interpretations even when they seem comfortably adequate to the task at hand? That is to say, why not proliferate artists (i.e. abstractions as to what artist "X" did, or does), enrich the past rather than constipatedly constrict it? And let us shed the ludicrous garb of local expert on some tiny subject-focus.

The past decade of 'Post-Minimal', 'Conceptual' art should have taught all of us something that many philosophers find unacceptable: that we can take nothing as 'nature', nothing as a priori, to art activity. An artist's problems begin, not with questions as to what kind of painting he or she should pursue, but before that. Should I paint at all? Is it not an utterly arbitrary convention-set that I should operate within the limited terms of paint across a flat surface? And further, in view of the recent history of easy compromises with 'ideas' as material for display, is there really anything *essential* in the business of making art? Is visuality an irreducible condition of a thing's being art? Is 'good design'? Or is it that my work should embody 'special' perceptions? None of these are sufficient conditions, are any of them necessary conditions? If I do something well, something visual and carrying 'significant meaning' of some sort, what does it's being 'art' add to it? If I place it in the company of other well-made, visual and significant things, what happens? You can see something of its genetic history, something of some of the models I've used in making it, but is there not the grave danger of burying it amongst so-called 'likenesses'? That is, implying that it is now, finally, in its rightful place? Literally and metaphorically my work is now in a museum, it's a token in the bourgeois world of museum-goers and loses whatever embeddedness it may have had in the world in which it was proposed. Actual museums are themselves completely loaded art

-viewing situations, precisely in their attempts at neutrality-removal of all context but the museum's history and art history is ultra-typical mystification.

I am trying to convey the sense shared by many contemporary artists that the institutions, conventions, basic beliefs and usual behavioural patterns of members of the various current artworlds are strangely foreign, very fragile, impositional on and alienating of the artist. The fiction here is that 'the artist' has more possibility of freedom than others in the artworld—but he is as much a joiner, and everyone is alienated in one way or another. All you can do is struggle dialectically with and against these conventions (the desert-island option never has, never will, be on). Above all, you struggle reflexively, self-consciously. The main task is the complex, contradictory one of creating alternative, oppositional structures in the very process of *de*constructing the conventions.

Against this there is, of course, the "it was ever thus" exhortation. So what if this is the view of (some) contemporary artists; They may be wrong, time will tell, we have our traditions. Or, worse still, this may be a repetition of the good old Dada anti-art option, and we all know how easily *that* was absorbed into the ongoing history of modern art.

Both objections are flawed in the same basic way, in the implication that there is a developmental history of art transcending what it is that particular artists, at any given time and place, do. A history with its own history. Consider, for example, the two very popular dictii of Professor Gombrich: "Art is what artists do" and "Art lives on (feeds off) previous art". Both are, like all truisms, half-true. The problem with the first is not only that artists do many things, sleep for example, which are not art in any sense, but also the circularity of it, each of its terms being 'defined' by the other, i.e. you need a notion of 'art' before you can pick out those whose 'doing' is supposed to give you your notion of 'art'."This is where the second comes in, and they are inseparable to Gombrich. The problem with it is its pragmatic implication that art is made mostly, primarily, most interestingly within the inherited frameworks of previous art. The art historian's job is virtually complete when he has spelled out the 'art' context for the 'art' under consideration. Together, the aphorisms amount to this: art is what those we call artists have done in the past; art changes when artists, who mostly do what has been done, do something a little extra, usually an unexpected combination of conventions. This is clearly a heavily institutionalized conception of art, and it gives to the art historian a rather boring form of life.

How does Gombrich's picture stand when put (admittedly rather loosely) as an analogy to change in language? It would then clearly trade on a Sausserean Langue-Parole distinction, and be a mistake. 'Langue' would then be in the museums and 'speech' would be that coming out of the studios. But in actual language-use you have indeed only "natural' language-use, against a background of dictionaries (which are words plus stage-directions for use, not 'language' embodied) and grammars (which are inspired guesswork). The lesson here is that artworks are only the uses made of them –you are *always* making (constructing, construing, etc.) art, whether you are staring at an object on a wall (adopting the role of 'spectator', 'audience') or welding pieces of steel together (adopting the role of 'sculptor').

Before going more deeply into the art-language analogy, let us try to summarize what has been so far said and try to put the strongest point we wish to make. T.J. Clarke, in the recent *T.L.S.* article, and Raymond Williams, in the *New Left Review* for Nov.-Dec. 1973, both emphasize that our attitudes to art need to shift from understanding artworks as *objects of contemplation* to a grasp of the complex of social forces Within which the making of an artwork should be seen as a contributory, inflective *act* (of which the artwork becomes the token, evidence, means to other socially-embedded ends, etc.). They are both offering suggestions as to how objects, perhaps made according to other presuppositions, should be *viewed*. During the past decade, however, artists by the thousands have been working in ways which take this debate to be already settled in favour of activity, so that 'objectness' has become incidental, a "museum-question". Post-minimal and conceptual art, so the

rhetoric goes, have left painting and sculpture far behind. The object-quality of, say, a display of documentary photographs of an event (by, for example, Douglas Huebler) is considered incidental, its art associations regarded as so much noise interfering with the message of the work.

But this is not enough. 'Object' can gain scare quotes, as in the case of the musical object *The Firebird Suite*, which is not coincident with its score as a physical object but is on all fours with its performance. That is to say, Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* 1972, a performance piece, retains its art-object status and nature by being staged in an art gallery, recorded in art magazines, being a point of reference for the art community and almost no other, and so on. What needs to change is our level of awareness of the context-embeddedness of each of our communicative acts.

On the question of reflexivity. One is not a neutral observer: one usually has commitments to academic life, to rationality, to (broadly speaking) a classical, humanist culture, to 'civilized values'. The troubles here have already been evoked: rationality is an embattled world-view, classical humanism is—as George Steiner has eloquently pointed out in *In Bluebeard's Castle* and elsewhere—over, leaving *Civilization* of the Kenneth Clark kind one of its residual manifestations.

The 'object of contemplation' approach contains a number of dubious presuppositions. A finite list of physical objects count as 'art'. The list is long and hierarchically divided into categories such as 'high art', 'the minor arts', 'commercial art', 'popular/folk art'. These reflect the social history of art history itself, above all its two-part development as

(i) a service industry, as connoisseurship to vendors and purchasers of 'fine art' objects, wherein a premium is placed on refining one's sensitivity to the 'aesthetic' features of individual objects within a class of like features—the minutae of 'handling', brushing, texture, composition within convention, image modification, etc., and

(ii) as an autonomy-claiming study discipline, necessitating the construction of a category of 'reality' called "Art", which in 'History' has its own special 'History'. The capitalization here is a deliberate reference to Hegel's theories of history, and to the importance of these to Wölfflin 's theories of art history. The principal tokens for the dialectical, cyclical unfolding of this 'history' are specific features of artworks. These features (by massive ellipsis) undergo growth and change, cluster together to reveal tendencies, react to and replace each other, seemingly in ways independent of the human agents who created them. Thus the famous "art history without names". (We should note that this light-hearted dictum becomes possible only if one simultaneously holds, as Wölfflin did, a parallel Hegelian theory of the history of societies, i.e. 'Geistesgeschichte', 'Volkkultur'. Riegl put the artist back in, but possessed him of a 'kunstwollen' which interacts with the immanently unfolding logic of the material's 'ordnungskarakter'.)

It is surely obvious that we no longer need such absurd machinations, that we have no need to account for a separated, socially-isolable entity 'Art', lumbering through time, going through its changes. But we have yet to face the implications of this realization for style-history in general. Style history is precisely a slightly more subtle, but equally superficial and tenuous, version of the same Hegelian machinery which appears so embarrassing in Wölfflin nowadays: 'art' is presumed, and style changes are reckoned to be the changes in the substance o.f 'art'. We all learn by rote the litany of the half-dozen main features of Renaissance versus Baroque art, or Cubism and Fauvism, etc. In our experience of artworks, 'style' tends to come up before anything else about them. Now, if such categorization did tell us something about the genetic context of a particular work—if, that is, Wölfflin's 'Gothic shoe' had been an adequate sociology - it would perhaps be useful. But the sociology has been out of reach of art historians for at least most of this century. So we tend to be left with changes in the formal disposition of elements within the artwork, and we are asked to take changes *within* such dispositions from work to work as somehow intrinsically, profoundly significant.

The remark has been made, by Meyer Schapiro and others, that art historians (some of them) know that style history is a misleading tool for organizing the material before them but there is nothing available to replace it which would not take art historians beyond art history. But, surely, this is precisely the point. In so far as this is the case, it is an indictment of art historical practice. So much the worse, we have to say, for art history which is bound by the framework of style history. Art historical practice, I want to argue, should gladly surrender its autonomy.

(A parenthesis might be in order here. It can be well argued that the history of avant-gardism—the standard framework within which French art since the early/mid nineteenth century, and European and American art of the twentieth, is treated—is in fact a history of increasing claims for autonomy. And partially it is. But it hardly follows that the *history* of such claims need be written in a way which claims autonomy for its own procedures. Surely an embedded, wide-ranging, open-tooled approach is the right one to take to any object of study, autonomous or not. And, anyway, the experience of very recent art is a rejection of autonomy: inevitably, this will influence art historians to look at past art in different ways. Hopefully, the influence will go further: not the usual reassembling of the same museum-sanctioned objects, but at the very least a Ionger, more diverse list of objects will be included in the field of inquiry.)

(Another parenthesis. The crudest current version of Hegelian/Wölfflinian style-history is that outgrowth of formalist art criticism called 'modernism'. Here, each of the arts progressively isolates out its own autonomy dement Greenberg has revived the—by now, quite properly discredited—views of Clive Bell and, to some extent, Roger Fry, elaborated them somewhat and provides a very easy history of modern art which has won followers in art history departments throughout the world [see my 'American painting and British painting: some issues', *Studio International*, Dec. 1974]. The point I wish to emphasize here is the self-fulfilling nature of this approach. Developed against the evidence to account for the work of the American Abstract Expressionists, it was refined in the 1960s to apply to a group of artists, in close personal contact with Greenberg and his followers, whose work indeed is primarily autonomy-claiming—Louis, Noland, Olitski, Poons, Stella, etc. As art history, however, 'modernism' is appallingly distortive of previous art—Old Masters emphasize chiaroscuro, whereas from Manet onwards 'flatness' is the thing. And in order to operate as art criticism it has to reject the overwhelming preponderance of contemporary art, which seeks to shatter its autonomy, as mere 'novelty art'.)

In a certain strong sense, autonomy has been a problem for all approaches to art ever since the 'fine arts' began to be picked out as unique and distinct (cf. Kristeller's history of the idea of art). In my own case, some recent study of the early work of de Kooning and Gorky, their profound dependence on themes developed by Ingres then Picasso, has led me to conclude that, unlike their colleagues, these two painters worked within a very self-conscious art historical framework (paper, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, Spring 1973). But how do I know that this conclusion is not a self-fulfilling function of my methods of inquiry? To which broader reference-set can I appeal for disconfirmation?

The 'object of contemplation' industry is in a position of fantastic cultural privilege. It is often argued, in defence of the object of contemplation position, that artworks are intensely-wrought intentional objects with references to a broad (if not the whole) range of human experience. This appears when you list the typical kinds of evaluative ascriptions:

—striking imagery
—rich formal, compositional placement of images, shapes, colour areas, etc.
—deeply skillful passages of paint-handling, evocations of natural phenomena, illusions, etc.
—summarized insights into the nature (an aspect) of a historical event; a myth of social significance; a seemingly trivial moment of experience; a human emotion/state of being(?)/mood; a personal or social relationship; the structure of a natural or man-made object, place, etc.; the portrayal of a

specific individual personality; and
many more of this kind
—participation in a ritual
—'mere' documentation
—perfectly fitting decoration

Now, these are some of the things which artworks are often held to show, and some of the functions they are held to serve. My point is not that artworks do.n't ever do so, but that they don't when they are not *used* as so doing. It is one thing for an art historian to say that Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* represents the rural bourgeoisie, go on to discuss its 'flat' composition, then to say that Manet represents the city bourgeoisie and go on to discuss *his* 'flat' composition. It is another thing to show that Courbet deliberately *uses* the *Burial* to disrupt the Parisian bourgeoisie's self-conceptions by showing them an unavoidably realistic image of the rural counterparts *against* whom they were busily defining themselves. And it is quite another thing for T.J. Clarke to use this act of Courbet's to challenge art historians' presumptions that objects of contemplation are the beginning and end in the making of art and the appreciation of it.

My objection (at least in this paper) is not to the object of contemplation position as such. Rather, it seems to me that a major debilitating factor in art historical practice is the assumption that the object of contemplation approach is the *central one*—indeed, in many cases, the *only one*—available to those who may properly call themselves art historians. The list of subjects which I cited above, and the skills required to properly elucidate them, are subjects and skills which I value highly and would hate to see wither. But I must insist that none o.f these subjects can be picked out, and none of these skills employed, in a neutral, disinterested way. They are each and every one embedded in the presuppositions of us as practicising art historians in a post-classical, late-capitalist society. And, no matter how various and, all-encompassing they may seem, they are not enough in themselves.

So we need elements of the sort of art history that we already have, but we need it to achieve a higher degree of theoretical self-consciousness, social self-awareness and procedural praxis. This would so radically transform it that the current, too typical practice of carefully expositing an aspect of an artist's oeuvre within the framework of an amorphous style-history (the format of the majority of journal articles and books) would take on the peripheral, ancillary service function that is quite proper to it. We need retain such peripheries because many artworks do, to some degree, feed off earlier artworks—not all, and not necessarily, but some, sometimes, somewhat—so it's nice to know. And because artists do spend much of their time in socially-specific artworld contexts: they do react to the ideologies prevailing in those 'worlds'. But (and here the Apostelian analogy breaks down) no-one is a finite function of the set of values and behaviours of his membership sets (Apostel in Bar-Hillel, ed., *Pragmatics of Natural Languages*, Reidel, Humanities Press, N.Y. 1971). It should be obvious enough by no.w that filling in the picture as to sources in previous art and sketching in some details of the relevant artworld is a lamentably inadequate approach to a potentially very rich dialogue.

There are, it seems to me, three major tasks before us, if the discipline is to be revived. (Add to these the chorus of willing bees quietly doing their orthodox accumulations of imagery, documents, etc.) Two fine traditions of art history need to be recovered from the ant-like scurrying of their current exponents—iconology and social history.

What has happened to the Panofsky of the work on Dürer, the Abbot Suger, on Perspective as Symbolic Form, on Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism? Panofsky's later fastidious image-splitting may have been a contributing factor to the current teaching generation's inability to push themselves beyond the most mechanical icon*ography*. There is a richness about the scope of Warburg and Saxl's early responses to imagery from whatever source, however culturally embedded. Their adventurousness within a replete world of human imag*ing* is something we should not so easily surrender. But surely the Warburg Institute program of tracing the classical survivals, revivals in Post-classical western art has Iong been too limited. As well, the implications that the world of human imaging

is, for all intents and purposes, a self-contained world, is a clear fallacy. Iconography again, not iconology. (Yet another parenthesis. Like utterances in a language, images do not behave in ways independent of their *use*. It is possible to abstract a seemingly independent 'history' for an image through time, but you are doing something utterly arbitrary which is justified only by the insights it surprises about things other than itself. An entirely ordinary bit of minimal indexing illustrates this point: the image of Martin Luther, by Lukas Cranach, oil on wood, 1543, seen by a Protestant, farmer, in Bavaria, in 1550 ... is an entirely different image in use if any one of the points of reference is even slightly changed, for example, seen by a Catholic farmer, or priest, in North Germany, in 1560 ... [or an Australian art historian, in the Uffizi, in 1974). So what could it mean to say that the physical stuff is "the same"? An iconology thoroughly informed by at least this sort of self-questioning would seem to be a minimal starting point.)

The only other, related, bright spot on the incredibly dull art historical horizon that I can see is the theoretically self-conscious *social* history of art practiced in this country by, among others, Baxandall and T.J. Clarke. The latter's *Image of the People: Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Thames & Hudson 1973) starts to indicate the results which accrue when one faces up to the implications of the point that artworks are invariably communicative acts within highly-charged rhetorical situations—situations which set the terms of the communication and are changed by its utterance. Clarke's special skill is his ability to visualize the many different *audiences* which artworks have. These are *contexts* of use for Courbet's works. The members of each audience (e.g. Political factions within the rural bourgeoisie at Ornans and Dijon, the Parisian bourgeoisie at the Salons, the critics of the Salons, etc.) construct his 1850 trilogy *Burial at Ornans, Stonebreakers* and *Peasants Returning from Flagey* differently, according to their sets of points of reference. Clarke shows Courbet's struggles to grasp the fine complexities of this situation, his frequent failures, his adoption of guises (e.g. the Bohemian 'countryman'—Courbet's way of being at once inside and outside the Parisian artworld).

The limitations of Clarke's actual performance, I feel, are few. But there are some and they point beyond his achievement. He still takes Courbet's consciousness as the central subject of his inquiry (thus perpetuating myths of Romantic individualism and special perception) instead of showing how Courbet's 'public speech' was continuous with that of others, was an example of the kind of rhetorical action then available, creatable. (Antal and Klingender tend too far this way, risking leaving the artist out.) And perhaps there is still the implication that the proof of his pudding is the fact that he has given a better account of the genetic context of the *Burial at Ornans*' 'flat' picture-space then anyone else. But it would be a shame if the acceptability of one's approach depended on this sort of 'proof'.

Every approach to artworks must account for them as intensely-wrought intentional acts. Obviously. But—and this is my third and major suggestion, informing the whole of this paper—we have to do more. We have to approach the whole context of uses within which artworks are proposed, artists make, audiences construct. That is to say, we all make art, then remake it, then go on.

Melbourne, Australia

MEDIA MADNESS

ANDREW MENARD AND RON WHITE

1

THE AGE OF MEDIA, 1930-1975

Several months ago, in *Art Letter*, there was a brief discussion of the relation between artists and media. The discussion was supposed to be a slap oil the wrist for Louise Nevelson, since she was arranging to appear on the Tonight Show. It was an interesting discussion nonetheless, for a couple of reasons. Apparently no one remembered that Nevelson appeared on the Dick Cavett Show about four years ago.) For one thing, it was generally assumed that media exist for the sake of publicity, and for little else; that is, that they are secondary to the actual production of art works. For another, it was said in passing that Nevelion's art was particularly unsuitable for television publicity because the TV camera, not to mention the commercials, would only break the spell of that old black magic. By themselves, of course, neither of these assumptions would seem to merit a second glance; yet they do contradict each other, and they may be as good an indication as any of the confusion which blesses almost all discussions of art and media. Nevelson's art is indeed unsuitable for television. But that's only to say that its natural medium is the gallery or museum, it's not to say that her art has only a secondary relationship to media. (Nor is it to say that all art is unsuitable to television.) For it seems to me that media have completely penetrated to the level of art production, that modes of distribution (museums, trade journals, even television on occasion) are implicitly *reproduced in the work itself*, that the form and content of art is in fact determined by the modes of distribution (media). In the long run, even the judgments of critics, curators, etc., are not "external" to our work, but an integral part of it; indeed, formalist art is uniquely dependent on the presence of art criticism.

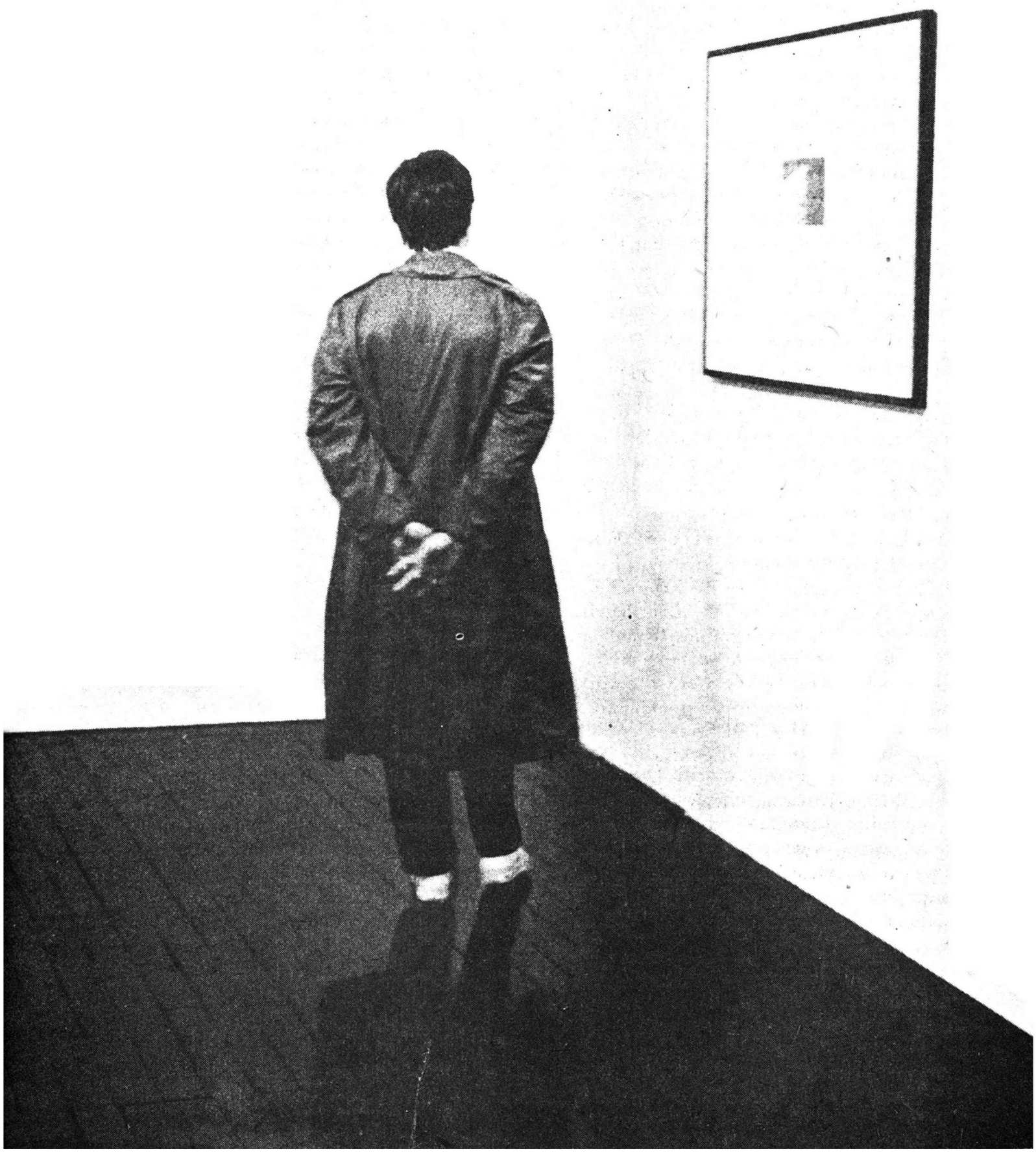
The most obvious indication of this development is the way art is now made for museums. In the past, American museums used to construct "period rooms" in order to recreate the cultural context of art works. From the 'thirties onwards, however, many museums began to refine what might be called an Architecture of Contemplation: neutered white walls, neutered white space; works hung in a line, separated, rather than ganged up vertically. In other words, instead of being an integrated part of a whole (the period room), each individual art work became an autonomous, self-contained world of its own. In this way the Architecture of Contemplation helped destroy the social/aesthetic context of art works; that is, by displaying them in a socially and aesthetically sterile environment, it isolated art works so much that they became their own social/aesthetic context. Moreover, since this was a none-too-subtle reminder that art is one step removed from the activity of day-to-day living, the Architecture of Contemplation also put the finishing touches on the notion that most of us are supposed to look at art, contemplate it, rather than participate in it. (Perhaps the greatest single influence on this architectural shift was the construction of the Museum of Modem Art in 1939.)

It's not likely that such an exhibition space could have developed in the absence of early formalism (the move towards "I'art pour l'art", abstraction, the gratuity of social context); on the other hand, the subsequent development of formalism—which is to say, American art—couldn't have developed in the absence of such an exhibition space. For the subtle relationships which form the content of most American art demand isolation—of works from each other (horizontal display; or

in the case of sculpture, sufficient distance), of works from a dominant space (the controversy over the Guggenheim and Pasadena museums), of art itself from culture (since questions of "objecthood" (remember Stella?) or color/ edge/ surface (virtually all painting and some sculpture) or even "process"/"intention" (the self-referential work made popular by Johns and heroic by Conceptual art)—all these developments are virtually gratuitous to the world at large). Even Morris' notion of the gestalt, or the installation aspects of Judd's work, or Andre's and Flavin's, didn't contradict isolation. It's true, these works were self-consciously designed for, or otherwise incorporated, the space they inhabited. But they all depended on the autonomy of the object-as-shape; or, more abstractly, on the autonomy of a "positive" or distinct figure against a "negative" or comparatively neutral ground. All the waffle about the object becoming less "self-important", about the gallery space becoming more important, all this simply mystified (on the level of "aesthetics") the fact that (on the level of production) galleries and museums reinforced rather than undermined the autonomy of the object. (This was mystification from another angle as well, since this kind of thinking shifted direction slightly and quickly led to the belief that galleries (-as-media) were somehow "antagonistic" to art, rather than its *raison d'etre*; this in turn made environmental and Conceptual art appear to be much more unconventional than in fact it was.) The work of Judd and Flavin in particular would have disappeared if it had been placed outside the gallery/museum space, in a more visually competitive environment. Moreover, even these works demanded isolation from each other.

But it's impossible to discuss the influence of museums (-as-media) on art without simultaneously discussing the influence of trade journalism (-as-media) on art. For trade journalism really came to life during the 'sixties and early 'seventies; there was a virtual land-rush on new publications, from *Artforum* to *Avalanche*. And for the most part, trade journalism rose to power because museum art was already in power. Of course this may seem a bit contradictory on the face of it, since trade journals can display art only by reproducing it photographically, and photographic reproductions, like television, hardly do justice to museum art. However much museum art may rely on spatial and cultural isolation, most of it does need to be seen in person to make sense; the problems of color scale, edge, have no real meaning unless they are contemplated in the raw, first hand; Brice Marden isn't the only one to complain about students who try to copy his paintings from *Artforum*, only to get the colors wrong because the color process is faulty. Nevertheless, it was just this need to be seen in person which helped encourage trade journals to expand their photographic, as well as critical coverage. After all, quite a few places, schools in particular, were unequipped to adequately display such work, initially anyway; the next best thing was reproduction. More importantly, while photographs may have provided the "look" of the work, criticism itself provided (established) the "aesthetic experience/theory" of being there, a surrogate view of how the style of art came across. It is for this reason that museum art is uniquely dependent on art criticism, as I indicated before. It is also for this reason that the contradiction of photographic reproduction is really a nonissue: Marden wouldn't have to worry about students getting his colors right if they weren't interested in his style of art to begin with; and the reason so many of them are, is that criticism of Marden's work has been so widely reproduced recently. In the end, photographs "illustrate" the article more than they do the art.

Of course, once trade journalism became prominent, 'sixties art itself began to change, moving away from its dependence on museums at least partially. These changes cropped up at various times and in various ways, though in the long run most of them presupposed the notion of reproduction to one degree or another. For instance, while Pop art was mostly made for museums, it did rely on reproduction- not only were many of its images reproductions of media images to begin with, but artists also began using techniques borrowed from commercial reproduction. For these reasons there was much less "lost", visually, when the images were reintroduced as reproductions



in journals. Pop art thus disseminated pop images as images, and reproduction as process, thereby reinforcing the power of journals to initially influence those images as well as distribute (reproduce) them nationally. (Of course, Warhol also distributed himself as an image, a policy subsequently adopted, though from a different angle, by many "body" artists.) Although this hardly exhausts the subject of Pop art (or any other movement), it does give an indication of the way the media base shifted for much 'sixties art; that is, why particular aesthetic concerns may have seemed viable at specific points in time and, moreover, why these concerns were singled out for recognition. For subsequent artists did continue to rely on this base: the geographically isolated work of Smithson and Heizer, as well as the work of other environmentalists, necessarily depended on a wide-spread network of trade journals, in this case specifically on the critical (surrogate) response of being there. Most of Conceptual art was similarly dependent: while the self-referential nature of this art, its emphasis on documentation, information, language, may have helped eliminate the need for critics, it was only because the work itself was so conducive to reproduction (in appearance and as an idea). Even the current promiscuity of Photo-realist work, as well as the "promise" of photography as serious art, should be obvious. It isn't a question of the "demise" of conceptualism and the "resurgence" of formalism—a real cigar store Indian notion—but the interpenetration of two, as yet distinct forms of media: like Pop art, both Photo-realist work and photographs reproduce well in journals, while at the same time they display well in galleries and museums. (Of course photography itself, as a medium, has periodically influenced painting for some time now. But these influences were always converted to painterly concerns; moreover, until recently, painting influenced photography much more than the reverse, I think. It was only after the need for reproduction became so important that photography moved away from painting, and in many ways began to reverse the direction of influence.) Finally, the rise of film and video can also be traced to the interdependence of journals and museums, since films/videos are not unique objects (they are made for reproduction), but they can be displayed in galleries/museums, and in fact usually are.

2

AS ARTFORUM GOES, SO GOES MY MERCEDES BENZ

Now the reason media have become so important to art, the reason media have penetrated to the level of production, is that they establish our link to the art market. There are many aspects of the production process, among which are consumption, distribution, and exchange. Art media have simply reified distribution by developing it as an independent mode of production, a business. This is comparable to the way advertising has reified consumption, at least once advertising became a lucrative business of market manipulation. But in developing distribution as a business, art media simultaneously altered both consumption and exchange. For it is clear that the worldwide influence of trade journalism and the Architecture of Contemplation, the primary media of art distribution now, has substantially enlarged the international art market; it has thus enlarged the consumption of art products (including media themselves, of course), contributing more than any other single factor perhaps to the inflation of art prices, and consequently to the feasibility of art as pure investment, to the rise of a group of traders (auction houses, art investment firms) whose purpose isn't to acquire art as a product but merely to retain the money which is generated from selling an art work at a higher price than it was brought. It has also helped art become a profitable business for artists, allowing many more people than before to become artists. Essentially, art media have become the major regulatory mechanism of the international market and thus of the exchange value, the market value of all art works, though particularly of modem art works. All capitalist products at least latently contain their exchange

value when they are produced (materials, wages, time, etc.). But the "non-utilitarian" nature of art makes this process more opaque; it even suggests art might be produced primarily for non-economic reasons—as if the 'market system were subsequently *imposed* on the production of art, as if artists were largely unaffected by market relationships and were only making art for our own personal pleasure as well as the pleasure of other people (use value). The penetration of media, then, demonstrates that there is indeed a (latent) connection to exchange value, since this penetration has become the current historical development of art production as exchange value, instead of use value. In order to claim that art is primarily use value production, you would have to shut your eyes completely to the myriad ways in which economics has influenced the social production of art (e.g., the reproduction of media in the art itself; the tendency towards stylistic consistency as a market identity; the cut-throat competition in the art world; the vast influx of artists during the sixties, corresponding to market expansion; the resonance between formalism and the tastes of the ruling class, as well as the requirements of American imperialism; and on and on).

But the media penetration of art also demonstrates a major difference between art products and most other products. For the, exchange value of most products (oil is an exception now) is determined independently of their circulation in the market; that is, the price of iron ore is determined by the cost of extracting it (wages, etc.) and by its availability in relation to demand, but not by the eventual value which accrues to it in the form of steel. Whereas, if an art work is bought in New York, sold at a higher price to someone in Paris, sold at an even higher price to someone in Switzerland, what usually happens is that the prices rise on *all* works done by that artist, old *and* new (if alive); in other words, market circulation (the result of media expansion) helps determine exchange value at all levels, instead of being virtually gratuitous to this process. Such price indeterminacy is one of the reasons why art appears to be "non-utilitarian" in the first place, an economically unregulated activity somewhat out of step with "pure" capitalism, that is, with the more or less predetermined values of wage-labor. For, once again, it seems that the market system is tacked onto art only as an after-thought, that the relation between art and the "market" exists only to the extent that art tickles the fancy of individual, or perhaps corporate buyers. Pardon a short guffaw.

So what is usually seen as the internal history of art (the development of "flatness" leading to "dematerialization", and the development of "dematerialization" leading to "information", etc., as if new art were solely determined by previous art), yes, what is normally seen as the internal history of art might more appropriately be seen in conjunction with the history of media. Modem Art is indeed the history of formalism, but it is also the history of capitalism—the history of products of labor sold for money, as well as the history of status quo power, since this is largely what media embody. As the modes of distribution have changed, grown more complex, so have the social production and and social relations of art. This connection to media is reinforced even on the level of day-to-day expediency, since most government and corporate money is given to media rather than to individual artists.

3

La region centrale

It is at the level of media that art world bureaucracy penetrates the social production of art. Essentially, the production of art is the reproduction of centralized authority. This is inevitable: the transformation of exchange value which resulted from media expansion (the vestiges of a patronage system shifting to a more capitalist one, where art is brought and sold in order to generate profit, social status, and an income for artists) necessarily created

the current bureaucracy at the same time. That is, the media transformation of exchange value create a New York-centered bureaucracy, while at the same time this bureaucracy reinforced the power of New York media to regulate exchange value. But the point is, this is a rather opaque process. Like the art they distribute, even more so, New York media appear to be culturally and politically "neutral". The best example of this is the Architecture of Contemplation, that brainchild of MOMA, because it seems so "self -effacing" in its efforts to make art the center of attention. But by producing such an historical, acultural art, the Architecture of Contemplation requires exactly the same exhibition space worldwide. While the art object itself may remain the center of attention, it is only because the conditions for showing it—conditions which have to be more or less uniform for the extraction of contemplative art to make sense, and in this sense inseparable from the object itself—have been reproduced in the museums of Buenos Aires as well as Los Angeles. The requirement of showing work allows architecture to homogenize the world in the image of New York. ("The Museum of Modem Art was characterized more by activity than by place" –Joshua Taylor.)

But trade journals, though somewhat less so, are also "self-effacing". Though *Artforum*, say, is always linked to New York, this is generally a geographic, and not a cultural assessment. The major reason for this, I think, is that trade journals distribute art in the form of criticism, which is to say, style. For discussions of style are usually confined to the artist's psychology or the internal history of art; they rarely include the socio-economic factors influencing the rise of one historical direction over another, the material reason why, for instance, Conceptual art may have arisen when it did. Even "movements" arc merely a loose collection of individuals rejecting or extending similar things in the movement which immediately preceded them, that is, internal art history. This whole process is enhanced by the tendency to concentrate only on mature styles, rarely conveying the stops and starts which culminate in these styles (except after-the-fact, in a "retrospective" context), much less the relevant socio-economic factors. It's as if Minimalism, say, could have arisen anywhere, though, just by coincidence (!), it happened to arise in New York. Of course it seems much less oppressive for distant artists to reproduce Minimalism, a style, than to reproduce the cultural web of Minimalism, New York—though in fact the two are inseparable, and reproducing Minimalism inevitably means adopting New York culture, however obliquely.

So the Architecture of Contemplation and trade journalism become the perfect mask for centralized authority and culture, concealing it even as they create and perpetuate it. An important result is that distant artists are forced to assume the same relation to their own culture as New York artists do to theirs. And in this light, the reproduction of Minimalism presupposes the penetration of New York media.

Of course, not *all* art comes from New York. The work of some L.A. artists, for instance (Bell, Diebenkorn, Kienholz, Irwin), has been given a lot of media coverage in New York and elsewhere. Also, there's the fact that some New York artists, Warhol in particular, had their first major show in L.A. and only subsequently became prominent in New York—a situation which parallels the accusation by photographers that New York has been one of the last places in the country to accept photography as serious art. The real political power of New York is its ability to standardise all these elements, while remaining the locus of this standardization process. Not only do distant artists reproduce New York—dominated media in their work (media as "form"), they have to contend with the way New York media frame regional contributions (media as "content"), and thus the cultural exaggeration which accrues to that reification of events. (When Bell and Kienholz and Irwin are referred to as "L.A. artists" this isn't a description so much as a stereotype, a desire to restrict the focus of L.A. art. Obviously attention is bestowed on art which best complements New York production (e.g., the recent Whitney bi-annual). Indeed, it was the sudden international prominence of New York during the fifties which significantly diluted the relatively vibrant community of artists in Los

Angeles to begin with; the process has merely escalated recently. This situation becomes particularly serious when L.A. artists themselves do the dirty work for New York. I'm thinking of Peter Plagens' long history with *Artforum*, and his new book *Sunshine Muse* (editorial assistance by John Coplans), where he always refracts L.A. art through New York standards.) Essentially, the production of high art is the reproduction of its own standardization, its own homogenization; even artists in New York are subject to this standardization, since they also reproduce media in their work.

In fact, this whole process is somewhat analogous to the development of money as universal exchange value. For by recreating the world in its own image, New York media are trying to shackle international art production to the universal "exchange value" of New York business and culture; that is, New York media are trying to install New York (U.S.; bourgeois) culture as the material factor against which all art products and activities are "exchanged". But when you come down to it, the spread of New York (U.S.; bourgeois) culture is not only analogous to the generalized transformation of products in to money, it is also, as I've already indicated, a major step in the transformation of specific art works (as standardized products) into the more universal standardization of money as exchange value (and thus a good example of how the "parts" of capitalism recapitulate, in both form and function, its totality). So, while distant artists such as I are indeed forced to assume the same relationship to our culture as artists in New York do to theirs, it's a process of alienation for everyone. None of us has much access to real power: the very act of reproducing media in our work is the relinquishment of power (though it may be the attainment of fame and fortune). The power is in the hands of those capitalists who own media, as well as those capitalists who contribute money to media. The difference is, distant artists are subject to a much greater distortion of culture, if not of power: New York media have developed in response to New York culture (at least in the context of, capitalism).

4

THE CONSCIOUSNESS INDUSTRY (PART 1)

The *technological* conditions for relieving poverty, disease, pollution, and boring jobs have existed for some time in the U.S. And of course we do see the results of this, since education has helped create more interesting jobs and the standard of living has risen. Even recent developments in feminism, for instance, can be at least partially traced to the (unintentional) influence of technology: the pill, improvements in household devices, the destruction of the myth of "vaginal orgasm" all helping to undermine women's traditional psycho-economic role as concubine. However, these "concessions" have not been overwhelming in their abundance. In many ways the conditions of poverty, etc. have remained the same or gotten worse. Yet it is just such developments as feminism and a shorter working day which point up the degree to which the contradictions of capitalist technology are becoming apparent. For this reason, and for the last seventy-five years at least, there has been a corresponding tendency in capitalism to step up *psychological* manipulation, the primary role of the "consciousness industry" (Enzensberger). The consciousness industry, like advertising, has reified consumption as an independent mode of production. But the consciousness industry isn't selling products, it is distributing and creating a market for the status quo.

There has always been a symbiotic relationship of sorts between the state and its people (or between feudal rulers and their serfs), and the state has always tried to maintain (enforce; sell) the status quo. The difference is that the interests of the corporate state have become increasingly antagonistic to the interests of its people. The contradictions of advanced technology are only one example of this.

Consumerism, particularly when it is projected through the media helps solve this problem by creating a market for the status quo, that is by creating a psycho-social

receptiveness to the status quo. To say that most of us feel we "need" a car, breakfast cereals, Bunny Bread, meat etc. is only to say that the vested, and combined interests of corporations and the state have increasingly come to define our basic "needs". Consumerism is an (asymmetrical) relationship of exchange, where capitalists always control the products to be exchanged (bought and sold), and where the content of what is exchanged, the specific product, is much less important than the perpetuation of the exchange relationship itself. The significance of this situation is that while status quo relationships may change through time-even the' 'status quo" is not a fixed entity, but a historical development of specific power relationships—people's *acceptance* of the status quo never changes. While it is implicitly granted that production depends on consumption (among other things), the act of consumption has now become a means of relinquishing power, and not a means of asserting (potential) power. Consumerism is thus a buffer against the passing of time (though it itself is an historical development—a typically bourgeois mystification of history, time); simultaneously, consumerism helps appropriate the *superfluity* of time produced by technology (a shorter working day), rarely allowing the potentially liberating character of "free-time' to emerge, insofar as the consumption-orientation of "free-time" as well as the products to be consumed merely reinforce capitalist relationships of production.

Consumerism distracts us from the potential of our roles as producers; it presupposes and perpetuates production as exchange rather than use value. Though unemployment forces us to realize that a reduction in consumption results in a reduction in jobs, this usually leads to "solutions" on the level of consumption only. This is undoubtedly part of the reason why strikes in the U.S. always center on more money, consumerism, not on changing the basic structure of production—which is just what capitalism wants. After all, a basic link in the exploitation of workers is money itself, since most of us are forced to exchange our labor for money in order to buy the products our own labor may have produced in the first place, and money is concentrated in the hands of the capitalists. In this way the products of our labor are separated from what we do and become something which is done to us. We thus come to see these products, and by extension ourselves and each other, as *objects*, as something we have no control over (consumerism as the relinquishment of power). Whereas, if we concentrated on the sterility of our roles as producers, we would be much more likely to demand satisfaction from our jobs—contrary to capitalism's need for a self-perpetuating, oppressed labor force—perhaps reversing the downward spiral of consumerism.

5

THE CONSCIOUSNESS INDUSTRY (PART 2)

"Today, by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value, the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental" –Walter Benjamin (1936).

Now the point is, the art world is also part of the consciousness industry. The art produced by the Architecture of Contemplation and trade journalism doesn't encourage creative participation, it encourages voyeuristic consumption (which is to say, it helps appropriate "free-time"); moreover, the conditions for this consumption are virtually standardized worldwide (which is to say, it helps appropriate "free-space"). But this development simply reflects, on a less abstract level, the development of art as exchange value. So while art world media do distribute products (art works), this always takes a back seat to the fact that they mainly distribute consciousness; art isn't merely an object, it is the concrete manifestation of status quo power relationships; the dual purpose of media and

art is to advertise themselves as products while they implicitly advertise (reproduce) the socio-economic system which produced them. Indeed, it could be said that the "content" of American art is merely the reification of its "form" as exchange value. That is, formalistic concerns, etc. serve no other function than to perpetuate the kind of alienation which results from bourgeois production, including art production, being nothing more than exchange value (capital; money) (which inherently involves imperialism). The notion of "form-as-content" takes on added meaning here, projecting a world of consumerism. In contrast to many products of bourgeois society (computers, blenders, tractors, radios), which could liberate our lives under different economic conditions, art has no such potential: whereas bourgeois technology does not necessarily produce only bourgeois products, bourgeois artists do produce only bourgeois art. (Of course, criticism's reduction of art to the level of style [standardization] is the flip side of this process.) Consequently, however "satisfactory" our own production may seem—and probably it is, or becomes, "just a job" for many of us-this production necessarily rises on the oppression of others: art only helps to reify consumption as an independent mode of production.

In fact it should be clear by now that art production is particularly well-suited to the consciousness industry in light of its emphasis on psychology. For art and media have become an incredibly reactionary weapon of psychological warfare, inducing passivity (the consumption of "neutral" culture) to further the cause of American (capitalist) economic values. While American art does appear culturally "neutral" now, it implicitly conveys the development of the American economy totechnology, industrialization, urbanization, advertising. The work of Morris, Olitski, Estes, Marden would be inconceivable without this socio-economic base. Art thus reinforces these values in American society and spoonfeeds them to other countries. Indeed, recent American foreign policy of sweet talk imperialism, the penetration of American culture by way of friendly persuasion, the sweet-nothings of American billions, American technology ... American art.

What needs to be reiterated, however, is that despite the psycho-political influence of art on certain aspects of the world (appealing to, and reinforcing the power of the national bourgeoisie in numerous nations, including the U.S.), artists do not have much power. Most of us are in the rather curious position of doing something we "enjoy", while at the same time we oppress others (consumerism) in the very act of oppressing ourselves (production as exchange value). Artists are no different from other workers, in that while we may be the ones to actually "make" the products, we have little or no control over the system of production as exchange value. And by reproducing media, by basing the content of production on its own form as exchange value, we simply perpetuate capitalism, the major effect being that the products of our labor become the means of oppressing us. But the most significant aspect of bourgeois art is that it offers no potential for eventual appropriation as use value for ourselves (of course it already exists as use value [consumerism] for capitalism). As I said before, bourgeois art reproduces only bourgeois art. In this form, the only "use" art has for us is its use as exchange value. So in the end artists are also very different from many other workers, in that what we produce is completely gratuitous, completely contradictory to an economy based on non-exploitive use value (that is, use value exclusive of the needs of capitalism). This is the best indication of our powerlessness. It is also an excellent indication of how we inherently exist in *opposition* to the working class. This whole situation evolves, I think, from the peculiarity of the art market—where art production is not really defined by the master/servant relationship which does define worker production in general (that is, as wage labor), but where art production is defined by the (historically) less developed situation of an extended exchange market. This forces us to reproduce media (our current connection to the market) and thus reproduce a complex and oppressive system of capitalist relationships, while we simultaneously think of ourselves as "free spirits", opposed to oppression, even capitalism.

6

MEDIA REDUX?

It seems to me that the failure of American art is the failure of much 'sixties "radicalism": instead of organization determining media, media determined organization. In general, the substance of American art is media coverage (museum art; Polaroid art; some combination of the two); in general, the substance of much 'sixties organization was media coverage (marches, marches, marches; most teach-ins; rock concerts).

If we really don't want to capitulate to the consciousness industry we have to use media differently. Using media differently means organizing differently. Like technology in general, media aren't inherently good or bad; they merely happen to be used oppressively whenever they are embedded in capitalism. So organizing differently means organizing against the art market, on one level or another.

Now *The Fox* is interesting because it is less a publication, a reified object, than the byproduct of a community of people. That is, there's some attempt to use it as an instrument of praxis, both a cause and effect of self-determination. Similar attempts are being made on the West Coast. Quite a few journals were started in 1974 especially, some of the most "visible" ones being *Left Curve*, *Intermedia*, *Straight Turkey* (now defunct, I think, and the worst by far of these three). One of the differences between *The Fox* and these journals is that they devote a certain amount of space to resource lists, trying to connect up the very horizontal, spread out community which exists in California, as well as Oregon and Washington. Consequently there's a certain emphasis on all kinds of artists working together, a cross-media approach.

But the major difference between these journals and *The Fox* is that they have different political ramifications. When you get right down to it, New York needs *The Fox*, it welcomes it: if more journals like *The Fox* spring up in New York, New York will become not only the heart of market imperialism but in addition a major center of *opposition* to that market imperialism. In that case, the reified form of national/international exchange would remain intact: both New York-standardized art and its dissenting voice would emanate from New York. "*Artforum* urges its audience to read *The Fox*". If *The Fox* intensifies the appropriation of dissent, without really forcing the hand of market imperialism, it will only turn out to be counter-productive.

It is, of course, difficult to create polarization *within* the New York art world. Artists are too secure in their illusion of power, a "security" inherently dependent on the international market for New York art. Under the circumstances, *The Fox* should probably seek to reestablish New York as a more local culture, that is, a culture which doesn't depend on the domination of other cultures for its identity and its sense of power, and which might ultimately reject exchange market relationships.

What's become increasingly clear to me, however, is that in order to "decentralize" the art world we have to decentralize opposition to the art world. The problem with market imperialism, with bourgeois culture nationally, is that we enslave ourselves by identifying psychologically with our oppressors. The psychological bind of imperialism is that we frequently end up turning to our oppressors for help: foreign countries turn to the U.S. for more industry, money, and culture; distant artists turn to New York for more energy and ideas. Of course *Left Curve* and some other West Coast journals are indicative of a trend in the opposite direction. But I'm always surprised—well, not surprised, but depressed — by the incredible defensiveness of most of these journals. For instance, a journal just came out, Currant, which tries to contrast the "humor" of West Coast art with the high "serioumess" of East Coast art, concluding that West Coast art, at its best, is more "mature" because humor is the most mature expression of humankind. What a weird contortion of stereotypes! But quite a few of the other West Coast journals seem to be sourgrape productions (to indulge

in my own stereotypes): there are discussions of how Hemingway and other major artists were "discovered" via small publications—the implication being that these journals are stepping stones to the big time, and as such hardly in opposition to the hegemony of New York or Modernist culture.

Decentralization presupposes that various communities, enclaves of "alternate organization", can arise within capitalism, even though they are interested in breaking down capitalist relationships; it hardly outwits the larger circumstance of having to polarize against capitalism within capitalism. Decentralization thus becomes a vital *psychological* strategy, for it is certainly an attack on reproduced consciousness, consumerism, as well as the bourgeois ideology, morphology, and psychology currently built into art production. We need to stress psychology here, because reproduced consciousness inevitably inhibits the rise of non-alienated consciousness.

In the end, the decentralization of art is impossible unless it is somehow brought to bear on the contradictions of capitalism, which is to say, on art itself as a manifestation of capitalism. Since it is the very structure of consumerism, standardization, and exchange value which defines high art today, decentralization isn't trying to "affect" high art but eliminate it completely. It is therefore trying to eliminate all of us who consider ourselves high artists—eliminate our role, our identify as high artists. Decentralization stresses the psychology of self-determination, sexual labor, the potential anger in the face of an economic system which uses the products of our labor to enslave us. For self-determination is impossible when the production of art is based on a world market centered in New York, that is, when production is exchange value rather than use value. In other words, the decentralization of art is impossible unless its class basis, as an exclusively bourgeois product, is eventually transformed. A real local consciousness is not achieved, not completely, by merely stressing the local nature of local art 'production (a revitalized "regionalism")—though this may be a transitional form; it is only achieved, dialectically, through an involvement in local struggles against capitalist oppression, or at least through helping to raise rather than repress class consciousness. That is, a decentralized consciousncss is impossible to achieve unless you do something about the socio-economic system which continually tries to standardize consciousness.

It is important to realize that decentralization isn't a matter of isolationism. I am stressing local production, local struggle, because I think it is at least psychologically easier to engage in struggle/the raising of consciousness on a smaller, more familiar scale. (l may well be wrong. But one of the major effects of the consciousness industry has been that large scale contradictions ("gaps") in the promised land of capitalism (e.g., inflation; depressions) are blamed on politics (OPEC, the Democrats), rather than on capitalism itself. Presently, anyway, this makes these rather abstract "gaps" in capitalism difficult to organize in and organize against on the same level of abstraction (essentially: a mass conversion to socialism). (This is a strategic problem largely, I think, because it is a psychological problem.) On the otherhand, localized production and struggle has to link up with other localized production and struggleinitially, perhaps, as a means of mutual support, and eventually as more widespread and unified opposition to capitalist relationships.

The use of media could thus become an agent for non-oppressive development, a raised fist so to speak, instead of another link in the treadmill of cultural tourism. Once again, though, we have to remember that media don't become "revolutionary" just because "artists" use them, in fact usually just the opposite. A good example is the co-op galleries started by artists traditionally excluded from galleries and museums (women, minorities), where the Architecture of Contemplation blithely remains the norm for exhibiting what many of these artists consider to be "radical" work. Another example is the work of, say, Nam June Paik or Douglas Davis, whose notion of "participation" TV still presupposes the artist as the basic link in creativity—such that the audience is more or less confined to following directions or responding to a "feedback" situation dictated by the artist. This hardly undermines the

asymmetrical transmitter/receiver relationship common to TV in general. The answer to technology is not "more technology" (Paik)—or at least not only more technology—but reorganization of the way existing technology is used. In fact, I recently found out—some of you probably know this already—that the FCC has set aside twenty percent of FM frequencies for educational purposes. This has a lot of possibilities for local political power, if handled correctly. Such access to straight media is likely to be rather minimal, however, and probably short-term in any case. A possible solution to this problem is the development of a parallel media system-not simply the alternate print media of the "sixties" (a real middle class, tried-and-true form of agitation), but various media, increasingly linked together, one target of which would be the straight media system (this includes such things as the local effects of MOMA [the Architecture of Contemplation] or *Artforum*). Actually, this parallel system probably already exists, if the resource lists of *Intermedia*, etc., are any indication; it merely needs to be linked together better and more self-consciously pointed in the direction of class struggle.

*

I realize this discussion is very general, very sketchy. (It may also seem pretty "optimistic," probably because we're so used to seeing our false consciousness as fulfilling behavior, not as something we *need* to overcome.) This is, in part, the result of space. But more importantly, this discussion exists as a process of self-clarification as much as it may aspire to be a "call to arms," perhaps more so; that is, it's more important for me now to sort out a direction for praxis than to sort out the specifics (aside from this discussion) of praxis—not that my specifics would necessarily overlap with yours at the moment anyway. It's likely that, with twice this space, I would only be able to document these ideas better, not say them a great deal more complexly. But I do think we need to begin to develop a theory of both art media and possible responses to this media, a theory which might help sharpen the cutting edge of the various tactics which have already arisen in response to New York, as well as those which might arise in the future. At the very least we have to deny completely the illusion of nonpolitical production—as if creating alone in one's studio is somehow beyond politics or economics, as if being a "political" artist is only a matter of dealing with specifically "political" subject matter. But simply starting another community or another small publication; simply starting another museum which relies on the Architecture of Contemplation, however democratic its organization (Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art); simply demanding the Museum of Modern Art to show the work of minorities and women; simply using the technology of decentralization (especially video and film)—none of these strategies, in themselves, necessarily force the hand of New York or capitalism. We have to organize much more specifically than that; we have to be aware of the implications of organization. In this context, using media differently is important now, because our relationship to media, for all of us in society, is inseparable from our relationship to power.

New York, New York and Los·Angeles, California

REFERENCES

Sherman E. Lee (Ed.), *On Understanding Art Museums*, Pren-New Jersey, 1975_

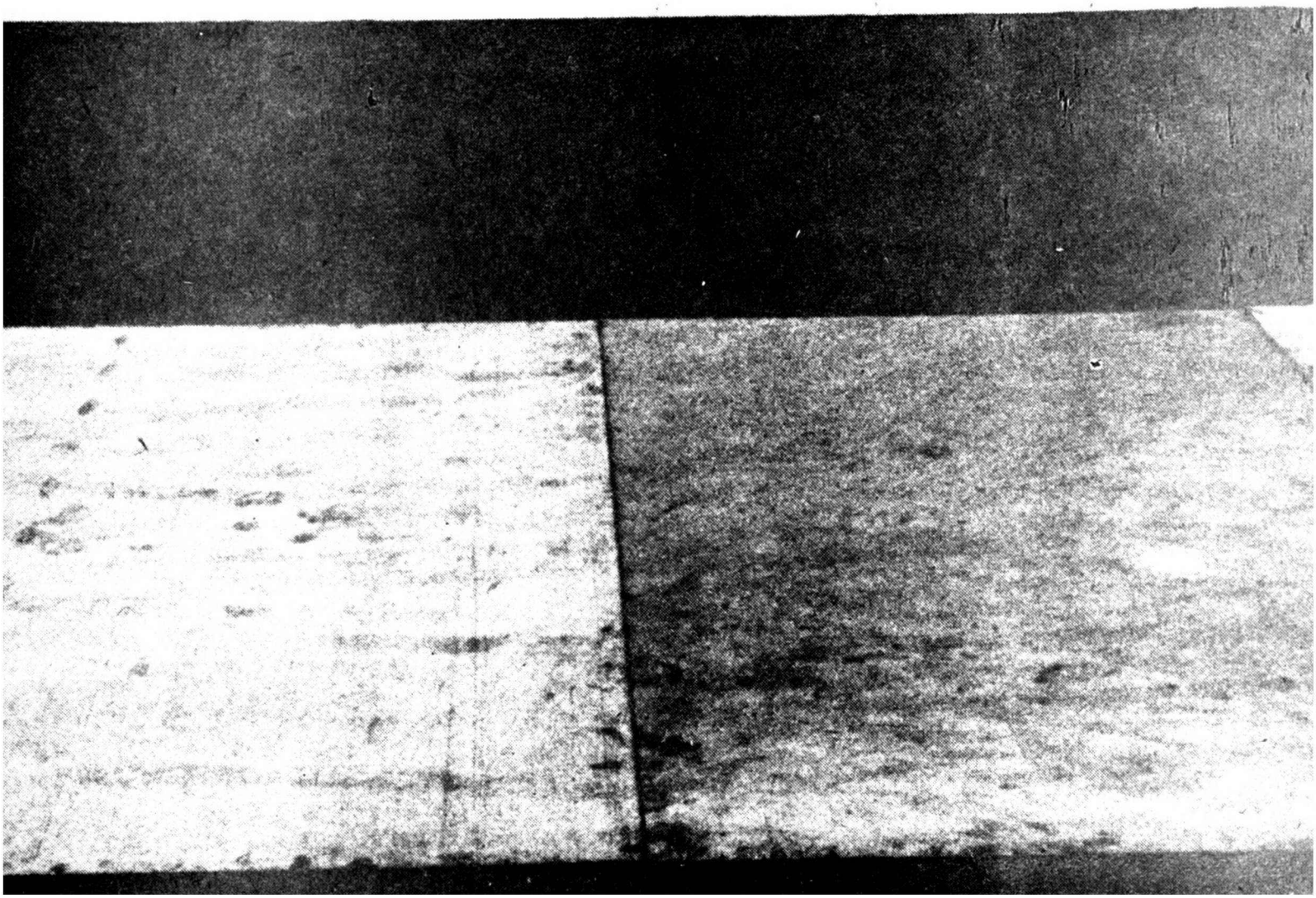
Kurt W. Forster, "Critical History of Art, or Transfiguration of Values?," *New Literary History*, Vol. III, No. 3, 1972,

Karl Marx. *The Grundrisse*. Harper and Row, New York, 1971.

Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York, 1973.

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964.

Berteill Ollman, "Toward Class Consciousness Next Time: Marx and the Working Class," *Politics and Society*, 1972.



LOOKING, BACK, GOING ON -PART 2

TERRY ATKINSON

In the article 'Looking Back, Going On' in the previous issue of *The Fox* an attempt was made to utilize the distinction between language used as a conservative instrument and language used as a revisionary instrument in context of the phenomenology of The New Army of Britain in 1914. The present remarks are an attempt to discuss further the structural character of language used as a conservative instrument. In doing this, I hope to be able, for both readers and myself, to build up a clearer picture of the concept of fixed grammar. In 'Looking Back, Going On' the following suggestion was made "If, *somehow*, a control is placed by the institutions of a given society upon, for example, a characteristic device of language-use such as self-embedding in respect of the language-users in the society, then here is a considerable weapon in the armoury for producing a standardized 'consciousness'." (p. 129)

What this essay will entail then is to say something more about the 'somehow'.

Record and testimony furnish a lot of evidence that in the classroom of late Victorian Britain there was a high incidence of inculcation of slogans through repetitious recitation (rote learning), the 'repeat after me' approach. It seems that the formative process of learning in this way is one of accepting material passively and reproducing it for matching against the teacher's model. The teacher produces a fixed stimulus and elicits a fixed response. If this is the case then the basic epistemological operations of the education will be reduced in complexity in the sense of.the attempt to standardize the communal perception of the pupils en bloc; because the education aims at achieving standardization of interpersonal exchange. That is, if there are two interpersonal situations, say between A and B, and between C and D, and the starting point of their respective exchanges is the same, with A and C's conversation acting as the respective stimulus, then B and D's response should be as nearly exactly a replica of each other as possible.[1]

Such an education will tend to set out its conventions as commandments. Any questioning allowed within such a system would have to be questioning towards a preconceived end, one of the primary requirements of which willbe to allow no questioning of the superstructure of the ideology (the world-picture). Life views will come to rest upon a number of key slogans[2] and as a precise expression of these simplified epistemological operations life itself will come to be seen as simpler than it really is, one of the most typical manifestations of which will be a 'sentimental adoration of simplicity per se.[3] In such an educational framework 'knowing' will be a matter of (mentally) being able to tick off the right item, where "tick off" suggests the mechanistic character of the epistemological operations. The achievement ascribed to the learner's role will be that of achieving tightly prescribed goals. The teacher, having already been taught by his/her teacher what her/his needs are, continue teaching her/his pupils what their needs are.[4] The distinction between language used as a conservative instrument and language used as revisionary instrument corresponds, then, to the distinction between language used as an instrument of teaching and language used as an instrument of learning.[5]

In their book "Plans and the Structure of Behaviour" Miller, Galanter and Pribram,[6] (hereafter MGP), set out the concept of a 'Plan' (when mentioning the word "Plan" I shall stay with MGP's convention of using a capital p). They hold that a Plan can be defined as any hierarchical process in the organism controlling the order in which a sequence

of operations is to be performed.[7] A Plan is said to be involuntary when it cannot be changed according to its consequences for the organism. A Plan is said to be inflexible when its component parts cannot be rearranged or reordered. A Plan is said to be inherited when it does not have to be learned or discovered.[8]

MGP compare their notion of hierarchical process with Tinbergen's[9] description of hierarchy as exemplified in his concept of a consummatory act. Tinbergen states that the consummatory act is characterized by a thoroughly stereotyped motor pattern, and that such acts can easily be recognized by direct observation of the animal's behaviour and usually have a self-exhausting character. Within each consummatory act there is a hierarchical organization. At the higher levels of the hierarchy the various components of the animal's instinct can be rearranged according to the prevailing environmental conditions. In this sense the consummatory act is much more complex than a reflex or tropism: it being a coordinated activity of several parts of the animal's body, which, in turn, can be analysed into movements of muscle groups and then, finally, into contractions of individuals muscles. There is only the possibility of rearrangement at the higher level and as the process approaches nearer and nearer the level of actual behaviour so it becomes less and less flexible. Tinbergen writes" ... until at the level of the consummatory act we have to do with an entirely rigid component, the fixed pattern, and a more or less variable component, the taxis, the variability of which, however, is entirely dependent on changes in the outer world."

MGP, in comparing Tinbergen's description of hierarchical organization with their concept of hierarchical organization as set out in the concept of the Plan, observe that the higher levels as described by Tinbergen, are not sequential, but simply classificatory, and that not until he is attempting to describe the level of the consummatory act does the structure take on the hierarchically organized sequence characteristic of a Plan. They go on to suggest that this leads to a view of relatively discrete, stereotyped, Innate Plans for organizing actions into a consummatory act, which is itself ordered in time by some other kind of mechanism. This other mechanism may be either chaining, if the consequences of one act provide the situation needed to release the next, or concatenation, if the next act is generated by events not regularly[11] caused by the preceding act. Thus, concatenations are flexible, chains are inflexible. It follows from this then, that MGP are compelled to make a further distinction between Innate Plans and Plans, stating that Innate Plans are not flexible, but Plans *may* be flexible. It is a matter of simple logic then, drawn from this last point, to observe that non-Innate Plans (i.e. Plans) may also be inflexible.[12]

The property of a Plan which is most important in context of these remarks is that of communicability because communicable Plans play the crucial role in educational processes. The suggestion that non-Innate Plans may be inflexible can be iterated by observing that habits and skills which were originally voluntary, assume, in becoming habits and skills, a relatively inflexible, involuntary and automatic character. Once the Plan that controls a sequence of skilled actions becomes fixed through overlearning, it will function in much the same way as an Innate Plan in instinctive behaviour. So, there is the further suggestion here that the study of Plans for learning (and 'learning') may offer another useful distinction—that between non-recurrent Plans and instinctive or habitual Plans.[13]

From numerous experiments involving subjects reading lists of nonsense syllables, has been gathered a considerable body of evidence that even after having read these lists hundreds of times, the subjects, if they were not aware that they would later be tested for recall, have learned nothing. So it seems that unless a person has some kind of Plan for learning then nothing happens. In order to achieve memorization the person must have an 'intent to learn.' Given this intention to learn, the act follows by what MGP call a steady heave of the will. In defining an "intention to learn", MGP have to draw on the idea of meta-Plans[14] specifying a person as "executing a Plan to form a Plan to guide recall." The "intention to learn" (the metaPlan) does not stamp in or strengthen the associations, it simply signifies that the person will search for associations he

already has.

The study of Learning Plans may well tell something about the way people form Plans in general. For example, the natural, naive, first impulse kind of approach to the list of nonsense syllables is to translate them into words of some form or another. This suggests that a natural part of nonrecurrent Plans are words and phrases and is perhaps a general pointer to the importance of a mastery of grammar as a contributive means toward the forming of Plans, insofar as the subjects tend to master the material by organizing it into chunks formed around one or a number of the familiar grammatical units, e.g. words, phrases, etc. However the mechanical methods of presentation used in many of the experiments rather obscured this fact, because such methods order the subject's time so that he cannot spend his time as he wishes.

Rote, serial memorization is a fairly complicated learning process to build up. The argument of MGP is that such a skill could not maintain a smooth and successful running unless it is guided by a Plan. So, for example, in the case of the experiments concerning the memorization of nonsense syllables, if a subject reports all the wild and improbable connections he had to use in memorizing the lists then he would be telling us about the way in which she/he developed her/his Plan to control her/his performance during the test period. It seems there are two kinds of Plans that are involved in rote memorization. On the one hand, the subject is attempting to construct a Plan which will when executed, generate the nonsense syllables in the required order. On the other hand, she/he must also adopt a Plan to guide her/his memorizing. She/ he must choose a strategy for constructing the Plan for recall. The subject has a number of ways she/ he may choose from for memorizing. One is to translate the nonsense syllable into words, then, to organize the words into sentences and/ or images, and if the length of the list demands it, even into rudimentary story sequences. Another Plan a person can use is sheer drill, perhaps aided by rythmic grouping, or rhyming, until the list rolls out rather as the letters of the alphabet do.[15]

Probably the longest unorganized list most of us ever learn is the alphabet, and there also the groupings come quickly to us through the culture (e.g. vowels, acceptable letter succession, etc.) for sorting out simple strategies for memorizing. These learning traces recede when recitation by endless repetition, transforms the operation from a conscious planned performance into a habitual one. As the learner groups and renames the items in the list to be memorized, he effectively shortens the length of the list. At the point where the number of units is such that they can be held and scanned quickly then there is no serious problem for executing the Plan when the time comes to translate it into action.

There is also a good deal of evidence to show that there is no fundamental difference between the way recitation is guided by a hierarchical Plan and the way other intentional behaviour is guided by such a Plan. It is relevant to note here that it seems experienced memorizers do change their strategy for memorizing. The change is prompted in part by increasing familiarity with the material to be memorized, less insecurity concerning the task, and an increased appreciation of the usefulness of rythmic grouping over semantic grouping. But it also seems that experienced memorizers never give up the practice of grouping the material into sub-strings, producing a simple hierarchy. Which itself seems to suggest that grammar acquisition is critical. This may be a very rudimentary or degenerate grammar, but the idea of recognition seems indispensable. According to idiosyncratic characteristics, many memorizers build up remarkably elaborate hierarchies. Why is it that such elaborate hierarchies are built up anyway? Is this not an additional burden to what has already to be remembered? If a list of words is remembered as a chain, then n-I associations is required, and if they are organized into substrings, groups, etc., and then associations between these items are formed, then is not this a proliferation of further items needing to be committed to memory? This seems to bear upon the limits of a person's span of apprehension. On average, the largest number of digits a person can remember is about seven. In an experiment, if the experimenter wished to make sure her/his subject will never fail, then she/he must reduce

the number to four or five symbols, allowing at one time an easy grouping in consciousness as a new list to which the subject can attach a new label.

To summarize, so far. The concept of a Plan has been noted and the related concept of a hierarchical organization. Also the distinction between Plans and Innate Plans, noting specifically that Plans (i.e. non-Innate Plans), although learnt and not instinctive, may become inflexible.

It is worth pointing out here that a person conducting the kind of experiments we have previously mentioned (dealing with the learning of lists of nonsense syllables) really becomes a clinician, in the sense of her/him being concerned with only one nervous system at at a time. In contrast the special point about the concept of fixed grammar is that it is posited upon the possibility of studying, so to speak, 'many nervous systems at a time.' The area it is intended to be applied to is that of a public, shared educational experience. There are a number of points from the 'one nervous system at a time' approach, that are, nevertheless, very important in bearing upon the 'many nervous systems at a time' approach. One of the most critical of these points is the concept of "the intention to learn." The suggestion now, then, is that an educational system such as that of Victorian Britain ensampled, regulated and standardized the intention to learn. It was in doing this that the various class-separated sections of Victorian Education were kept in-phase.

There is a very good reason to think that 'many nervous systems at a time' can be studied. Large groups of people apparently learn the same grammatical rules (groups such English speakers, Urdu speakers, Gujurati speakers, Spanish speakers, etc.) and this seems to suggest a human predisposition to intersubjective exchange. Having learnt the grammar large groups of people can, and do, use this grammar for further memorization operations, and in so doing may well, and usually do, improve their memorization techniques. So there is a common structural factor in the memorization operations of large numbers of people. Advocates of universal grammatical characteristics, hold that there is a common structural characterer to all memorization operations of all people. But let us stay with the more modest view that there is a common structural factor in the memorization operations carried out within each respective group of a large number of large groups of people. One of the things a grammar literally is, is a public learning instrument[16] for a grammar is, by definition, potentially public insofar as it is a system of rules. Grammar is having a Plan ready, a state of having a means of acting which it is possible for another person to understand, but even if he doesn't the crucial point is that he can understand the Plan if he is so inclined.

Insofar as the traditional picture of association holds that language is simply an extremely complicated instance of behavioural processes then it seems incapable of explaining a number of aspects of language acquisition and language-use.[17] The traditional theory of association says that association is built up slowly through frequent contiguity and repeatedly strengthened by reinforcement. As a characterization of a conditional salivary reflex this may be accurate, but as a characterization of human verbal learning there is a considerable body of experimental evidence[18] that points to the fact that storage is not the problem. In respect of memory and verbal learning the problem is retrieval. Memorization appears to be much more than a simple hooking together of two items at a time. It is not the building of the connections that is problematic, it's finding them later.

Without any great degree of self conscious theory, the controllers of Victorian education, through the overwhelming promotion of repetitive rote memorization as a teaching methodology, regulated and standardized the association-finding pathways. Here can be seen the possibility of an operational superstructure for standardizing memory; not simply a public memory in the sense of one person's recounting of his memories being capable of being understood by another person, but that of one person's fund of memories being structurally similar to that of another person in respect of the interpretive content of the memories. In such an educational framework the teacher does

not only teach the pupil what his needs are, he forms the form of the needing.[19] For a given society to advance and maintain an educational system the language-use of which is heavily weighted as an instrument of teaching, then in respect of the retrieval patterns of the verbal learning the language-use must be made to function as if it is a classical reinforcing mechanism. But it is only storage that can be satisfactorily explained by a theory of association-reinforcement. In 'Looking Back, Going On' it was suggested that fixed grammar can only be a brake on creative language-use. Language-use is intrinsically creative, thus the concept of language-user as automaton is a logical absurdity, arguing out as 'If an automaton then not a language-user.'[20] This is the all-embracing contradiction in an educational system maintaining language as an instrument of teaching.

But although the productive aspects of language-use cannot, apparently, be eliminated, it obviously does not follow from this that they cannot be impeded or blocked for long (or for that matter, short) periods of time. But, historically, it seems that blocked language-use will eventually tend to generate adverse empirical consequences of that very language-use, providing, inadvertently, input back into the language-use calling for new ideological patterns.

The Brazilian writer Paulo Freire has invented a term "the culture of silence," and by this he has meant a culture, the process of transmission of which produces a standardized uncritical participation in that culture.[21] This act of uncritical participation renders the participator marginal to any controlling decisions concerning the continuing character of that society. The Portuguese word for such a person is marginado. These two terms "the culture of silence" and "marginado" have some heuristic extrapolative power in context of looking at The New Army of 1914, although it should be noted that Freire's analysis is specifically applied to contemporary Latin American societies. But the suggestion here is that language used as a conservative instrument, as an instrument of teaching, is intended to produce a culture of silence. The marginado, by definition, lives under orders, some explicit, many implicit. The literate marginado is a product of rigid control (which may itself be implicit, directed by an overlearned inflexible, non-Innate Plan) of literate transmission. A transmission intended to make the future repeat the present,[22] programming and determining a person's capacity in the precise sense of specifying her/his needs by forming her/his needing through reducing 'learning' to technical action produces to a large degree thinking in mechanistic sequences. The literate culture of silence is typically manifest through the fact of large numbers of people who participate in the given society being articulate only insofar as the education/propaganda instrumentalities proscribe the form and limit of that articulation. There is nothing logically absurd about the concept of passive articulation, it simply entails that a person who is so cannot be aware that he is passively articulate.

Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

NOTES

1. The education aimed at precisely this—If A's initial conversational item THEN B's following conversational item. And this should apply in all situations: where a conversational item like that of A takes place then a conversational item like that of B should follow. The aim is to make the future predictable.

There have been social groups who have prided themselves on having produced (and being able to continue to produce), countless members whose behaviour is predictable and standardized and insured against asking themselves questions about the value of self-consciousness, self-criticism as part of their social model. It seems that the latter lack of critical insight is almost a prerequisite of the former standardization and social stability. The logical outcome, if logic were the only thing at work here, would be a society the members of which would be standardized throughout. The reason that many social groups appear to be so successful in approaching this logical limit rests on a basic human intuition of finding something irresistibly psychologically comforting in being similar to someone else. (cf note 15, below).

This is not, however, a plea for modern liberal individualism—assuredly, the manifestations of, for example, the 'Moderate', or the 'Artist as Free Individual' offer very clear instances of some well established and current fixed-grammar models entrenched around the insidious structures of the 'Let's be reasonable'—'Live and let live' consequences.

2. It is a simple maxim that holds something like "the simpler life is made, the easier it is to remember." Such maxims, if dogmatically applied, will ignore the flux like quality of much of our experience. Individuals, groups, societies, etc. adhering

to such maxims identify our apparent need for ordering our experience, with an assertion that experiernce itself is ordered. The distinction between the two factors, our apparent need for ordering our experience and the quality of experience itself, is obvious; but, nevertheless, often ignored.

3. The argument for simplicity has some strong links, albeit ones that are persistently misconstrued, with a deterministic outlook. It seems that there is a strong human intuition which directs us toward feeling more secure with chain sequences than with concatenation successions (cf. para. 4 (the preceding remarks) and notes 5 and 12 [below). If we assume that the idiom of determinism is constituted of the language of 'common-sense' (apparently) understanding the behaviour of things, then, can we say that to understand the concept of indeterminism is to subscribe to a deterministic view of indeterminism? This way of putting the question may be suspiciously near the metaphysical void, but, nevertheless, it does give a hint as to the linguistic methodological difficulties in dealing with the concept. It should be remembered that 'predictability' and 'determinism', though related, are by no means interchangeable. The Rousseauesque admiration of 'The Noble Savage' seemed to rise from a number of contradictory components; the primitive simplicity of the culture was admired insofar as it was regularized, predictable, and 'natural' (i.e. 'close to nature', 'in harmony with nature', etc.). The pattern of life was admired literally for its non-unexpectedness. The concept of 'primitive', in this historical context, has seemingly developed a contradiction which underlines its triviality. An admiration of the 'primitive' from this view, means the admirer is non-primitive, in the sense that he must be aware of not being primitive, for, by definition, one of the important things about being primitive, is that such a person cannot be aware of this state else she/he contravenes the state of 'spontaneity', thereby becoming non-primitive. Various models developed from this view have been, and still are, found in their exemplary forms in the models of the artist, writer, etc. This has been a great ploy for 'understanding' the special temperament of the artiste—in technical terms. The model has been interpreted in terms of classical mechanical causation in either its weaker or stronger sense, stating that the temporal relation between the states of the system of 'artistic behaviour' at different times is a relation of necessary connection."In political terms, this has meant a highly determined tradition of interpretation for the semantics of 'creativity, individualism, freedom and self-expression. Artists, writers, etc., who have talked left and behaved right, are the rule rather than the exception. The traditional association of simplicity with purity, honesty and modesty is a different tradition with many of the same logical shortcomings. A notion of 'working class' has been promoted on an ethic of simplicity in much so-called Marxist criticism. Marx has many points of power in his theories, one of these is a clear ability not to sentimentalize the concept of 'working class' as simplistic, pure and fIxated. Much Marxist theory on art, and this includes a fair amount of William Morris' theory in his looking back at Mediaeval craft technology, has held to some rigid historical models, when dealing with craft-base. There is nothing logically necessary about the association of job satisfaction with traditional craft. The concept of job satisfaction is not an eternal object of contemplation, it is as subject to a critique of development as any other branch of social psychology, and the psychological category of 'need' of which job satisfaction is a type, can only be seen as non-transformable and structured according to classical mechanical causation if it is based on a yearning for simpler days, or what are thought to be simpler days.

4. If needs can be made as resistant to transformation as possible, then a society has a very effective structure for stabilising and entrenching the extant ideological pattern. This is not to say that this stabilising operation rests only upon the establishing of one need, or a number of needs, which are common to every strata of the society. It may be the case that there are a number of forms of need which are common to each strata, but there will usually be a set of needs which are particular to each separate strata, but which are made resistant to transformation in respect of the infra-structure of the society. How successful a society is in achieving this will be a measure of how effectively it keeps each of its separate strata in-phase with each other. The notion is not only to have a need, or a number of needs, which are common to each strata, for these will be the needs at the top of the hierarchy of needs, regulating the character of the needs lower down the hierarchy of needs which are particular to each strata of the society. And these regulating needs will usually be of a high abstract character, and, certainly in terms of Victorian society, are couched in pious and sanctimonious language. Such a structure might be characterized, for example, in the classic, old established, socially stabilising epithet, 'To every man according to his station.' How men come to be persuaded of this idea is very hard to sort out in respect of technically describing the operation of controlling public memorization programmes, but it seems, insofar as language-use and memorization are complexly linked to each other, then looking carefully at the language-use of a given society is certainly one of the prime requirements of making such a description. Looking back at the first sentence of this note, the suggestion is: it is not the case that, first, a society's ideology is entrenched and stabilised, and then, the needs of the various strata comprising that society are entrenched and made resistant to transformation. Rather, the needs of the various strata being made resistant to change is, in fact, the very act of stabilising and entrenching the extant ideological pattern. But we are left again with a logical involution if we think of this action in the sequence, first, we have the extant ideological pattern, then we have the decisions as to how to go about entrenching it, which amount to taking action to make the needs throughout the society resistant to transformation, because part of the extant ideological pattern is the idea of making needs resistant to transformation.

5. Straightforward accounts criticising the Markov Chain Model (i.e. left-to-right models) of grammar-acquisition can be found, for example, in MGP (pp. 144-147) and in *Psycbolinguistics*, O.l. Slobin, Scott Foresman and Co., Glenview, lllinois. (pp. 8-12).

Perhaps, not surprisingly, the left-to-right model of grammar has some corresponding models in pedagogic methodology. This is where the learning process is seen as sequential in the sense of the rhythm and tempo set up in rote learning of material. In this kind of structure the idea of 'building up' learning by a 'betting and trying' method will as far as possible, be eliminated.

6. *Plans and the Structure of Behaviour*, Miller, Galanter and Pribram, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1960.

7. Ibid. p. 16.

8. Ibid. p. 74.

9. *The Study of Instinct*, N. Tinbergen, Oxford University Press, 1951.

10. Ibid. p. 110 (quoted by MGP, p. 77).

11. Here one is not quite sure whether MGP are invoking the concept of classical mechanical causation (cf., for example,

note 3, above) "Regularly" implies 'as usually happens', and, in context of MGP's remarks, is equated with the mechanism of chaining, and opposed to the mechanism of 'concatenation'. The difficulty seems to be the implication that concatenatory operations are not law-like, in the sense of being 'Irregularly caused', which is a strange locution.

12. Language used as an instrument of teaching can be defined as the operation of expounding closed-question sequences. A closed-question sequence is a sequence which has a rigidly determined end. In practical terms, the pupil will be taken through a rigidly rehearsed and mechanistic sequence of items. When the drill is sufficiently overlearned to render the sequence inflexible in terms of the pupils memorisation strategy, the sequence often has the characteristics of a Markov chain. Thus the pupil comes to live by a spectral maxim. The teacher is not saying this is one way we can order our lives, he is saying, this is the nature of our experience. He holds a subjective tendency to be an objective truth. The problem, in terms of running the day-to-day operations of our lives, may not be to worry about subjective tendencies, but rather how to make sense of a notion of objective truth. The Victorians had no such worries, for them there was no question of equivocation or hesitation —there were, indubitably, absolute ethical values and non-relativised phenomena.

13. Put the point in the form of a series of questions:
    (1) Can a Plan be made to function like an Innate Plan in instinctive behaviour?
    (2) Can people be made (conditional) to 'see' learning as a stereotyped motor pattern?
    (3) Can the "intention to learn" be formed by making two categories of items; items which constitute a 'legitimate' set for learning, and items which are illegitimate? If so, then the initial sorting of given items into one or the other categories, is one of the first ideological-controlling acts. Legitimation of learning material is big political business.

Again, in context of Victorian education, It seems a historical convention was given a high degree of autonomy through the almost exclusive use of rote memorization, organised according to rythmic grouping, unlike the lists which were required to be 'learned', could be rolled out in a chain sequence much as are the letters of the alphabet. This kind of 'learning' was widely used in every strata of Victorian education (e.g. Church School, Public School, etc.), and perhaps offers material for further inquiry in respect of the cross-class response to Kitchener's Call for the New Army in 1914.

14. MGP, pp. 128-29, pp. 178-79 (cf. note 19).

15. The phenomenon of rythmic grouping is of considerable significance in Victorian educational methodology Obviously the momentum that rythmic grouping gives to memorisation can only take place after the memorizer has gained familiarity with the material to be memorized So rythmlc grouping is a strategy for improving memorization after this initial memorization. When memorizing solitarily by rhythmic grouping, that is, chanting to oneself, so to speak, it is fairly easy to pick out the reinforcing character of the strategy. But communal chanting, offering as it does the bonus of the security of shared reinforcement, is perhaps the ideal framework for this method of transmitting information. The model has been set so that the aspiration of the pupil is to match the teacher's model (output). This communal character is perhaps one of the most basic drives towards feeling secure, and in this sense, communal rote memorization is posited upon a basic human predisposition to require approval. In fact the chanting can become so autonomous as to overwhelm any requirement to understand the material, in the regular sense of the term 'understand,' and in this respect acting as immunization against any alteration of the extant ideological patterns. The Victorians used rote chanting as a rigid means of drill, particularly in matters which were given priority rating, such as patriotism and religion. This had been evolved through a long and persistent chain of civic and religious mystification resting on an increasingly enshrined use of symbolic and allegorical language. Ultimately, the 'psychological relation of communal incantation of the given material to the ideological content of the material was developed, by the method of chanting, into a kind of public stereotype. John Tansley (cf. addenda to this note, below) when asked why he volunteered in 1914 to join The New Army, said, "Well, it's hard to explain really, it was like a fever." In context of the prevalent social conditions in Britain in 1914, it is worth remarking on some aspects of the relation of well-established routinized humdrum procedures (in which many rote-learning procedures would be included) to a psychoiogical security. Many veterans I have interviewed joined up because it seemed that, at last, something interesting was happening, which would take them out of the boring routine of their daily jobs. Besides the chance for many working class men to escape the sheer physical drudgery of their jobs, this phenomena applied to many middle class white collar professionals. For example, Philip Howe (cf. addenda to this note below), whose father was a solicitor, was articled as a solicitor at the time the war broke out in 1914, said, "In those days, you see, not like today, your father used to tell you, when you were about six or seven, what you were going to be. And you were just that. I don't think any of my friends had any choice, their fathers said you're following me, or you are going to be so-and-so. If you were going to be a shop assistant, you were a shop assistant. That's why everybody was so anxious to get into the army, to get away from the unending dreariness. Because nothing ever happened in England, for ages and ages and ages. People left school and got their jobs their fathers chose for them, and then they realized that for ever and ever and ever they would be going on doing the same old job. I used to think when I walked down to the office in a morning, at the age of eighteen, that I should be doing this for the rest of my life. Which, but for the war, I should have been ... I think, really, and I've not had a particularly happy life, but I think that the war years were on the whole the happiest period of my life. You got away from the dreary routine which you thought was going to last forever ... it was a change," The actual routinized conformism which characterized the way of life of millions of people, was the ideal scenario to render the war irresistibly attractive. There is a paradoxical situation here: ostensibly, at least, the war was being fought to protect the British way of life. Now according to numerous testimonies like that of Philip Howe, the 'British way of life' for millions of Britons was a dreary routine. Thus the war situation was more attractive and interesting than the very way of life, for the continuance of which, the war was being waged. In summary, you did something more interesting to ensure the continuance, and return to, something far more dreary. It must surely follow, that, if life is dreary, then the quality of the society of which that life is a function, must be reflected in the quality of that life. It must be construed, if we were to analyse the phenomena logically, that it is a strange idea of sacrifice that entails sacrifice being made to ensure the continuance of dreariness. But this is rather too straightforward, for the slogans which were attached to the war effort were not only bedecked with conservative sentiment ('Protect the British Way of Life'), they were also gilded with progressive

Liberal sentiment (Lloyd George's 'Land Fit for Heroes'), so many men thought they were fighting for an improvement in the quality of life. It should be remembered, however, that many people, are not unhappy about being extremely routinized. Particularly where there is an ethic which makes a public virtue out of regularized behaviour per se. The puritan tradition of the work ethic was imbedded, almost imperceptibly, but virulently, in this earnestness to the observance of these rites of routine. Routine was the temporal framework of duty to the Victorians. It could be dreary beyond reason, but the need for it had been implanted since a person's earliest childhood days. It is then, perhaps, not surprising that when a break in that routine was required to protect the sanctity of that routine, and to aid its perpetuation, that that break was so enticing. Not only were you actually subscribing to the cause of protecting the routine, which allowed you to discharge your sense of duty to the routine according to the value system set out in the routine, but in answering the call of duty, allowed you the absolute luxury of a break in that routine. And in answering the call of duty you were conforming to the condition you had always been trained to conform to, the phenomenon of being similar to the next guy, drilled in, in the communal chanting of the Ten Commandments, The National Anthem, etc., in the earliest family and classroom days. In a very precise sense, the outbreak of war was, to countless men, permission from the fixed grammar, to break the routine. Socialist sentiment such as Kier Hardie's "No British working class man will plunge a bayonet into the heart of his German Brother," either took no account, or radically underestimated the sheer temptation of a legally sanctioned break in the routine, which is somewhat ironic in respect of the absolute requirement of any effective socialism to be sensitive to the psychological effect of a man's work upon the man.

John Tansley. Joined the New Army in September, 1914. At that time was working on the railway marshalling yards at Wath-upon-Dearne in South Yorkshire. Private with the 6th Yorks & Lancs Regiment, with which regiment he went to Gallipoli. He fought on the Somme with the 9th York & Lanes., 70th Brigade, 8th Division attacking opposite Ovillers. Now lives in Corby, Northamptonshire, England

Tape 4. Interviewed 19 May, 1975.

Philip Howe. Joined the New Army in September, 1914. At that time was articled to a solicitor in Sheffield, Yorkshire. Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant with the 10th West Yorkshire Regiment, 50th Brigade, 17th Division. On the Somme, the 10th West Yorks attacked opposite Fricourt. Now lives in Calver in the Peak District, near Sheffield, England.

Tape 7. Interviewed 29 May, 1975.

16. This takes us into an old controversy of philosophy—'The Private Language Argument'. If a grammar is a system of rules, and this seems obvious, then, is a rule, by definition, *potentially* comprehensible (understood by at least two peopIe), always potentially public? In talking about the rules of grammar, we are talking about rules which have been acquired on the basis of very restricted and degenerate evidence (cf. Looking Back, Going On, p. 123), thus we are talking about rules, the use of which, may be very unselfconscious. Nevertheless, it seems as a matter of logic, these rules are understood by all users of grammar to which these rules apply. So, in a very clear sense, these particular rules can be said to be public—they are, unquestionably, (publicly) shared. One side of 'The Private Language Argument' makes a much stronger claim (and this was Wittgenstein's view), namely: *if* it is a rule, *then* it is potentially public. If a person is using a language which only he uses, then he, logically, has to be using a grammar. If he is using a grammar, then he is using a system of rules. If he is using a system of rules, then, by the logical definition of rule, these rules are, potentially, able to be understood by someone else. For the act of interpretation rules are needed—the act of interpreting someone else's 'private' language requires us to either, find the rules he/she is using, or, alternatively, think we have found the rules he/she is using. In the latter case, insofar as we will be using his/her linguistic acts, directly or indirectly, as part of the empirical tests for these rules, then, if we have found rules, which allow us to make sense of the 'language' (in fact, to decide it is a language) then we will have had to agree, in some way or other, with the language-user, and will be bound to assume that we have found his/her rules. The idea of setting out to find rules in order to decide whether the 'oral' and/or 'written' acts that a person engages in are consistent with those acts which can be characterized as linguistic acts, presupposes some kind of formal order which is, eventually, discernible as either being there, or not being there. But this is a problem. If it can be discerned that there is no formal order, it must follow that there are no rules. Saying, there are no rules to be discovered, is, obviously not the same as saying, rules cannot be discovered here. The former statement is much more positive, and is equivalent to saying, this is not a language. The latter is saying something like, this may be a language but we cannot discover its rules, therefore we don't know whether or not it is a language. Obviously, the anti-Wittgensteinian argument does not hold that a private language is a language without rules, this would be a logical contradiction. What it does say is, there may very well be a language used by one person, the rules of which, we will never discover. But this in no way lessens the argument of Wittgenstein on this question; namely, that a language is, by definition, rule bound, and therefore those rules are potentially discernible. No one can demonstrate rules, the character of which are indiscernible—all that can be said is, there may be rules here, the character of which are indiscernible—but how do you demonstrate the presence of indiscernible rules? You can never say positively, there are rules here, but they are indiscernible, you can only say, there may be rules here which are indiscernible: which seems to be a tautology in the sense that, obviously, if you can't discern them, there may be rules there, if, 'if you can't discern the presence of rules' means also 'you can't discern the absence of rules'. But exactly what are the differences in observing the absence of rules, and, being unable to observe either the absence or presence of rules?

17. It should be remembered, we are talking about the phenomenon of adult grammar when we talk of the language-use of the New Army. And in talking about language-use we have to take account of language acquisition and language development. But there is no attempt here to infer the process of acquisition from an analysis of the structure of adult grammar. There is an attempt to look at certain aspects of language-use from an analysis of adult grammar.

18. It seems that the Plan for reciting the alphabet is stored directly, like any other motor skill. The strategies in Victorian education aimed directly at making as much 'learning' as possible of this motor skill-type. This means the number of items and the number of relations between items must be kept as low as possible. Where this is not possible a kind of metaplan is drawn up. This metaplan is a set of rules for generating N+1 items from N items/item relations, rather than a direct Plan for uttering successive items. At this kind of point the limit of drill is reached, because of the pressure placed upon the retrieval operation.

19. **"Forms the form of the needing" is a rather strange and strained locution. It might be put better by, say, "forms the form of the metaplan".**

20. **Looking Back, Going On, pp. 126-127.**

21. ***The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and Cultural Action for Freedom*, Paulo Freire. Both published by Penguin, London.**

22. **As in note 1, these remarks are not intended in the spirit of pleading for liberal individualism—on the contrary!**

DON JUDD

KARL BEVERIDGE AND IAN BURN

I

Don Judd, is it possible to talk? What must we each do to construct a relationship which is not merely institutionally-mediated? Can we cut through the public mythology of "Don Judd"? How do we deal with an almost sacrosanct figure, a reputation seemingly above ordinary criticism, a powerful reference point for so much during the sixties and apparently still "fundamental" to a lot of the high art produced today?

What do we know of you? You "exist" in Castelli, in the Modern, in the Stedlijk, on Philip Johnson's front lawn. For a while, you wrote criticism to earn a living; now you exhibit and sell to earn a living, to be able to make more work. You like John Chamberlain's work, you don't like Robert Morris', Tony Smith's even less. Barbara Rose says your work is "pragmatic"; Michael Fried says it is "theatrical." Is this what we are addressing? By addressing this are we addressing you?

Should we accept your admonition that a "thorough discussion" of an artist should involve "the primary information [which] should be the nature of his work," and "almost all other information should be based on what is there"? [6] What does that leave for us to say?

More to the point, can we ask what sort of relation *your* writing has to your work? Your writing does function differently to the writings of other artists, say Malevich's, or even Newman's. Maybe the easiest way to summarize the function of your writing is to say it operates almost like a Manual for the sculptures or objects you make. For a lot of artists, particularly Morris, but also Smithson, Bochner and Kosuth, this became a model for "controlling" the public image of their work in the art magazines.[1] Emphatically enough, you've insisted on the *terminology* you want your work *experienced* in relation to ... "specificness," "wholeness," "objectivity," "facticity," "large scale," "simplicity," "non-associative," "non-anthropomorphic," "anti-hierarchical," "non-relational," and so on. These intermesh to provide a more or less linguistically defined context. The language which constructs this context reflects a collection of assumptions about a particular form of art, —what sorts of assumptions are these? In other words, what can we say about the *form of art* this context presupposes?

II

By your own reiteration, specificity seems to be the key concept. It is not always easy to understand what you intend by "specific." In one sense, you often use it to set up a comparative value; for example, "I'd like my work to be somewhat more specific than art has been ..." [4] But doesn't this hold the implication that your work is specific only within a history of art objects, and so the value "specific" depends on the acceptance of that history as unproblematic? Doesn't the specificity of your work hold in a "world" categorically limited to what counts as "art," and thus it is a tacit claim for immunity to "anything to do with society, the institutions and grand theories"?

But you have used "specific" in another sense: "Materials vary greatly and are simply materials—formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and 50 forth. They are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also they are

usually aggressive." [5] Doesn't this suggest that the materials (and techniques) you use are "specific" to an advanced industrial society? Inasmuch as we know America is technologically the most advanced nation, wouldn't that locate "specific" in what are generally held as *American* ways of doing things?

Of course, you would claim this has nothing to do with your work, that people who associate your work with advanced industrial materials and American life are being simpleminded.[2]

On the other hand, you have said that the structure of your work is "barely order at all." [7] You dismiss technology and mathematics, "the scale ... is pragmatic, immediate and exclusive ... the work asserts its own existence, form and power." [3] Finally we are left with "whatever the boxes are made of." [7] That is, we are left with materials.

In this light, the use of "practical" industrial materials appears almost as an end-in-itself. Put this with a disavowal of transcendental qualities and it suggests that the identity of the art object is embodied in the materials (—that is, if we understand what you said about the Bottle Rack as an interesting *object*, and ignore the Dadaist gesture of it).[3] Would you perhaps want to add that the identity lies also in the *arrangement* of the materials, and in the physical context of that arrangement? Or doesn't it matter? If you take the identity for granted, you must also take its function for granted and presuppose the whole context of art as given. Do you?

You have also asserted "there is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of materials" and that "most of the new materials ... aren't obviously art." You are saying that materials which don't "belong" to art are more objective. But you are *also* saying that, by appropriating these materials "for" art purposes, they *lose* their extra-art associations.[4] They become materials "without histories." That is the explicit claim, but what is implicit in it? Isn't it an implicit appeal to a notion of art history in which that history is totally divorced from social history? Doesn't your assertion rest on the assumption of *autonomy* for art history? Without that assumption, can we understand your claims at all? And given what we know about the political and ideological appropriation of the function of art, is the autonomy of art history an assumption we can abide any longer?

If you assume an autonomous art history, you are assuming autonomy for the category of art—at least, so long as it continues to be assumed that art is historical, and not social. Even if "specific" has nothing to do with materials, this presupposition of art still underwrites so much you've done. You stated it succinctly when you said "an activity shouldn't be used for a foreign purpose except when the purpose is extremely important and when nothing else can be done." [10] But, in the same article, you said, "I've thought that the situation was pretty bad and that my work was all I could do"—which means things would have to be much worse than "pretty bad" before you would use your art for a "foreign" (or extra-art) purpose. That is an indication of the degree of autonomy you associate with the form of art you presuppose.

This has ramifications for many of your other concepts. When saying you "prefer art that isn't associated with anything ..." [9], aren't you saying you want the "associations" to be restricted or localized to the object or its immediate (i.e. architectural) environment?[5] Along with an autonomous form of art, you wanted a *more autonomous art object*, what you would call "more objective." Let's look at that. Traditionally art objects are associated with other art and art history by way of their materials and by being a conventional type of art object. Such associations would, I suppose, in your words, be specific. But this was the last thing you wanted. The "autonomy" you developed for your objects had to function in respect to your presuppositions of an art (historical) context, and hence you still needed a means of associating the object with that context. Since the object itself denied any associations, *the physical situation* became a more important vehicle. That is to say, the object had to be *circumstantially* associated with its art context.

The ramifications of this are plain. You've said that works of this sort, what you've called three dimensional work, are "real space."

[5] But this "real space" ends up being not a neutral space but a particularly *loaded* space.[6] It is this which provides the circumstantial association. Which is an indirect way of saying that the sense of art and art history being appealed to is an *institutional* sense. It means that the more "objective" you make your work, *the more necessarily dependent the work is on a culturally institutionalized situation*. It also exposes—and perhaps this isn't so surprising—the interdependence of the autonomy of art and art history with their institutionalization.

I'm not sure, —are we stretching the point too much to suggest that, putting this in the context of your rejection of the European tradition, it throws all of that increased dependence onto the institutionalized forms of *American* culture? And, if we accept that, inasmuch as your form of art is influential on other artists, American and non-American alike, doesn't it force these artists to reproduce an equal dependence on the institutionalized forms of American culture?

Let's look a bit more closely at what you rejected as "European tradition." You characterized it as "relational."[7] Any work which had a lot of parts which invited "visual play" was entrenched in that relationalism. To escape that, you made something which didn't *readily* break up into parts, so that the number and functional role of the parts were reduced (or subordinated). For what parts there were, their power lay "in a polarization of elements and qualities, or at least in a combination of dissimilar ones." [3] This was characteristic of a number of artists' work you liked. The effect was to *force the constituent materials to assume a significance they hadn't assumed before*. Moreover, "new" materials had no obvious (a priori) cultural or historical relations, this was their "objectivity." As we all well know, subsequent history of avantgarde art can be seen as an elucidation of that significance ... the "trek through materials," esthetic investigations of a particular material's range of presentation, the identification of particular artists with certain materials, to the extent of standing as a "signature," and so on. The "new art" was identified by the significance and the newness of the materials. (It is largely in this respect that we understand your important and enduring influence.)

It is the central role of materials which coalesce your concepts of "specific," "objective" and "factual." At times, for you, these seemed synonymous. To your thinking, specific is stronger than general, objectivity

is stronger than subjectivity, facts are stronger than fiction—and the factualness of the materials you used was the justification for your attack on the illusionism of painting. You saw illusionism as retrogressive: "A new form of art usually appears more logical, expressive, free and strong than the form it succeeds. There is a kind of necessity and coherent, progressive continuity to changes in art." [2] But do you really think that the "objectivity" or "facticity" of your work is independent of a viewer and his or her system of beliefs? Do you really think that something might be seen as objective or factual without first having met a socially-accepted rule of procedure? Do *you* think you can see something as objective, in dependent of *your beliefs*? You obviously did at one time; do you still? And what is this objectivity—isn't it the sort of "objectivity" popularly held in American society, the middle-class materialist sense, the supposed "objectivity" of science, and so on? By asserting the "objectivity" of your sculptures, weren't you claiming their character as "real objects," the matter of their *existence* and *identity* being independent of a viewer? It is the attempt to establish *a more autonomous* art objective. This was the point, wasn't it?

There are a couple of curious questions left over. The "autonomy" of the art object for us is its objectivity for you. So, for you, is the autonomy of art history also *its* "objectivity"? And then, would the autonomy of art be grounds for claiming a possible "objectivity" for art?[8]

What does "a more autonomous artwork" mean from the viewpoint of the artist who produces it, or the person who looks at it? More autonomous translates into more *alienable*, in personal terms. The object itself (but not its context) is aggressive to the viewer, to his or her cultural expectations. Isn't the viewer then forced to treat the object as more alienable?

How *does* a viewer relate to what you do? You've stressed the importance of the viewer

seeing the works … "Art is something you look at." [1] You've also stressed the importance *for yourself* of seeing the works … "you can think about it forever in all sorts of versions, but it's nothing until it is made visible." [1] But what kind of "seeing" did you mean? As you've stated, you wanted works which couldn't be contemplated.[9] What kinds of things do we see but not contemplate? Did you mean we should try to see them in an "ordinary" sense-say, like bits of furniture in a room? Obviously, that was out of the question, the presuppositions of your art wouldn't allow it: its specialized mode of marketing and the prices demanded removed the work from the realm of objects seeable in an ordinary sense, and the institutionalized forms on which the work depends have emerged from assumptions which deny such viewing.

Contemplation was seen as a problem, and a number of artists of your time were able to induce some shift in the traditional habits of perception. For instance, Robert Morris theorized and rhapsodized about how we see the object in a field, the immediacy of the space in which it is placed. What you and others achieved was a break with the Modernist hardline of formal and exclusively "optical" (their word) qualities. This made a precedent for a less exclusively visually-mediated relation between the viewer and the object. You were right insofar as we didn't contemplate (in the standard sense of the word) the objects, rather we experienced them *within a particular situation*, a situation which is, of necessity, culturally-loaded ... as we have already pointed out.

But that didn't change the *passivity of a contemplative 'mode that the work imposed on the viewer*. If anything, it heightened that passivity. It was just contemplation under a faintly different and more hierarchic guise. I remember looking at your work and feeling that my "looking" was almost "programmed"; I remember walking around your series of boxes and thinking my reactions were in some way "choreographed." Contemplation isn't the problem, the cultural *passivity* it reinforces *is*. It is this passivity which makes us powerless in face of our cultural institutions, and which constrains us to reproduce our own powerlessness.

So why did it seem so radical in the mid-sixties? Why did it generate so much other work, not only of your own generation, but of those who followed, *ourselves* included? The traditional European art object was very deterministic about the condition of subject, the historical conventions determined the role of viewer (me-as-subject). Your work and that of some others made the role of viewer more "open-ended"—at least it made me more self-conscious, more aware of my own presence along side your sculpture. Perhaps this was a function of the sculpture's alienating effect; the art object, being (as it were) exclusive of me, forced me self-reflectively to deal with my own presence. This focused attention anew on the subject-object relation, it made the relation explicit, it made it *conscious* again. This became important for a lot of us. It encouraged me to view myself as object-and-subject. For a moment, this seemed radical, even revolutionary. It was radical. It touched the very alienating structure of modem art. *But what was its relation to your work, your aims?* The possibility of a dialectical relation between object and subject didn't exist in your work. The possibility was inherent in your work only in a negative sense. The changes you (and others) wrought made us self-conscious *only in reaction* to what you did: your form of art precluded the very options it made us aware of. Your work remained immutable, passive, disengaged, its heightened alienability denying the possible transformations of subject-object relations. Your work's fundamental dependence on loaded contexts made us too aware of the institutionalized forms of our culture.

What were the implications of the "self-consciousness" that such work (perversely) generated? That is difficult to answer. We can say that self-consciousness hinted at *self-mediation* of relations to the objects ... which at least admitted the *theoretical* possibility of non-contemplative relations. We have to say "theoretical possibility" because it just wasn't *practically* possible, then or probably now.

What you did was to make *explicit* in your work the rigidified subject-object form which has been fundamental but implicit

in all of modern art. We could even say you *polarized* the subject and object roles. This accounts for you thinking you had achieved a new "objectivity," the object conveying an independence of the viewer. The object's alienability was now inherent in the object itself, in its mode of production. The object was more exclusively an object ... and this exclusivity of and polarization from the viewer became an integral and essential factor of the production of this sort of work. It was the most characteristic feature of the work ... its very power. You were very close to this when you talked about objects "becoming objects in their own right."

But what does that really imply? If we accepted it as so many have, what does it commit us to, as a way of going on?

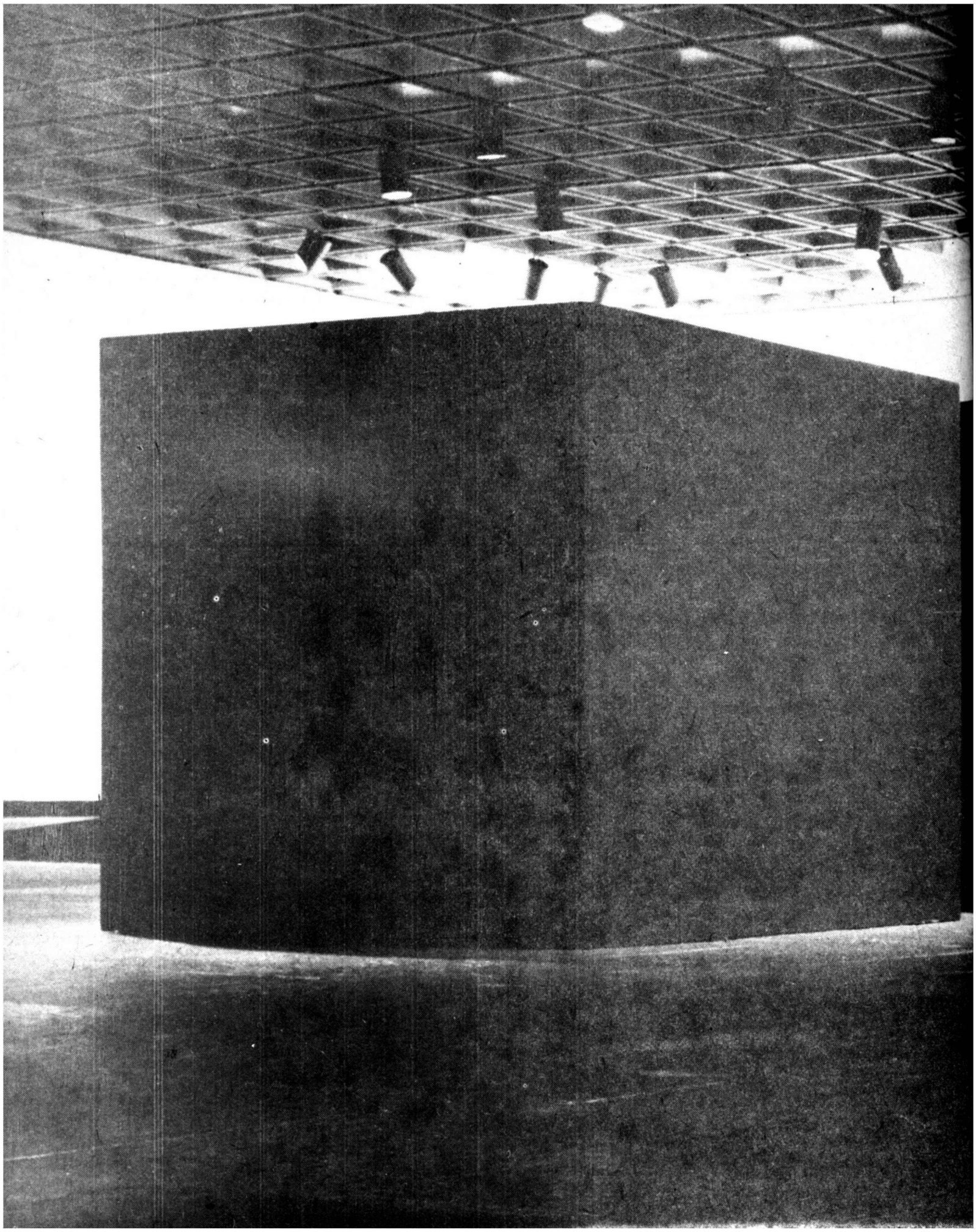
It opens up questions about what our art, our culture, *ought* to be. The issue is fundamental and crucial –whether we might be able to express (at least) a *negative* relation to the modes of capitalist production, or whether we are *forced* to reproduce a positive relation to those modes. Your form of art represents a final stage in the reduction of art to a mode of capitalist production.[10] When the object of our "creativity" becomes so *objectified*, "creativity" becomes a concept external to us, indeed alien to us, losing its dynamic as a personal-practical transformational force and instead seeming to have a "life of its own." The work appears "to make itself" (as Rockbume and others would have it). Subjectivity becomes the enemy![11] And thus our art production further ingratiates itself as a public and institutional affair.

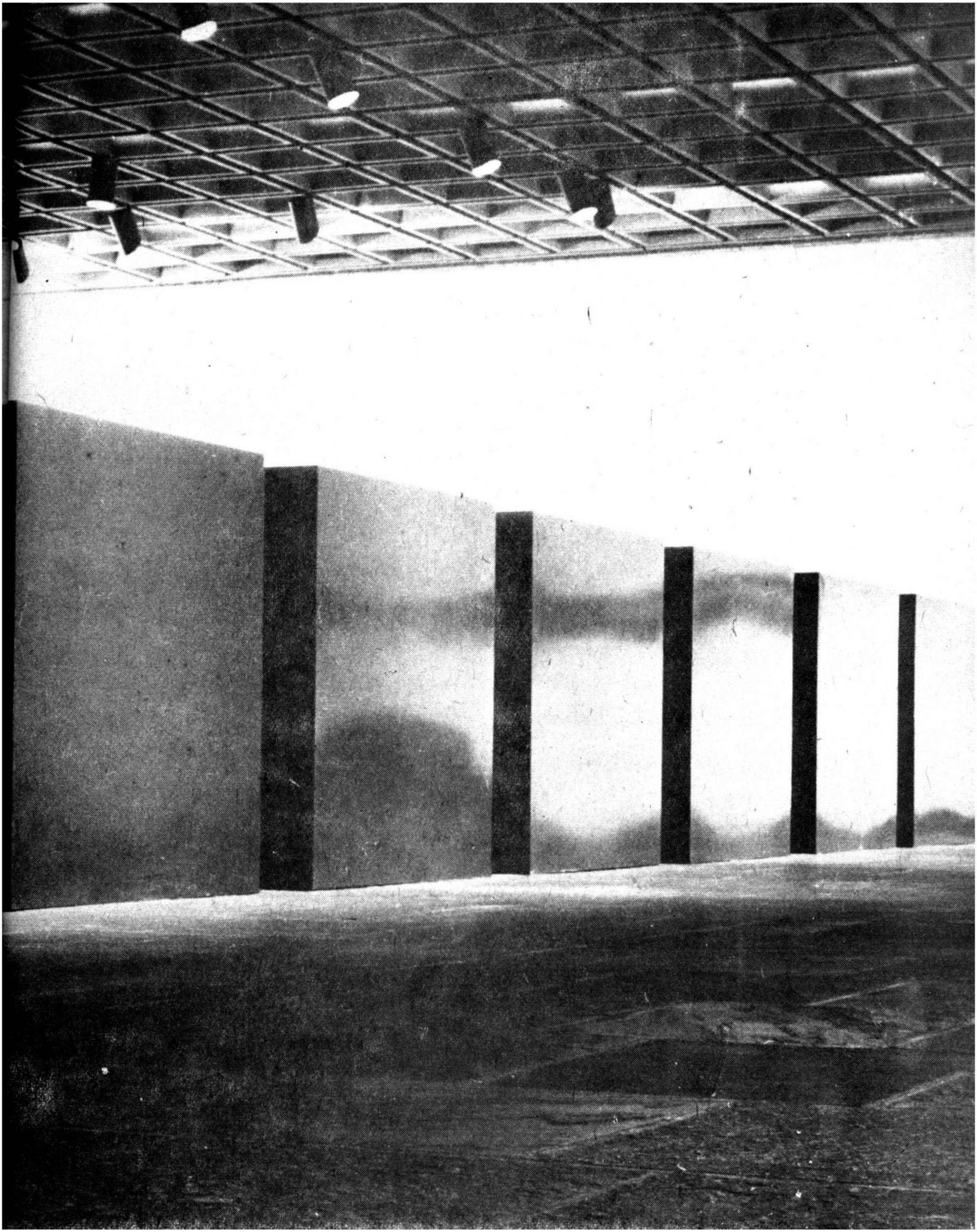
So, in retrospect, the implications of your "program" are striking. In giving your sculptures what you called more "objectivity," thus more autonomy, thus necessarily more self-sufficiency, many of the external social relations, normally treated as only contingently related to the art object, were forced to be incorporated as inhering in "personal expression," inhering in the personal processes of production. In the history of modern art, works of art exist only in an alienated form. You have striven for, and largely achieved, a *more* alienated form. This was a function of the internalization of the social dimensions of art, their internalization as *expressions in production*. This created not merely "objects in their own right" but art objects which embodied their own exchange value. Prior art had reflected the "psychological" *effects* of the modes of capitalist production—its fragmentation, the abstraction, the passivity, the myths of individualism and personal choice. The form of art you advocated embodied those modes, reproducing not merely the effects but the production modes themselves. Can you grasp the significance of that? It means: the alienability of the art object is no longer merely a function of the institutional "life" of the object, the alienability has become fundamental to the *form of art itself*. It means: to change anything at all now entails changing the productive form of art itself—that is, *changing to a form of art which presupposes radically different social relations*.

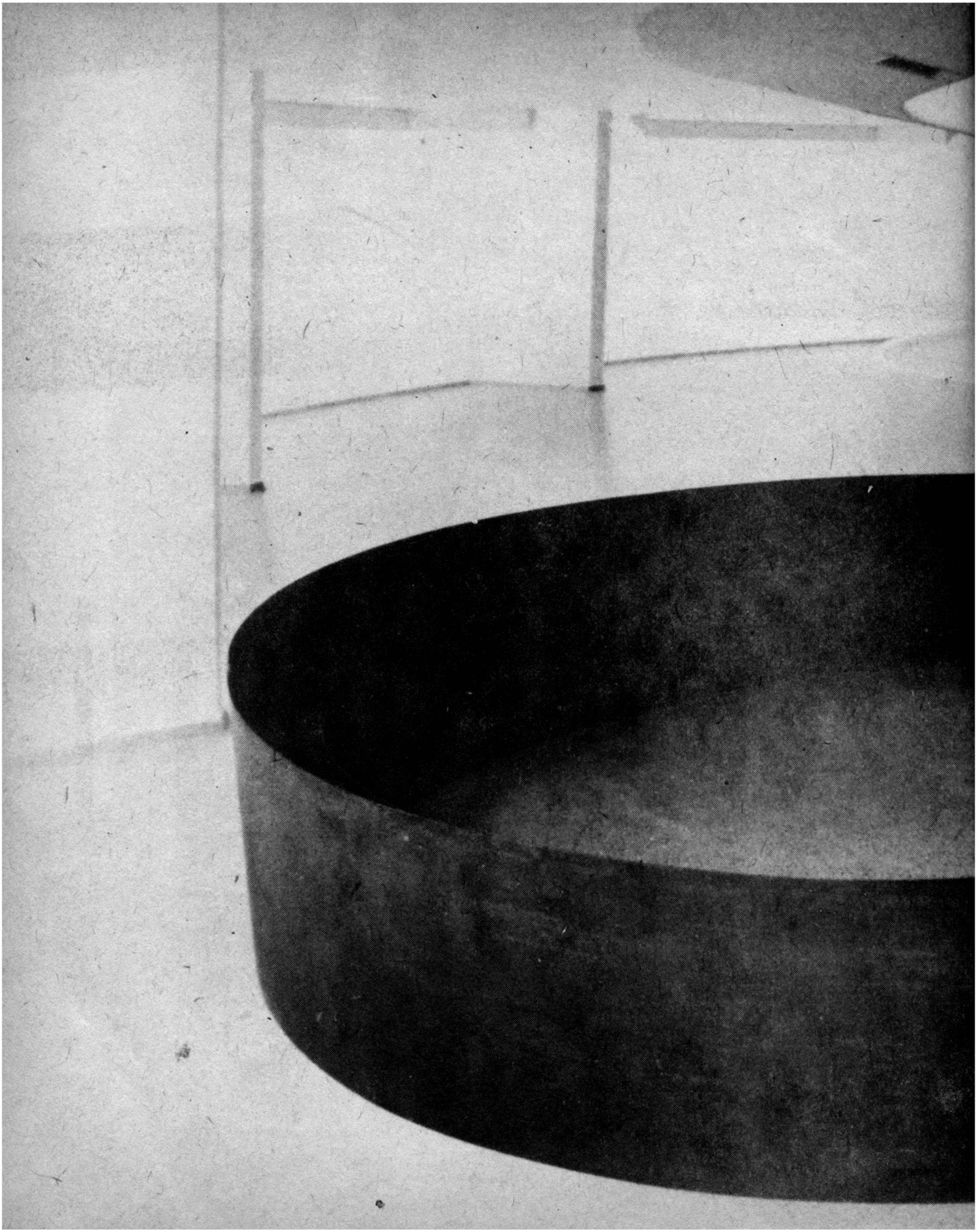
III

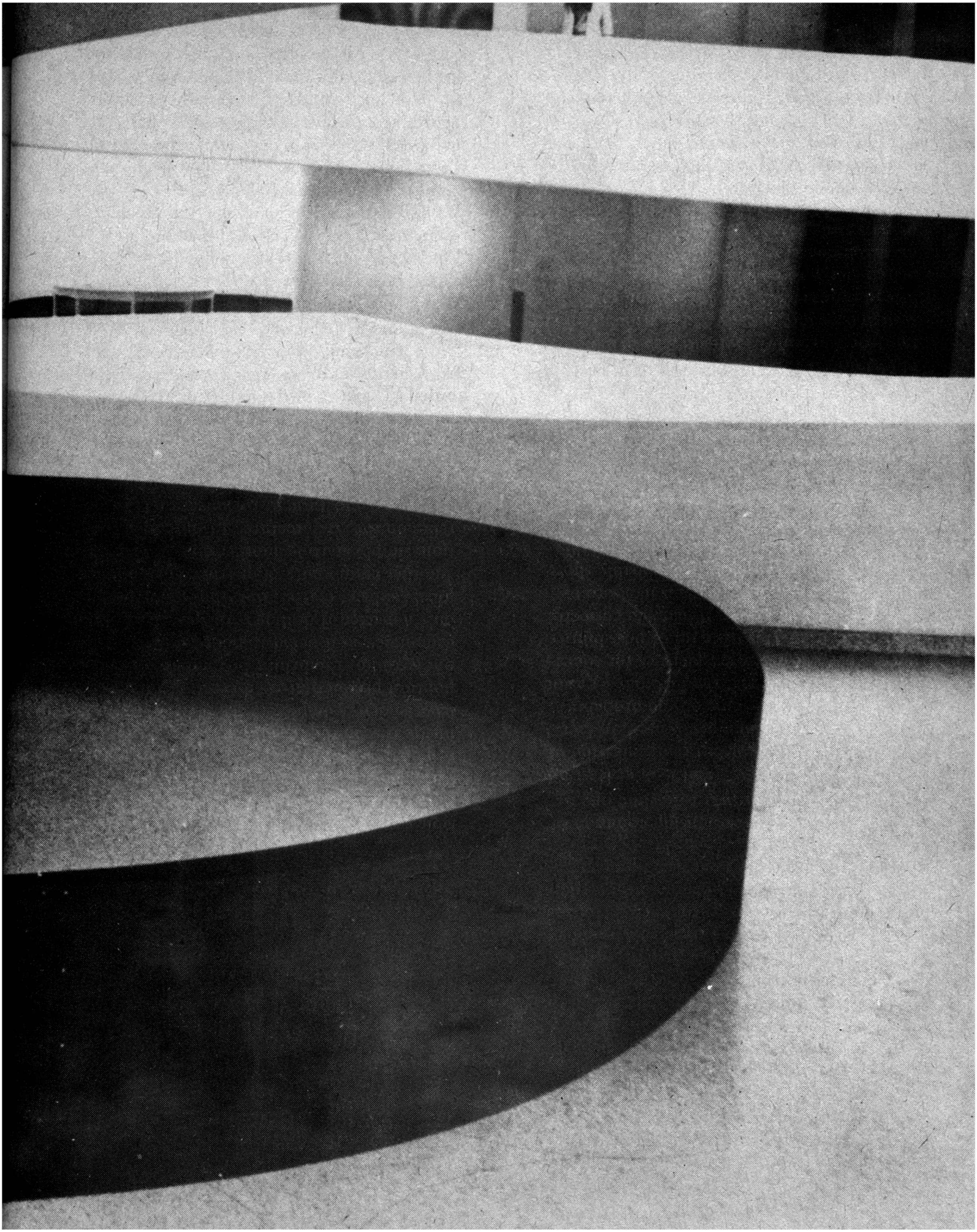
You've said that your attitude "of opposition and isolation, which has slowly changed in regard to isolation in the last five years or so, was in reaction to the events of the fifties: the continued state of war, the destruction of the U.N. by the Americans and the Russians, the rigid useless political parties, the general exploitation and both the Army and McCarthy."[12] Yes, these events affected *all* our lives. And there's no reason to think the art we produced wasn't in some ways affected, too. Do you *still* hold that your art was immune to such reactions?

The fifties, with their cold war politics and anti-communist exhortations, become more incredible the more we find out about them. It was probably the worst possible time for our cultural institutions to develop, but it is perhaps not surprising that they did. While it seems hard to understand some of the gross distortions and lies, it's not so hard for us to reconstruct some of the circumstances whereby our culture became divorced from a politico-economic critique. An attitude which emerged from the fifties was that one didn't have an ideology in America, that the American way of life was the "natural" one—anything else implied domination by ideology. This was given academic credence









in Daniel Bell's "end-of-ideology" nonsense, the idea that America had achieved a society in which ideology was no longer necessary. This continues to re-emerge in various guises. Your earlier arguments about painting and sculpture being too circumscribed to be "free" perhaps reflects some of this. Fried certainly tried to pull it on you by accusing Minimal Art of being "ideological," implying that his brand of Modernism was the "natural" form of art. More recently, Rosalind Krauss seems to be resurrecting the strategy yet again, on your behalf this time ... But all this conveniently ignores that an "end-of-ideology" is as overtly ideological as it pretends not to be.

We're not looking for simple-minded isomorphism. Of course it's absurd to seek one-to-one reflection between the values of American society of the fifties and the values of an art which was subsequently produced by artists directly influenced by that period. However, the strongest forms of ideology are those reproduced implicitly, not through explicit forms. In this light, to say you're "interested in making so-called abstract art and don't like the idea that it is exhibitable by virtue of its abstractness or unintelligibility" [12] is just fantasizing the *reality* of your work. The split between art and real problems emerged in the sixties in an essentially apolitical and asocial art—to the extent that, for most artists, political engagement meant moving on to extra-art activity.[13] We witnessed the Pop artists using the subject-matter of social criticism for uncritical or even "anti-social" ends. The neutrality which this art assumes excludes the possibility of a critical relation to a capitalist form of life. .

Hence, are we to view it as *accidental* that your notions of "specific," non-associative" (etc.) reproduce a form of art which *denies* political or social content and in fact provides a cultural rationalization for just such a denial? Looking back, doesn't this disturb you at all? Or doesn't it matter—do you regard the suggestion as ludicrous? It disturbs us. And finally isn't this why your work sits so comfortably in our cultural institutions—and not, as you once said, … the popularity of American art is that the museums and collectors didn't understand it enough to realize that it was against much in the society"? [10]

You have sometimes been referred to as the first really American sculptor. What does that mean? America is powerful, aggressive. It's hard not to embody that, and even harder not to reproduce it. But why shouldn't you, you are American? After all, in your attitude towards art there is a constant equation of "American" with "most powerful" and "best work." Did making your art "more American" mean it was "more powerful"? Was Abstract Expressionism "American" and Minimal Art "more American"? Was this reflecting the fact that America, as the emerging world power, needed to have its own dominating "high culture," the imperative to be the best in the world? What would you say if people started referring to you as the first *complete* capitalist artist?

The image America has reproduced of itself is that of exporting technology, a technology which is democratic because it is good, neutral, and progressive, a technology which is equally available to everyone—the means for a better life, and free from ideological bias. The American artists of the sixties and seventies have reproduced this pattern, becoming the "cultural engineers" of "international art." With the image of neutrality—selling art, not ideology. This has even been institutionalized by galleries and museums, bringing the artists to make work "on the spot." The impact of this is immeasurable, as a way of showing other artists the American way of doing things, of making art. This is the extent to which production itself during the sixties carne to embrace and internalize the "internationalist" ideology. By contrast to the fifties—can you imagine someone giving Barnett Newman a plane ticket to fly to Australia and make a painting? When Abstract Expressionism was sent to Europe, it had to be packaged, it had to be given a form in the media, a publicity wrapping of "free expression in a free society." The art of the sixties and seventies was media-conscious, the packaging was a feature of the "expression," internal to actual production.

Such a form of art can't carry much personalized baggage: the potentially frail, the quirky, the idiosyncratic, the unsure. That

destroys the illusion of objectivity-because this sort of objectivity has to do with how things are packaged, how they exist in relation to public forms or institutions of culture. Is this what you meant by suggesting that while "power isn't the only consideration … the difference between it and expression can't be too great either"? [5]

Yes, there *was* a time when the forms of "high art" were powerful media in society. But other, more potent and far-reaching forms emerged, and, for "high art" to maintain itself, it became dependent on the power of other, "external" forms of media. Existing institutions had to be transformed, while those emerging presupposed, even embodied, the new media and market relations. It was "natural" that the internationalization of American art and the institutional forms of culture that emerged during the sixties should follow the structure of internationalization of media. A world invaded by the vast U.S.-controlled international communications network found itself "wanting" those cultural commodities.[14] All comers of the "free world" *had* to have a Don Judd. A media-conscious form of art reproduces cultural hegemony, recreates the world in America's image.

You've said "it's a strange idea that other people's culture is your culture," and also "the idea that imported history is culture is one of the great American mistakes." [12] I wholeheartedly agree. But *why* don't you think it such a strange idea that *your* culture should be someone else's? Then there is an appalling remark you made suggesting that everything is "international art in America and the best thing that could happen would be equal international art elsewhere."[15] What a preposterous remark, surely you didn't mean it as it carne out? Did you? That remark blatantly reproduces the ambitions of U.S. hegemony and economic and cultural imperialism—where "international values" are dictated by the U.S.'s "national interests," or rather the U.S.'s "national interests" are imposed as "in the self-interests" of other nations. Put bluntly, the internationalism you're talking about is unilateral, is something which is *exported*, not a state mutually achieved. This is the form of art you've presupposed, and *imperialism* is fundamental to its way of life.

The "power" of American art has been acclaimed in many countries. Of course such power has highly contentious value, its relation to knowledge, to concepts like "progress," "advanced art," etc. are treacherous. The acquisition of power by a particular form of art conforms to the relations it presupposes to prevailing institutions, the channels through which "values" are transmitted. Power accrues through the ability to mediate what counts as significant cultural points of reference. No matter what your personal intentions were, these weren't what gave your work its power … it was its interaction and interdependence with the media of the magazines, the museums, the prestigious exhibitions, the market, all the institutionalized forms of our culture.

Against all this, how could you see your work as *political*, as *subversive*! "So my work didn't have anything to do with society, the institutions and grand theories. It was one person's work and interests; its main political conclusion, negative but basic, was that it, myself, anyone shouldn't serve any of these things, that they should be considered very skeptically and practically." And "I've always thought that my work had political implications, had attitudes that would permit, limit or prohibit some kinds of political behavior and some kinds of institutions. Also, I've thought that the situation was pretty bad and that my work was all I could do."[10][16] Do you still believe that? Do you still believe that the *individual* qua individual can be political or subversive? Haven't you realized that achieves nothing, that it is exactly what the interests dominating this society *want*, that it is its most insidious form of social control? In fact, it is self-control-because only through an *organizational* base can one achieve power enough to subvert anything. Perhaps you would reply that *because* your work is so well represented in the media, the museums that you do have power enough to influence our cultural institutions, and to influence them in a subversive sense where you see fit. But do you? Aren't you merely reproducing *their* power, thus power to assent, not dissent?

Yes, in America, the individual is in so many ways (apparently) sovereign. This

is masked in the rhetoric of duty of the individual towards himself, the glorification of personality and private ethics.[17] Ruling "national interests" are well served by maintaining this dominant (ideological) concept of "individual," since it maintains us in a socially unorganized state. You can't treat this as incidental or accidental … wasn't that plain when you remarked "it's difficult to moderate a police chief in a little town in Mississippi but easy to destroy a government in Guatemala."[8] A remark which surely suggests the link between privilegedness of individualism and imperialism.

We all tend to accept the sovereignty of the individual as the "natural" way of life, as unchallengeable—and under pressure from it we react accordingly by isolating ourselves. You've remarked how isolated you felt. I doubt that many of us fully realize the impotence of the "individual freedom" we all have been taught to value so much, or the ideological import of it to the capitalist state. Such "freedom" is based on an indifference to everything which doesn't hamper the development of bourgeois interests.[18] You can express indifference to institutions only insofar as what you do doesn't threaten them in any way and what they do isn't threatening to your interests. This is your fate—perhaps ours too? In nowhere but the U.S. has the definition of freedom been so absolutely cast in individualistic terms, to the point of isolating the individual from his or her social world. This is why the artist's problems are always given as psychological, not social.[19] Isn't the sovereignty of the individual in society his or her isolation from other people … *isn't this "the first fight" we all have?*

What then do you mean by "subversion"? Subversive to what? As reformist, or as revolutionary? How can an artist today be revolutionary when every revolution stops at the collector's or museum's door, stops in the pages of a glossy art magazine? Both the idea and practice of "cultural revolution" in Western society have been successfully *confined* to high culture alone—everything is immune to its "revolutionary" power. The only thing it may be subversive to is *prevailing art and art history* … which, given the dynamic of that, makes it subsumable and a "logical" extension of that history. Yes, your art is revolutionary, but meanwhile art criticism, art history, museums, *all* the institutions remain *stable* and unchallenged. Yes, in these terms your work and most of that of the sixties is subversive—it is subversive to other forms of art, by presupposing a more alienated form, a form which has internalized an exchange value, a form saturated by political and economic interests. As far as being subversive to our cultural institutions, your form of art surrenders any independence of them, it acts in collusion with the way of life these institutions support. *You can't be subversive to institutions and at the same time presuppose a form of art which reproduces, thus increases, the power of those institutions*. If you really want your art to be subversive, it must be a form of art which doesn't reproduce the Big Cultural Lie.

IV

How do you see your work today? A lot has been realized during the past decade and this has changed the way many of us view the art around us. Our relation to your work has changed, too. By engaging your work and your writing, by trying to engage *you*, do we have anything to talk to each other about? Or have our actions precluded that possibility?

New York, New York

FOOTNOTES

1 And it also became a historical point of reference for many of the so-called conceptual artists, providing a model for how to assume a responsibility for the "language context" of the art they produced. While the value of this context remained implicit in your writing, a number of conceptual artists developed it as an "end-in-itself" and "integrated" a linguistically-defined context into their actual artworks or presented it "as" the work itself.

2 " … I don't make a great thing of technology and all that. In the first place, I use an old-fashioned technique—basically a late nineteenth century metal-working technique. I don't romanticize technology like Robert Smithson and others, I think generally you are forced into modern technologies, but the technology is merely to suit one's purpose."[11] Of course this implies technology is ideologically neutral. It can be, but only if one first amputates it from its function in the real world,

3 "There are precedents for some of the characteristics of the new work.... Duchamp's ready-mades and other Dada objects are also seen at once and not part by part… Part·by· part structure can't be too simple or too complicated. It has to seem orderly… Duchamp's bottle-drying rack is close to some of the new three-dimensional work," (5)

4 E.g. "I wanted to get rid of all those extraneous meanings—connections to things that didn't mean anything to the art. "[11]

5 Isn't the rejection of associations an obvious mode of abstraction? But then aren't we left with your notion of specificity on the one hand and a mode of abstraction on the other as somehow identifying the *same* characteristic!

6 Tony Smith provided a virtual parody of just how loaded. He is talking about the impact of what he calls "artificial landscapes" which had "a reality there that had not had any expression in art." He says "I discovered some abandoned airstrips in Europe… something that had nothing to do with any function, created worlds without tradition Artificial landscape without cultural precedent began to dawn on me, There is a drill ground in Nuremberg large enough to accommodate two million men. The entire field is enclosed with high embankments and towers. The concrete approach is three sixteen-inch steps, one above the other, stretching for a mile or so." ("Talking with Tony Smith," *Artforum*, December 1966)

7 In retrospect, the characterization of European art by the device "relational" appears fairly arbitrary… perhaps as inappropriate as the term "minimal" is for your work, We could suggest any number of other equally "fundamental" characteristics for European art, for instance, why wasn't *abstraction* seen as a characteristic of European art, and thus pragmatically un-American?

8 A persistent problem is that any interpretation we can come up with for one part of your "system" not infrequently contains contradictions of another part of your system, This becomes frustrating when you make few, if any, remarks about your aims, content or intentions, A possible resolution would be that adopted by some of your "critics," like Barbara Rose and Rosalind Krauss, who allow all your terms ostensive definition by your work… however that sets up a situation in which it is impossible to criticize your work in any terms acceptable to you, a tactic guaranteeing your work immunity to criticism,

9 This attitude was widely held by artists in the early sixties. For example, Frank Stella said: "One could stand in front of any Abstract Expressionist work for a long time, and walk back and forth, and inspect the depths of the pigment and the inflection and all the painterly brushwork for hours, But… I wouldn't ask anyone to do that in front of my paintings. To go further, I would like to prohibit them from doing that in front of my paintings. That's why I make the paintings the way they are, more or less." [1] We can also tie in Robert Morris' discussions about gestalt to a hope of escaping from a contemplative mode of seeing.

10 The most foolish statement of this sort was made by Rosalind Krauss in "Sense and Sensibility" (*Artforum*, November 1973—an article I thought just stupid on first reading it, but now realize that its implications are quite insidious. Krauss promotes an utterly dehumanized form of art, an art which "implies the disavowal of the notion of a constituting consciousness …". On the "theories" of Minimalism, she builds a fascistic and totalitarian dogma. She proposes "meaning itself as a function of external space" or "public space," oblivious (or perhaps not?) to the *ideology of the institutions* which determine this "public space." While she pretends this would make "meaning" in art more social, *in reality* the result would be the absolute control and manipulation of art by its public (hence institutional) meaning, the final denial of any possibility of personal meaning. This is abhorrent! While this is certainly a "direction" of much recent art, we've argued here that this is what we have to struggle *against*—not celebrate and turn it into a formal doctrine, as Krauss tries to do.

I have no idea how much the artists she is talking about agree with her "program" (—she discusses, besides the Minimalists, Hesse, Serra, Sonnier, Smithson, Heizer, Nauman, Rockbume, Bochner), But the crucial question is: where would Krauss *herself* be in this picture? As a professional manipulator of the "public space" in the media, what role has she in mind for *herself*? Obviously she learned more from Greenberg than she is letting on.

11 Sol LeWitt seems to have been one of the first to voice this explicitly: "To work with a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity. It also obviates the necessity of designing each work in turn. The plan would design the work ... the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better, This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible. That is the reason for using this method." ("Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum*, Summer 1967)

12 You went on to say: "Part of the reason for my isolation was the incapacity to deal with it all, in any way, and also work. Part was that recent art had occurred outside of most of the society. Unlike now, very few people were opposed to anything, none my age that I knew. "[10]

13 Most artists today still seem to accept this split as in some ways fundamental. For example, Flavin has said that to use art "to assert personal opinions in political concerns ... seems to be impractical, irrelevant abuse—of another art and life confusion, …" (*Studio International*, April 1969). Even when artists disclaim it, they reproduce it in their work, For example, Andre, in making the political point that "silence is assent" [10] , obviously sees the "silence" of his artwork as of a different realm.

14 As President Kennedy described it, in 1963: "Too little attention has been paid to the part which an early exposure to American goods, skills, and American ways of doing things can play in forming the tastes and desires of newly emerging countries—or to me fact that, even when our aid ends, the desire and need for our products continue, and trade relations last far beyond the termination of our assistance." (Quoted *New York Times*.)

15 The full quote was: " … I think American art is far better than that anywhere else but I don't mink that situation is desirable. Actually, it's international art in America and the best thing that could happen would be equal international art elsewhere."[9] To make a blunt point, compare this to then Secretary of State Rusk's statement that the U.S. is "criticised not for sacrificing our national interests to international interests but for endeavoring to impose the international interest upon other nations." Moreover this criticism is not rejected by Rusk, but rather is seen as a sign "of our strength."

16 Also: "It's hard to generalize about all art and the United States but essentially the best art is opposed to the main kinds of power and to many of the prevailing attitudes… The United States is still a hierarchical country, sort of a large oligarchy, though apparently not as hierarchical as Europe, which may be the difference between European and American art; my work and that of most artists is opposed to that hierarchy ... My work has qualities which make it impossible for it to be in agreement with

all of this [American foreign policy]. It couldn't exist, wouldn't have been invented, in agreement or acceptance of this."[8]

17 Take for example, your remark: "The explicit power which displaces generalizations is a new and stronger form of individuality."[3]

18 You've complied with that: "All economic institutions should be considered exactly as that, as producers and distributors, nothing more, certainly not as political entities. There's nothing mysterious and necessarily powerful about GM, GE, the Teamsters, Ford or whoever. They're just cars and light bulbs. Fear of these or adulation is sort of primitive, I thought that about the Art Workers Coalition, too; I didn't see why they were so excited about the Modern, certainly an indifferent institution."[10]

19 Even the concept we have of ourselves as "an individual" is fragmented—the "artist" part is polarized from the "social" part and the "political" part, and so on. This is reflected in what you said about most people not fulfilling their responsibility as citizens [10] –but at the same time you don't include, as part of being a citizen, what you do, the support and purpose of your life. Is being an artist independent of being a citizen?

REFERENCES

[1] "Questions to Stella and Judd," interview by Bruce Glaser, edited by Lucy Lippard, *Art News*, September 1966 (interview made in 1964).

[2] "Local History," *Arts Yearbook VII*, 1964.

[3] "Lee Bontecou," *Arts Magazine*, April 1965.

[4] *Art in America*, October-November 1965.

[5] "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook VIII*, 1965,

[6] "Jackson Pollock," *Arts Magazine*, April 1967.

[7] "Portfolio: 4 Sculptors," *Perspecta* (The Yale Architectural journal), 1967.

[8] "Donald Judd Answers Question: Can the Present Language of Artistic Research in the United States be said to Contest the System"? *Metro No. 14*, 1968.

[9] "Complaints Part I," *Studio International*, February 1970.

[10] "The Artist and Politics: A Symposium." *Artforum*, September, 1970,

[11] "Interview with Don judd," *Artforum*, June 1971.

[12] "Complaints Part II," *Arts Magazine*, March 1973.

Note: The complete writings of Don Judd are soon to be published by The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press.

YET ANOTHER PALACE REVOLT IN THE BANANA REPUBLIC?

MICHAEL CORRIS

CAVEAT LITERATI!

The literature emigrates, the social conditions don't. As you get further away from that hub of bogus self-determination, New York, New York, read the following article with this (from one of history's ablest PR persons) in mind: A Frenchman who arrives in London finds himself in a completely changed world. He left the world full; he finds it empty. In Paris the universe is composed of vortices of subtle matter; in London there is nothing of that kind. For the Cartesians everything is explained by pressure which nobody understands; for the Newtonians by attraction which nobody understands either.

(Voltaire, Philosophical Letters)

SoHo's 'tools for success' seem to be a hazard to culture apart from consumption behavior. They represent strategies of socialization at the level of consumption. I would like to suggest some strategies for *socialization at the level of production*. What is or isn't learnable in terms of ordering of political priorities must surely refer, in part, to the organization as well; an organization which must be read politically and allowed to penetrate the current level of (privatistic) production.

Theories of past and present organizationIclass consciousness—from Lenin's notorious "the factories and the barracks provide the necessary experience for socialist organization" to the SDS—are mistaken, since they presuppose a psychically 'whole' human being, *able* to organize above personal interests. The 'whole' person whose characteristics, capabilities,·interests and needs are fragmented by capitalist production and consumption, stands at the *end* of the revolutionary process, not at the beginning.

So I question if artists who go on about some degree of control over their lives consider their "programs" in terms of de-fragmenting their consciousness. Whether their organizations, cooperatives, etc., deal with cultural learning in the same stereotypical way where the transition from individual production (in private) to public display imposes that same producer-consumer oriented division of labor/ consciousness; or if those organizations are geared to starting from the existing resources of the participants, members of the community, from the community's point of development of those resources, where practice is constituted as collective production in a public context, where the producer-consumer demarcation no longer holds.

WHAT EVERY MODEL OF DECENTRALIZATION HAS IN COMMON IS A CONCERN FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY OF LOCAL CULTURE

I want to talk about some seemingly progressive applications, as found in SoHo, of that highly-charged phrase 'local culture'; to try and determine if resources already in operation can be appropriated for decentralization—so-called—within New York City. Bear in mind two very distinct notions of 'local' control: the first takes local control to be a function of limited, gallery distribution. The second takes local control to be a kind of learning indexed to a particular socio-… even geographical, as in geo-political…economic context. If we index these two relative to reproduction of capitalist production-consumption relations then the former is characterizable as socialization at the level of consumption; the latter as socialization at the level of production. Given the great schism between making and doing and adulation in the world of culture, socialization

at the level of production means one thing for the artist (who is by now benumbed by this self-exploitive production), something else for the onlooker (who appreciates it from the equally rancid position of compulsive consumption). Subsequently, the introduction of the unpredictable, commotional variable of control of their respective cultural practices means that the artist will have to move towards the ownership and control of the means of production (in the full-blown Marxist sense) while the non-artist will move, hopefully, toward some sort of active role in production. The two transitions are interdependent; perhaps both will move towards their respective devaluation of professional roles as tortured geniuses and nose-on-high esthetes. *In fact, they must demand this from each other* if anything substantial in the way of cultural learning transformations is ever going to take place.

SOCIALIZATION AT THE LEVEL OF CONSUMPTION?

SoHo TOOLS FOR SUCCESS.

The first approach to "local control", which includes co-op galleries, artist's spaces, artist's legal/economic rights groups, media such as the *Art Worker's News*, presupposes culture to be subsumed under the notion of commodity production. The point being the artist-as-producer (which is the net gain of consciousness achieved by the above assortment of democratic-ridden paraphernalia) is encouraged to believe in living a separate existence from the dirty work—distribution. And before you can talk about freedom from the financial need to distribute culture imperialistically-recall that New York City floats on international art sales—you have to make explicit the transition from complete non-control and exploitation (the current state of impecuniousness) to local control. In one sense it would be wiser not to shun or degrade such efforts made to learn some degree of self-management whether it be video production or magazine production. All these are potential tools for freedom from metropolitan culture. Otherwise, what resources are left to help us overcome the demoralizing effects of complete media dependency because of complete media-production ignorance (as well as complete lack of funds)? Any criticism of moves in that direction should be tempered accordingly; such a tolerance simply recognizes the reality of partial steps towards a future goal. But unless the already existing partial steps are intentionally politicized and integrated as strategies towards a particular goal such as decentralization of culture they will appear to be little more than an amalgam of insufficient, reactionary, protectionist market strategies, a haven for the conservative avant garde. For co-op galleries this is a political decision which should lead to other strategies working for self-management, instead of allowing the co-op effort to stagnate as a self-celebrating institution, an end in itself.

CO-OPS TRY TO FIGHT THE CORPORATE INTERESTS OF THE ARTWORLD WITH CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS

In the shallowest conception, distribution appears as the distribution of products, and hence as further removed from and quasi-independent of production. But before distribution can be the distribution of products, it is (1) the distribution of the instruments of production, and (2) which is a further specification of the same relation, the distribution of the members of the society among the different kinds of production. (Subsumption of the individuals under specific relations of production.). Marx in The Grundrisse, *p. 96 (Vintage).*

Obviously I can't criticize co-ops for poorly managed crusades which they have never espoused. Besides, the artist's self-management of distribution at the level of galleries is variously political or not; it really depends on who is running the show.

Co-ops can be criticised from their own position, however, and quite strongly. They fail to recognize that the corporate structure and process of the art market extend beyond the glaringly obvious public manifestation of that power, the gallery. Their strategy, therefore, consists of trying to smash the exclusivity (read: monopoly) of the big, prestigious galleries. We should praise the co-ops as an

initial economic and psychological tactic for attacking an ideology that has systematically tried to eliminate entire groups of artists from market competition. But, to the extent that co-ops have become springboards to the media or aspire to such status, to the extent that the economic and psychological context breeds a false sense of financial security and control over their product, we should criticize the co-ops strongly, since they, ultimately help to *widen* the corporate business base in the art world. Lastly, they ought to reconsider the nature of the audience and its role in direct production in order to transform their mercantilistic, garment-district notion of community.

SOME EFFECTS OF THE MEDIACENTRIC MODE OF PRODUCTION ON STRATEGIES FOR DECENTRALIZATION

"Local" is an ambivalent term, but it generally refers to the origin of manufacture. However, a geo-political distinction is not possible if we assume that "local" ought apply only to origin of production and not concern itself with where consumption takes place. It would appear as imperialistic as any other cultural commodity! In other words, it would be marketed as a sort of hyped-up regionalism. As Andrew pointed out, the mediacentric mode of production trivializes "local" as it refers to *production* (context) by taking over distribution *globally*. Geographical/contextual distinctions make sense only if they imply differing sets of social relations vis a vis the cultural object-as-product-and-consumable. These relations are implicit at the point of origin, in the context of practice, but are usually down the pipes-dissolved elsewhere. At least that has been the general trend: glossy art media, certainly, *distorts* the cultural context of production.

Local culture as the local consumption of a local product is constantly being devalued in relation to high-art culture. Short of boycott, unless the local media is sensitive to, and supportive of local culture, local culture will be vulnerable to the incursions of an irrepressible import market.

Geographical/contextual dimensions of production should be staunchly defended against trivialization by a culture which presumes learning to be a function of distribution in "the most shallow sense of the word."

THE METHOD OF PLUNDER IS DETERMINED BY THE METHOD OF PRODUCTION. A STOCK JOBBING NATION CANNOT BE ROBBED IN THE SAME MANNER AS A NATION OF SHEPHERDS

Local products almost always suffer, if not economically, then certainly in the media. Geography/context becomes depoliticised *against* the interests of the local population. Local culture as local commodity … implying distribution away from the source … is ultimately antagonistic to that second notion of local control previously mentioned. One of the points that hyped-up regionalism obscures is the potential strength of a city as culturally diverse as New York, as an *ally* in the struggle against capitalism-commodity-culture. This point is further obscured in the Big Apple media. Every chance they get they defend high art against local culture. For instance, we have to contend with political-rat-bagger-critics like David-White Knight-Bourdon, who think. that all art is ultimately a matter of success d'esteme—who fucks who up the ass. That is, Black Art isn't *all* that good because the 'art' suffers at the hands of the (Black) 'politics'. I've heard that one before in other contexts, which means things are bad enough, moneywise, for whitey these days. Whatever one's conviction towards the sordid capitalistic promotion of Black Art (Puerto Rican Art, Women's Art, etc.) it's clear that it doesn't account for all the art done by blacks. Even less does it take into account political vibrations of a wave-length out of range for Whitey. The cultural context of Harlem dissolves into a journalist's stereotyping as Black Art moves downtown.

(I don't want to give the impression that we have to completely fragment local culture into autonomous, geographical, ethnic enclaves. On the other hand, we can't

avoid taking into account the effect that the dual thesis of culture has on the separation of 'high' and 'low' art along Cosmopolitan ('local' culture for the upper class universally) vs. indigenous-ethnic (also 'local', for the lower class) lines. Insofar as New York City as a metropolitan cultural entity functions to the *exclusion* of New York City as an area comprised of diverse classes, a developing and indigenous culture will be subjugated to the already dominant 'high' culture. Culture-as-learning obviously plays an important role in both. For indigenous culture 'learning' can represent a stop-gap to the dominant culture, if not a move to galvanize opposition to that culture. 'Learning' about 'high' art more or less mirrors and consolidates behaviour *a propos* capitalist social relations. The parallels to underdevelopment are even more striking when indigenous (white, black, yellow, your choice) culture attempts to challenge the hegemony of high art culture. But not every Dago wall mural or Chink community workshop is an expression of revolutionary fervor, despite white, leftist romances. A good deal of indigenous culture/ethnic culture is simply a reflex, a Polka Party publicization of a well-known tradition offering little in the way of tools for community action.

SUCCESSFUL WORKERS BECOME CAPITALISTS, FAILED CAPITALISTS BECOME WORKERS

All things considered, it's hardly surprising that some artists believe the easiest way out of the inequities they experience under capitalism is to embrace capitalism, reproduce it in miniature (co-ops, etc.) thus making it (hopefully) more manageable. Some artists believe that there is a real community of interests between artists-as-workers and artists-as-capitalists. By displacing exploitive social relations with democratized, financial-legal sanctions, artists move in the direction of all organized labor in the US. Hallelujah! They wish to assiduously maintain their status as producers. Hallelujah! Ownership is out of the question. Allegiance to this capitalist concept of culture, local or otherwise, represents the ideal conditions for the artist-entrepreneur to rise from the ranks of just plain artist to become artist-manager. Commodity culture makes everything neat: the exhibition of the commodity remains the *closest point of public contact* to the mythical, privatized production of the artist and serves to explicate the homology between the consumption and production of commodities.

We can all rest easy and become shopkeepers or shopkeeper's enthusiasts. The multi-national New York Art World Market can afford to tolerate these marginal burps of flatulent artist-entrepreneurs.

CULTURE, UNDER DECENTRALIZATION, IS STRUCTURALLY AT LEAST THE SUM OF ITS AUTONOMOUS PARTS

Where are the markets to support all of those shareholder-artists going to come from? Assuming that there is an upper limit to the consumption of particular kinds of art stamped *Made in NYC* and that everyone currently showing in a gallery remains there, it seems to me that the configuration of the art market under cooperatives will be the same as the configuration of the art market under corporate capitalism. But the artist-entrepreneurs may soon discover that there is always a lot of 'distribution' of art going on without any selling intended. This operation is ultimately good for business, but costs a lot of bucks and is a risky proposition. What would happen if these artist-entrepreneurs didn't appropriate the museums as well? This is the folly of collective measures that are only half-measures. Like collective measures that are gung-ho on the transformation of the ownership of the mode of distribution without re-organizing the mode of production. A big change in the economic picture under the above fantasy that would not be taken lightly is the fact that currently big-name artists would have to take a substantial cut in their present inflated earnings, so that financial resources amongst all the shareholders could be equalized. This virtual support of lesser-knowns by more successful talent happens anyway in some galleries today; yet it is the dealer who generally suffers first. If the

collectivization of galleries went this far you could bet that the love of democracy would reach fanatically high levels. In that case how would the cooperatives deal with the unequal distribution of wealth amongst each other? Unless the media is collectivized as well, market preferences will shatter any collective solidarity. Some one will always wind up paying out to poor relations. The cultural hazard to decentralization is clearly this: while producers (artists) may own part of the 'heavy' industrial plant of art, without the producer's control of the art media and the capital to support it, responsive to their needs, the existing autonomous bureaucracy of art critics & co. will remain responsive to the interests of *already invested private capital*, which remains in control. No one will allow the bottom to drop out of any heavily collected artist's work.

IS 420 WEST BROADWAY THE NATURAL SCION OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM?

Echo and re-echo-a bid for SoHo status is a bid for international status as well. A strong international market supports the continued operations of the most prestigious of the New York galleries. It was just such an overseas market network which managed to support an entire group of Conceptual artists in New York way back when, in spite of thcefact that there was virtually no financial support for that work in America.

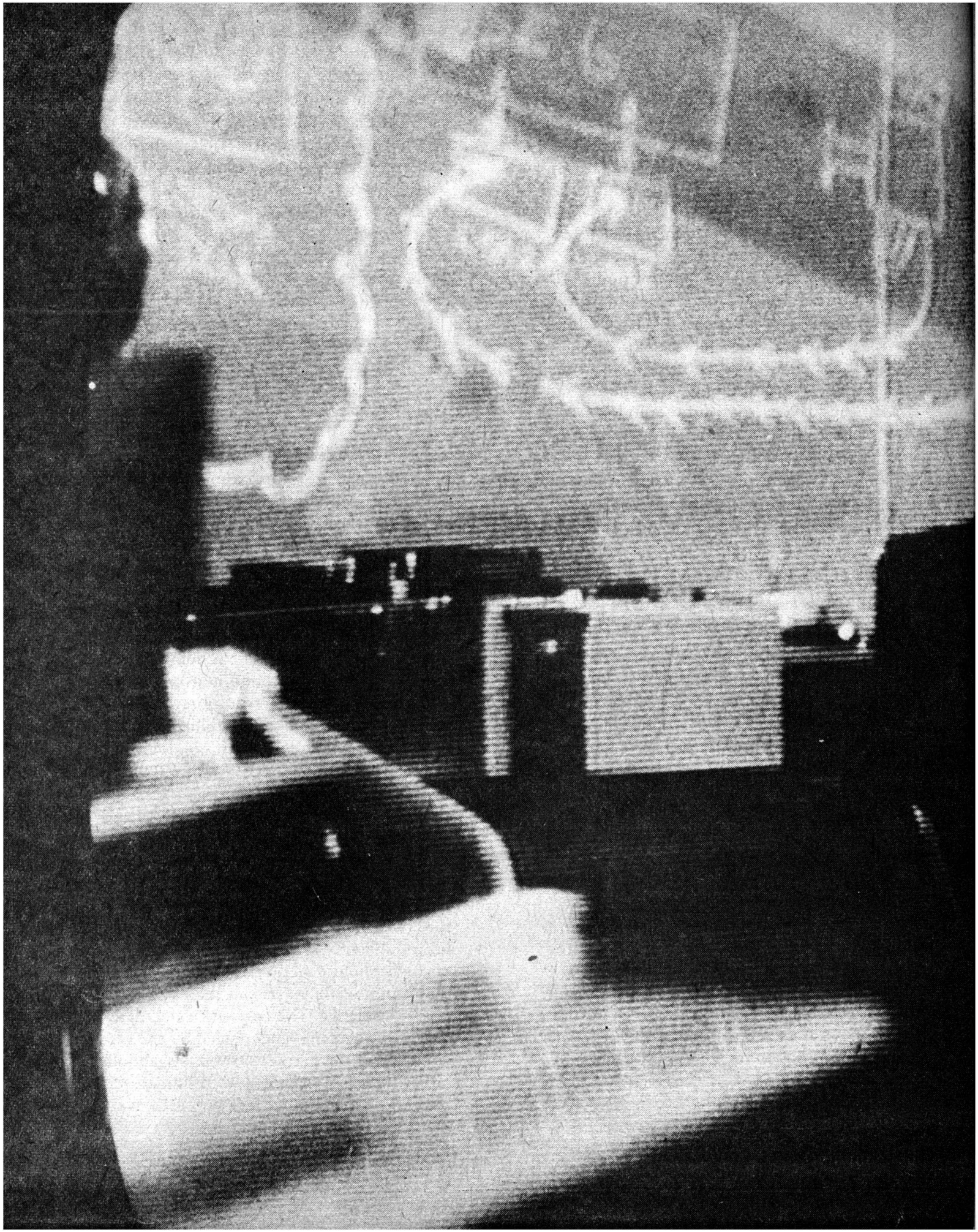
Paradoxically, since New York City is a distribution point first and foremost, New York City need not continue to be the centre of production. Consider the immense wealth needed to reproduce and manage a cultural hierarchy like New York's expensive museum-showcases, cultural centres (many going under now)—all needed to provide the optimal aura for the display of power, authority and the cultural "largesse" of a select few of the community.

This puts a damper on the *physical* expansion of the New York Art World Market. But the media (mediacentric production) allow the New York City Art World Market to expand virtually at will, to appropriate the existing resources of culture abroad for its own gain. All this means that New York City will become no more than the titular head of the Art World Market. Stagnation will set in, as New York City becomes a living relic of an antiquated life-style of production. The more clever artists, keen on changes in the air, will abandon the city in droves. SoHo will become totally what it is now only partially: a chic Upper East Side annex.

FROM THE BELLY OF THE BEHEMOTH, THE SAGA OF JULIUS THE STREETBOY, PART 1

So now artists don't necessarily have to come to New York City though well-known ambitions make this move the necessary, if not the rational, choice at the moment. There are, of course, other reasons, less cynical, for coming to New York City if you are an artist. It's just that the *best* reason for coming to New York City is in anticipation of your entry into the market. You might think that, all of these poor provincial slobs coming to New York City to become poor metropolitan slobs, would constitute some sort of national political block, potentially a destabilizing factor on the structure of the SoHo art community, overflowing into the very laps of 420 West Broadway. It might, if there was a direct relation between those who show in SoHo and those who live in SoHo.

SoHo can support only so many young lions. The swelling of the ranks of artists who are only marginally a part of the media structure (we can include those groups that have been traditionally excluded en masse *regardless* of the economic picture) leads to a situation that is politically volatile in theory, but half-assed in practice. The competitive climate serves to fragment—encouraged by the very structure of the market system. Vagabondage, rather than some expression of solidarity, is the sort of sociality we have in SoHo. Not that I am suggesting that artists are a *class*—Yuk! "Where there are no regular roads, there can hardly be said to be a community; the people could have nothing in common." What is demanded by these vagabonds is democratization of access to the New York Art World Market. Artists will band together only when it is convenient,



e.g. as a lever to gain entry into that market. Vagabonds, having no economic foundation, not even wage labor (vagabondage is the transitional stage between slavery and wage labor), align their interests with those who are in a position to support them in the future. Historically, most forms of vagabondage have been placed outside the law, or considered vile and demeaning. It is a tribute to our culture that the particular species of vagabondage epitomized by SoHo has been celebrated and exalted for a century.

... TO THE F TRAIN TO QUEENS, THE SAGA OF JULIUS THE STREETBOY, PART 2

Do SoHo artists recognize themselves as latter-day vagabonds, corporate ragamuffins? SoHo artists exalt their extra-class status. They therefore do not see themselves, classwise, in a state of flux, but rather in a state of eternal hovering. For the sake of their myth, they have repudiated their ties with *effective* political and economic power; *effective* because it is based on class solidarity and potentially has *long-range* effects and benefits. SoHo is little more than a sprawling dormitory of vicarious leisure class people, most of whom are in a state of perpetual *angst*.

Middle-class professionals generally have to face the playing out of reputedly middle-class ambitions in the arena of upper class control. At this point, seemingly unaware that classes are the *result* of a particular hierarchy of production, not a genetic fact, professionals have few real options if they have any pretenses towards their own 'social justice'. But the ultimate transformation is deprofessionalization: an historical process culminating in the disintegration of a particular socio-economic pattern of dominance. If we were all in a position to determine our own culture, i.e., if that cultural determination had a degree of parity relative to high art culture, the role of the professional artist would appear meaningless. In that case, centralized high art culture could no no longer be thought of as dominant, only *shinier*.

The middle class, then, is perhaps the repository of the greatest number of capitalism's internal contradictions, a class which is simultaneously the oppressor and the oppressed, as a move to abandon one condition forces you to become vulnerable to the other. Worse, the middle class can't comprehend the abdication of its power (read: relative status) in order to effect a move towards solidarity with other lower economic or bureaucratic strata.

Of course, it really makes more sense to talk of worker *stratification* instead of class in the art world. It's been pointed out that a basic contradiction in monopoly capital production is that existing hierarchically-stratified relations of production have become a fetter on the expansion of the forces of production, as evidenced by the increase in labor productivity when such relations are altered. But to alter these relations may induce workers to increase their demands for control over the workplace, a development which is antagonistic to the very core of monopoly capital production. *Classes emerge out of the production process:* whether one produces surplus value or controls the production of surplus value and lives off that surplus. Yet in the New York Art World Market, with its mediacentric mode of production, many sectors of labor are involved in producing the surplus (artists, critics, curators) and relatively few directly appropriate that surplus (dealers, collectors). In other words, the status of other groups not determined as classes of producers under obsolete Marxian economic categories (how could Marx incorporate the effects of a non-existent art media?) has to be taken into consideration to assess the interaction of the various hierarchies of production. In this sense, our avowed 'class' enemies, the critics, really fall on our side of the surplus production/appropriation fence. How does that grab you, Hilton?

NO CHEESECAKE & PASTRAMI DECENTRALIZATION FOR ME THANK YOU DO WE HAVE THE IDEOLOGICAL H-BOMB?

The media causes us to mistake universality of access for an indexical universality, thus flattening our practice,

dominating our cultural context. It's been suggested, in a number of different contexts, all sympathetic in their opposition to monopoly capitalism, that the most reasonable strategy in the face of monopoly capitalism involves the exploitation of existing gaps in our experience within capitalism, as well as the continual proliferation of new gaps. These gaps represent varying degrees of self-control and self-determination, since they are those aspects of our social, psychological and biological lives that aren't necessarily meditated by capitalist social relations of exchange. Beefing up these gaps may also help us in the transition away from Cheesecake & Pastrami decentralization, i.e. local control as socialization at the level of consumption pass the mustard please. To the extent that the present mode of distribution hasn't *completely* closed this circle, that culture isn't *completely* commodified or that the media and the artistic mode of production don't *completely* reinforce each other, there will be a margin for local culture in the face of imported cultural objects.

It's time now to become a little more worldly about politics and organization. Besides the potential explosiveness of the internal group sociality now gone public we have other resources, such as *The Fox*; variations on a technological theme, and I have some rough ideas about the possibility of constructing a public space which would give a good deal more control over the public dimension, as well as an opportunity to come out of our theoretically luxurious closets.

The original benediction appearing on the frontpiece of *The Fox* now strikes me as simpleminded. Journals breed fairly unequivocal responses. What magazines with "wide" circulations do best is generate more articles, not more "community practice". True, article writing has been an important component of our practice, but it isn't the totality of our practice. So I would think twice about encouraging it exclusively. Surely we have no desire to constitute a community that is, in reality, a committee of correspondance, though national hook-ups with other artists and oppositional art-media is something to work towards. *The Fox*, as a NY art magazine, has to deal with community forging measures in a more or less reinforcing way. Once again, the literature emigrates, the social conditions don't.

"Our civilization is against life," my doctor said during my yearly EKG. She immediately substantiated her claim: "These plastic leads are impossible! They always crack after a few years. You can't even get them in rubber anymore."

We constantly confuse the appearance of technology for its social reality. A good example of this ingrained instra-mentality may be found in the attitude and accolades surrounding video. Now video can't be praised enough. Solving a problem' using video is inherently satisfying to our capitalist ethos. It's a little like children playing with their dinner-ware: they confuse tools with toys. (But then perhaps the only difference between some adults and their children is the cost and scale of their toys.) The conventional homily goes something like this: "Whatever the instrument of our salvation, it should appear as convoluted and technocratic as capitalism itself." But capitalism teaches us, in conjunction with our artistic-brain damage-education, that technology, being neutral, may be appropriated *without risk*.

Most artists refuse to see technology materialistically, *as a web of social relations*,– an error to avoid if you intend to make use of technology towards decentralization. This is not at all surprising, since our consumer-artistic-brain damage-education also teaches us to revere the products of technology and, by implication, technology itself. As artists, we are professional media slingers. The ingrained point of departure for our practice is production, not the *circumstances* of production. This doesn't fit very well with a practice that embodies a critique of those circumstances while at the same time calls for the use of the means of production towards radical ends. Some might see this as a contradiction.

We have given some thought to video as complementary material in the context of seminars. A tape of us conversing (sounds boring ... I know, you are all picturing one of those endless documentaries consisting

of talking heads) might convey a good deal of information about us and simultaneously provide a common point of reference for live discussions. Using video "heuristically" at least gives you the option to enter into technology without necessarily reproducing the social relations of technology.

There are some hopeful vibrations for video emanating from the Women's Interart Center in the form of their circulating video newsletter. It seems any interested woman can participate, viewing and discussing video newsletters of other women's groups around the country. In NY, and other cities as well, they even made a tape of the comments about these various tapes and sent that off along with a video report of their local activities. This seems to be one way of simultaneously connecting up and constituting "local culture." But I understand that the turnout is low, which is a pity since these kinds of activities should proliferate. The double-edged sword of advertising helps: most local groups in NY would do well to expand their local media coverage so that they can begin to increase their leverage relative to the High Art Syndicate.

Needless to say, despite the advanced level of technology we are all floundering in, Art & Language long ago 'discovered' what was no great secret to begin with: sometimes it is better just to sit around and talk to one another. While the required apparatus is standard with most artists, the results can be exhilarating.

Central to the approach to local control of culture (as socialization at the level of production) is the design and construction of a street-level space responsive to the needs of a public practice. Galleries and museums put constraints on practice by imposing a standardized Architecture of Contemplation. While some work does indeed make demands on these sterile spaces, the work is generally fitted to the space rather than the reverse. Even if you consider the environmental pieces of a few years back, it wouldn't be difficult to place them squarely in the realm of object of contemplation. The so-called perceptual or experimental effects on the viewer, which was supposedly the point of these works, assumed nothing more than a properly functioning set of synapses; in short, a nervous system in good working order. But of course you had to be prepared to appreciate the ever-so-subtle variations in sensual and perceptual stimuli. So subtle were these neuro-poetic intrusions that if you blinked, itched, coughed, or even breathed too heavily you missed them. Those that demanded total immersion on the part of the initiates were about as interesting as the UN meditation room.

Aside from this phenomenological fluff and other more rigorous reproductions of educationally trendy Little Red School Houses by noted conceptualists (including Art & Language), little has been done to breach the gallery's architectural barrier. It's clear that the galleries do one thing best: serve the interests of buying, selling and casual browsing. So don't think of your practice apart from them & other constraints imposed by its context. And in terms of the physical display context, we are really face to face with a reified institutional package.

Boredom and disruption are two common 'emotional and intellectual states experienced in the galleries—we are usually overstimulated by the scene, understimulated by the art, rarely the reverse. The sociology and topography of the gallery is filled with these sorts of markers of dismal certainty. As the perfected middle-ground for display, the gallery offers no hope for those installations which are beyond the reach of the architecture's accommodation. Gallery topology reduces our practice with optimal certainty; we are forever trying to expand our practice with optimal uncertainty. There literally just doesn't seem to be room for any loose ends in the gallery. The only conclusion we can reach is that the gallery was structured to maintain social learning as ancillary to the preferred contemplation of objects.

When I hear the phrase 'artist's space' I cringe with scepticism. The open-door policy is really ludicrous in the face of a uniform topography, assuming that that space can serve a diversity of needs. The artist's space, a highwater mark for democratized access, is really an invitation to be fascist-for-a-day with respect to your practice.

This projected space will make one point rather obviously: display of objects will not be its prime concern, although tailor-made installations may be constructed.

Let's see if we can flesh it out, from the ground on up. The first requirement should be flexibility of internal spatial partitions. This is easily enough accomplished through the use of well-known display hardware, which enables one to construct flats for displays, or conventional walls.

We would also need a space for conversation, larger seminars, and screenings. The first item is major, so it had better be comfortable, as well as flexible enough to permit more intimate conversations. While this is beginning to sound like the Stork Club, bear in mind how important the setting is—the 'open' classroom was based on such an optimal coordination of learning needs with space needs for particular kinds of activities. It is also well-known that a good deal of energy and interest is wasted in an improperly tuned environment. While we don't want to go from a Maserati to an XKE, we can project the need for other moderately tuned resources.

There should be a reading area where people won't feel stupid sitting down and reading. The working surfaces, natural and artificial illumination, wall surfaces, etc. should be coordinated to provide the optimal environment for intensive visual tasks. Most classrooms are a hazard to our development in this respect, and each of us has physically and emotionally adjusted to these adverse conditions. After many conversations with Dr. Joseph Shapiro and Dr. Neville Cohen, both optometrists involved in developmental vision problems and visual training, I became convinced that this space had to be constructed to provide the least resistance, physically, to a practice that has already generated a good deal of irrational resistance.

The space is being designed to allow for sustained visual tasks, which simply acknowledges the fact that a good deal of our current practice is comprised of reading and writing. (Readers interested in pursuing the complexities of this problem should consult any of the work done by Darell Boyd Harmon on educational environment design, especially his' *The Coordinated Classroom*, A.LA. file No. 35-B. Don't let the title mislead you: everyone of the prescriptions for class-room type situations can be applied anywhere that we use our vision for near-work over an extended period of time.)

We've gone over some theories of learning, but always fairly idealistically. I don't think that concern with coordinated interior architecture is sheer gadgetry, but rather an infrequently visited realm for materialists. One would hardly call urban planning trivial in its social impact, as it has been pointed out that architectural planning reinforces or reproduces class structure; in factories, repressive divisions of labor.

A street-level space would be the best choice, so that store front windows, etc. could be utilized for display, rotating broadsides, public reviews, etc. The notion of display is fairly one-sided at this point, but it should loosen up as more of the displays are constituted collectively.

In each of the above considerations we want to move from a passivity and a-sociality nurtured by a highly-reinforced mode of production to something akin to, perhaps, consciousness raising.

We may then, partially demonstrate a context for practice in opposition to the gallery, deal directly with the over-rationalization of our practice; reinforce and complement our publicational activities (which can easily be expanded to pamphlet and broadside-format publications), establish a concrete base for collective learning, and serve to draw out some of our more obscure complaints and criticisms into daylight.

I think a move towards broader interest in social organization would be a necessary anti-intertia device. The alternative we face is gradual transformation into conservative niche-occupying avant-gardists … the slow death of just enough of a foothold in the art world.

New York, New York

ON SAMUEL BECKETT'S 'WAITING FOR GODOT'

TREVOR PATEMAN

1. I want first of all to explain how I came to write these notes about Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.[1] For I am not a literary critic, by training or by trade, and I am not trying to become one. In addition, I know little enough about Art—I cannot cite you chapter, verse and gallery—and in the Great Division which separates persons of Sensibility from persons of Intellect, my friends do not hesitate to shepherd me into the pen reserved for the latter.

It is from such a situation that I have come to *Godot*, and if what I have to say about this play strikes you as harshly scientific, my reply can only be—Yes. And this may be the price you pay for making of Art a fetish which, to those who have not been brought up in the circle of its worshippers, is as mysterious as mathematics.

What I want to do is to treat Beckett's play as a *world*. I imagine that an objection will be raised to this approach along the following lines: a play, or an artistic work in general, is not a world, though it may be the representation of one. If it is a representation, questions arise such as "What world is represented? In what way is it represented? How is it represented? How successful is the representation?" And so on.

In the particular case of a *symbolic* representation, all that is needed, in the opinion of some people, is a dream-book of some sort which allows the message to be "read off." In the case of *Godot* a certain Mr. Fraser has leafed through his Christian pocket dictionary to produce the ultimate—I hope—in complacent readings of the play.[2]

I would reply to the objection with two points. Firstly, that the "world" is also a representation. Not being an empiricist I do not believe one can talk about *the* world in a neutral fashion, but only that one can talk about a world itself constituted in the act of description. The same applies when for "the world" one substitutes "the text": there is not an original text which a truly faithful commentary can reveal and discourse about. All criticism, however scientistic and free from explicit value-judgements, is an act of partisanship, as is all science.

Secondly, if all the world's a stage, then why treat the stage differently from the world, and vice versa? That the world is a stage is already implied by our first point. That point boils down to the claim that one can never exclude the observer from the observation, the audience from the act. And the concept of "stage" has no sense without the concept of an audience.

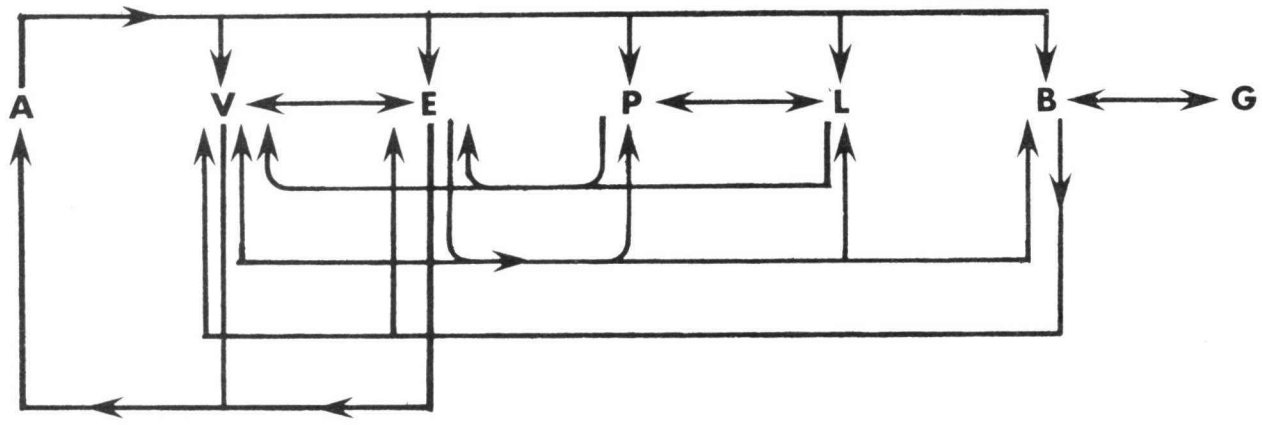
Both "the world" (really "*a* world") and the stage represent the actualization of possible worlds, for both of which one seeks to make explicit the laws which can produce their construction, structure and motion. The alternative which I reject is that which opposes the *actual* world to *possible* worlds, for which opposition I substitute that of possible world $_1$/ possible world$_2$. This position may seem excessive. Let us hope so. For what other road than that of excess could a philosopher want to take?

2. But even if it is conceded that one may treat *Godot* as a world, the laws of which can be sought, it may still be asked: where does this world begin and end? Are the limits of this world.the limits of its language—of its text? In one sense, yes: for it is the text which, so to speak, puts the play in motion. (The text as *Godot* …). This text includes the stage directions which define how something is to be said, the silences, actions and the setting. But

if we took as our object of study (and "took" here means "constructed") the text we would not have done justice to the specificity of *Godot* as a play. Of course, there are plays which are unperformable, and plays which their authors did not intend for production, but only for reading: Musset, I am told, is a case in point. But *Godot* fits neither of these bills. It seems to me that the text is the relevant object of study only when we are concerned with the interpretation a producer has given to a play in re-presenting it.

To find an object which does justice to the specificity of the playas play, we need to start not from the text, but from the representation on the stage, from the performance. But what are the boundaries of this object? The boundaries of the stage? I think not. For in Beckett's plays, at least, one cannot ignore the presence of the audience: the characters themselves refer to "that bog," just as they refer to their own performance. On what principles may one construct a world which included the audience, and what would be the consequences?

Accept for the present that a *social* world is constituted as a set of inter-personal relations: Marx has a remark somewhere to the effect that a cotton-mill is only a cotton-mill when it is inserted in a system of relations of production, which in turn implies that it is inserted within a set of mediated inter-personal relations. *Godot* as a world must, following this line of approach, be constituted in the same way. But what is the criterion of inter-personal relations? It seems to me that such a criterion (a minimal one) is provided by the *regard*. Who regards? and Who is regarded? Putting the two questions together, but ignoring for the moment that a person may be in one regard the same person at different times, whilst being for another regard a different person, we get an answer with respect to *Godot* which can be represented diagrammatically. In the following diagram, the arrows represent the direction of a regard; A is the audience; V is Vladimir; E is Estragon; P is Pozzo; L is Lucky; B is boy; G is Godot:



This schema is inadequate to the complexity of the play in numerous respects. First, as already noted, the identity of one person may rest invariant from one point of view but not from another. The Boy is the same Boy from the point of view, in the regard, of the audience and Vladimir, but *not from his own point of view*, itself defined by a differential relation to *Godot*. Again, in Act 2, Pozzo does not identify Vladimir and Estragon as the same men he met yesterday. And so on. In the schema we have in fact represented the *audience's* point of view of the characters, for they see them as the same from Act to Act: Second, the notion of regard is extremely simplified in this-schema, which permits the recognition of:

(i) X regards Y without being regarded by Y;

(ii) X regards Y and Y regards X, while ignoring more complex relations, such as would have to be brought into play in a "psychiatric" reading of the play, and which relations have, in fact, been conceptualized in theories of inter-personal perception.[3] Thus, for example, we have no way of distinguishing

(iii) mutual regards, where X regards Y, Y regards X, X is aware that Y regards him, Y is aware that X regards him.

Nor can we distinguish:

(iv) non-autonomous regards, such as Lucky's appear to be, where X's regard is *directed* by Y (Pozzo).[4]

Insofar as we need such differentiated concepts of regard, we will introduce them *ad hoc* in the text, rather than try and provide a schema which would cover a dozen pages.

Third, we have left out the setting. The audience, Vladimir and Estragon regard the tree; Vladimir and Estragon regard the landscape to the North, East, South (the auditorium) and West. This aspect can equally well be added in *ad hoc*.

But this simplified schema, though not the foundation on which I build my subsequent analysis, defines the boundaries of my object of study. For the moment, we are outside this object, but we go inside it every time we take our seat in the audience. If it is unusual not to take one's place immediately in the audience, then this distinction might be kept in mind and used as necessary in reading what follows.

3. Now what do we do? Let me begin by saying that the audience and the representation—the world with which we are concerned—is *there*. When I read Gunther Ander's article titled *Sein hone Zeit* [5] … Being without Time … I want to say No, this is not accurate enough. It is a question of Dasein … Being there … which relates to Sein somewhat as species to gender. (The same point has been made, I find, by Alain Robbe-Grillet.)

For the audience, if the stage, the play, is a *There*, the audience itself is a *Here* (to resort to a Hegelian capitalization of the shifters). But, for us as outsiders, the audience is equally a There. And then, by deduction from a familiar structuralist principle, it looks as if this *mutual* There-ness is without significance for us. For as meaning is created by opposition (such as the There-Here opposition experienced by the audience) there can be no meaning where there is no opposition. Further, since until recently the stage-There/audience-Here relation was taken for granted, how is an insider—a member of the audience—meant to become conscious of it, since as we know the obvious is the last thing of which we realize the presence? (An idea which I might have picked up with little cost and some pleasure from Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, but which I got expensively and painfully from Wittgenstein.)

The answer in both cases is that there *are* oppositions on stage and in the audience which draw our attention to the Being-there. First of all, Vladimir and Estragon are there on stage. That is to say, it is significant that they are There. This is emphasized in several ways, the dominant one is surely the fact that Pozzo and Lucky *come and go* whilst Vladimir and Estragon *stay put*. Again, at the end of each Act we witness the failure to implement a decision: "Let's go. (They do not move.)" These are Vladimir's words in the first Act; Estragon's in the second. For us to realize that they *aren't* moving it is necessary that in some way there be expressed an opposite: whether this be the expression of a wish, an order, a decision, an attempt or an intention does not matter for the

present level of analysis.

So much for the stage. What of the audience? Why should it be aware of its own Here-ness (There-ness from the outside)? They are made self-conscious, if they have eyes and ears, first of all because they are reminded of their own presence (presence is an alternative French translation of *Dasein*[6]) by the characters on stage. In the wait for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon express for the audience what it itself might be thinking. Vladimir's "This is becoming really insignificant" is one example.[7] But, secondly, might one not say that the audience is reminded of its own presence by the fact that throughout the performance people are in the process of getting up and leaving? Here, perhaps, there is an explanation of the preference Beckett is alleged to have expressed that such unscheduled exits should occur. But if such exits create such an awareness, in so doing they bind the spectators who remain closer to the fate, the wait, of Vladimir and Estragon. In other words, such exits produce a tendency towards a closure of the gap of theatrical distanciation which is being continuously recreated, and they do so by making the audience part of the theatre. Whereas in Brecht[8] distanciation serves to draw a line between Life (out here) and Art (up there), in Beckett it would seem to serve to theatricalize Life.

4. Having considered one aspect of the spatiality of our "world," what are its temporal characteristics? This question, like the previous one, is not arbitrary, for we are *invited* to pose it by the oppositional features of this "world" itself. If we take up the invitation we will soon find that our "world" is ready to provide answers, even if they are extremely complex ones.

Ander's title speaks of *Godot* as Being *without* Time. But is not the claim that this world is without time immediately contradicted by the fact that Vladimir and Estragon, and with them the audience, are *waiting*? Our attention is drawn to this by the title of the English version of the play[9] by the reason not being able to depart—"We're waiting for Godot"—by the opposition of waiting to journeying, etc. If we look at the *journeying* we see that we are first led to believe that Pozzo and Lucky are travelling by a strict enough time schedule, and that they have a definite destination. According to Pozzo's watch the pair have been journeying for six hours, and the object is to bring Lucky to the fair, where Pozzo hopes to get a good price for him.

We are dealing here with *clock* time, to which Vladimir and Estragon seem to be tied—and it is not inconsistent with this that they should not know what day of the week it is—but of which Pozzo would appear to be master. At least until his genuine half-hunter stops. Pozzo rejects the idea that his watch has stopped in favour of the theory that he has left it at the Manor, something we, as audience, know to be false because we have *seen* the watch. Without his watch, only his heart goes tick-tock-and that *is* damnation.[10] Compare an earlier sequence:

> V: Time has stopped
> P: (Cuddling his watch to his ear) Don't you believe it, Sir, don't you believe it … Whatever you like, but not that.[11]

We can take this episode of the watch and its opposition to the heart as the starting point for a distinction between clock time and *internal* time, experienced time, without which the play would simply appear to be confused. And that the play is not confused, I am wholly convinced.

Vladimir's, Estragon's and Pozzo's experience of time tends towards the experience of a *permanent now* (which is how Hobbes defines Eternity); in other words, of an achrony. How do we know this? Because we are told so by the characters, and their words which are barely, if at all, opposed within the text have the effect of signifying something to the audience perhaps because the audience does not share the internal time consciousness of those on the stage. When Vladimir opposes Pozzo's reference to keeping his clock time schedule with the remark "Time has stopped," or when Pozzo, blind in the second Act, asserts that "The blind have no notion of time"[12], I suppose that most audiences will feel that they don't live in this universe. (Could we say that Pozzo lives the discovery of the opposition clock time/internal time?)

More striking than the meta-statements

which the characters make about time, of which I have just given two examples, are the meta-statements which they make about their *memories* (or, the evidence they produce from which we infer the state of their memories). This is striking for us simply because we remember what they have forgotten, and the defectiveness of memory is significant for the experience of time because of certain causal or logical connections which exist in the "real" world between the two, connections which Beckett does not break in his "play-world."

'We know that the memories of the characters in *Godot* are all seriously, if not equally, defective. They are always to be found forgetting, querying someone else's account of what happened in the past[13] and they have to remind each other of what has gone before.

All of this occupies much of their clock time. For example, early on Vladimir cannot remember what they did "yesterday"[14] though as audience we already know that they were waiting for Godot, and know that they are going to go on waiting, for just prior to Vladimir's memory lapse we have heard the following sequence:

E: And if he doesn't come?
V: We'll come back tomorrow
E: And then the day after tomorrow
V: Possibly
E: And so on.[15]

In Act II, Estragon has the same difficulty remembering what they did yesterday, and he only once succeeds in remembering what they are waiting for, despite numerous reminders from Vladimir, the better endowed in this respect.[16] Finally, let us note that Pozzo makes a meta-statement in Act I and simply tells us that "My memory is defective."[17]

5. In this section we will consider the third time of the play, the time of *history*. The subjective incapacity to make history, is doubled by an objective absence of history. This absence takes the form of, and is marked by, *repetition* (perhaps for no better reason than that an *objective* achrony would be very difficult, if not impossible, to represent on stage).

The most striking proof that we are in a world without history[19] lies in the structural repetitiveness of the two Acts, a repetition in which the only change is a generalized movement towards entropy in the human world (no more carrots, Pozzo blind, Lucky dumb), thrown into relief by those few delightful leaves on the tree.

The cycle, which we know to extend indefinitely forward and backward, is doubled by the circular tour which Pozzo and Lucky have obviously made. Pozzo has not gone to the fair and sold Lucky. Perhaps the story he told in Act I was a lie.

But why is there no history in *Godot*? This is a question I want to pose without being sure that it is legitimate or knowing how to answer it. If we went outside the world we have defined as the object of our study and made reference to another world we could say that there is not a speck of history in *Godot* because Beckett was a bourgeois writer. Little doubt but that this is true. Inside our world we could point to the fact that Vladimir and Estragon … *lumpenproletarians* … are outside those productive relationships within which a lone History is made; whereas Pozzo and Lucky … Lord of the Manor and carrier; Master and Slave … are inside those relationships.

A European audience-will almost inevitably see the relationship of Pozzo and Lucky in terms of Hegel's dialectic of Master and Slave. Yet if Hegel inverted the Old Testament message, Beckett negates Hegel. I will explain. "*Die Farcht des Herrn der Anfang der Weisbeit ist*" says Hegel, lifting a line from the Psalms—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom." For the Psalmist, wisdom lies in submission to the Lord. For Hegel, the wisdom which the slave acquires in the submission to the Lord will allow him to overthrow the Master. This is also the Marxist message, at least in a Lukacsian version of Marxism. But is Beckett's Lucky capable of any such thing? Plainly not. We cannot look for History in that direction. (In what direction? Who "is" Lucky? My original answer was: Lucky is the isolated intellectual. He is an intellectual who has arrived at a truth, but because he is isolated—is not the organic intellectual of a class and, thus, in a position from which history can be made—he is unable eventually to sustain the effort of thought without lapsing into insanity.)

6. …The question of the relations which

exist between historical, internal and clock time…

The waiting of Vladimir and Estragon is a wait against the clock, though—unlike the case of Sozzo—theirs is a wait against a natural clock, the clock defined by daytime, evening and nightfall. This clock doesn't serve as a calendar, no more than a watch does.[21] It is a clock in the sense that it goes round and round and round, not on and on and on. The structure of clock time is *circular*; that of calendar time *linear* (we have seen how the grasp of Vladimir and Estragon over linear time is less than secure). Waiting, then, is also an act of repetition, a part of the circular motion, in this history-less universe, and does not contradict the a-historical, nor even the a-temporal (in the sense of inner time) nature of this world.

Let's look again at this repeated act of waiting. First of all, in waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for a unique, future event over the occurrence of which they have no control. Second, there is no inner connection of a logical or causal order between the real present and the awaited future. *Between these two states of the world there is no possibility of human, history making action.*

Now we have a possible link with internal time. For insofar as inner time is experienced dynamically as a result of human intervention in the moulding of the world, then all that can be experienced in a world of this Utopian or Millenialist waiting is a "time" divided between an *achronic present* … a permanent now … without action … and a *future* which consists in the arrival, like a *deus ex machina*, of Godot.[22]

Defectiveness of memory is not cause but consequence of the absence of history making action. Memory is bad because there is *nothing to remember:*

V: And where were we yesterday evening according to you?

E: How do I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void.[23]

Or, again, consider Vladimir's moving speech when the opportunity of doing something once presents itself:

"Let us not waste our time in idle discourse (Pause. Vehemently). Let us do something while we have the chance! It is not everyday that we are needed. Not indeed that we are personally needed." [24]

The two approaches (Memory → Action; Action → Memory) are not, of course, exclusive. They are on the same axis; only the direction of the arrows is reversed: The two schemas can be placed on top of one another to give us a theory which might merit the name of *dialectical.*

7. Being-there, time, communication: there it seems to me are three of the grand axes of *Waiting for Godot*. Much of our discussion up to now has indirectly concerned the verbal dialogue, and what has struck me in constructing my analysis is how a whole theory of the play can be conveyed in the peculiar vocalizations given to a single utterance. As I now turn to consider the dialogue directly, this should become more and more evident.

But should one, indeed, pay any attention at all to the detailed patterns of the dialogue? Is not most of it so much background noise, redundance, meriting only a cursory glance and against which certain star utterances stand out clearly, the utterances which most critics of the play that I have read seem to head hard for as containing the play's Truth … croutons in the thick pea soup of literary interpretation? Such utterances stand in opposition to the noise, and are often directly signalled to us as being of special importance, as does Pozzo signal the importance of what he is going to say to the two tramps.

However, the rest of the dialogue, the noise, is also picked out in an opposition; namely, in the opposition with *silence*, the importance of which in the play I need hardly emphasise.

Does this silence signify anything in itself, or is it just a determinative of the importance of the dialogue *per se*? If silences were, let us suppose, randomly distributed, then there would be a good case for regarding them as mere demonstratives. But in the play, the occurrence of a silence can be rationally connected to what has just been said or done and what is said or done next. If this is so, what in general, if anything, does it signify?

So as not to take star examples, consider the occurrence of the first two stage instructions which indicate *Silence*.[25]

The first falls at page 11, and at the same time seems to mark a change of subject in the

discussion—the boots are dropped in favour of the two thieves, though the boots recur again after the second silence, before Vladimir realizes he had moved on to the thieves (d. below).

V: There's man allover for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet. (He takes off his hat again, peers inside it, feels about inside it, knocks on the crown, blows into it, puts it on again.) This is getting alarming. (Silence. Vladimir, deep in thought, Estragon pulling at his toes.) One of the thieves was saved. (Pause) It's a reasonable percentage. (Pause).

In "This is getting alarming" Vladimir speaks, perhaps, for the audience what it is thinking. The silence gives them time to add their confirmation to what has been said and—dramatically—makes them wait for what the actors are going to do about this alarming situation. In other words, it is the audience, the Other, in this world which speaks in this silence, or which is invited to do so, and thereby to become conscious of its *expectations*. As for the play, if the characters had an Unconscious, we might say that the silence marks the point of a *repression*, where one refuses to go on because of what lies ahead. It follows that the Audience is put into the position of the Unconscious though the Audience may also fall silent at this point, operating its own repression.

Will such an interpretation work? Does it fit the second silence?

V: You should have been a poet
E: I was (Gestures towards his rags) Isn't that obvious? (Silence)
V: Where was I ... How's your foot?
E: Swelling yisibly
V: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

The structure of this sequence seems to me quite fascinating, Between the two Silences Vladimir has somewhat lost his thread: he started up about the thieves, shifted to repentance, is reminded of his malady when he laughs, asks if Gogo has read the Bible, tells him he should have been a poet. Now, in trying to recall his theme, he recalls first what was seemingly finished with just *prior to* the first Silence—boots and feet. One could say that represented here is a repression disorganising a chain of thought and leaving in its wake a series of disorganisations until in a second Silence the original thread is taken up ...

Suppose we confine ourselves to the context of the second Silence, without relating it to the context of the first. Here the Silence bears the distinctive mark of a repression: it is followed by a rapid change of subject, even if the change happens to involve picking up a thread abandoned some moments before, (V": "Where was I ...). But what is repressed this time? What is left for the audience to fill in? Something like "I was a poet because I'm reduced to this sorry state"? Or, "I was, but I was unsuccessful"? Or what? It is for the audience to decide: they must put themselves there, though they are guided by what has gone before: once upon a time we could have jumped from the top of the Eiffel Tower, says Vladimir. Now they wouldn't even let us up.

8. "Starting from a given theme their minds laboured in unison, They had no conversation properly speaking."
–Malone Dies

In introducing this quotation from another of Beckett's works I am not planning to change my method of analysis. *A propos* of it I would simply like to point out how it indicates Beckett's rationalist attitude to communication. Genuine communication, conversation properly speaking, is, for him, an essentially dynamic phenomenon which results in a change, whether that change be the result of the conveying of information, the expression of emotions, or the arousal of feeling by means of communication, does not matter for the instant. Change is not possible where minds labor in unison. Even a meta-linguistic statement to the effect that our minds are labouring in unison would not, by definition, result in a change. For in the ideal case even 'on these meta-linguistic points the two minds would necessarily labour in unison as well.

Returning to *Godot*, when one considers how long Vladimir and Estragon have been together, the circumstances in which they are placed, the nature of the inner and historical temporality which they inhabit, it becomes difficult-to say the least—to see how they could

have any conversation. The impossibility of this occurring seems hopelessly overdetermined.

But this does not oblige them to fall silent. On the contrary, in the orbit of the opposition static/dynamic there are many static forms of communication to which one can resort and which result not in any change but in the *reinforcement* of a given state of affairs. A reinforcement which may be achieved not through the content of what is said, but through the fact that something is said.

If one asks the question why do Vladimir and Estragon talk in the way that they do? answers are thrust at us in a whole series of meta-statements in the body of their dialogue. Right at the beginning, Vladimir wants to tell the story of the two thieves *not* to inform Estragon, *not* to refresh his memory, *not* for anyone of a number of possible reasons or motives *but because it will pass the time*.[26] Telling stories is a pastime which helps pass time. That passing this time, getting past it, over it, under it, round it, constitutes a problem.

But if Estragon's wishes don't count for Vladimir, his response does:

> V: And yet ... (Pause) ... how is it—this is not boring you I hope—how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved ... Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?[27]

The choice of metaphor here emphasizes the character of Didi and Gogo's conversations as a *game*, which demands only a certain performance and not any particular intention. Thus for Vladimir to be able to continue his story telling it is sufficient response that Estragon should return the ball in saying (with exaggerated enthusiasm, indicates Beckett), "I find this really most extraordinarily interesting."[28]

Language games are not the only way out. One can also play other games (exercises, Pozzo and Lucky, etc.). Of the entertainment provided by Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir remarks, "That passed the time." (Estragon replies: "It would have passed any way;" to which Vladimir responds: "Yes, but not so rapidly." A very clear expression of the opposition between clock and internal time which we drew earlier.)[29]

The situation is summed up in Act II by Estragon, in his peculiar way. Vladmir asks what they did yesterday and Estragon responds:

> E: Do? ... I suppose we blathered
> V: (controlling himself) About what?
> E: Oh ... this and that. I suppose nothing in particular (with assurance). Yes, now I remember yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That's been going on now for half a century.[30]

Passing clock time, a problem created, I imagine by the absence of history, is not the only problem, however, to which language games are proposed as a solution.

What are the *consequences* of keeping conversation going for purposes other than those of conveying information, expressing emotion, arousing feeling—what are the consequences in this world (and elsewhere) when the phatic function—in the broadest sense—is dominant and even determinant in communication?

Since the referential function of communication is subsidiary, if not downright non-existent, questions of veracity become correspondingly less urgent, and equally, referential statements may simply cease to be less urgent, and equally, referential statements may simply cease to be made, something which seems true in *Godot* much of the time. At the opposite pole in *Godot*, so that the two phenomena point mutually to each other, is a kind of logical (is this the word?) punctiliousness, as e.g. in the case of Pozzo, which might equally be described as an excessive literalism,[31] either way destroying the standard function of certain expressions. I think particularly of sequences such as the following:

> V: Where are your boots?
> E: I must have thrown them away
> V: When?
> E: I don't know V: Why?
> E: (Exasperated) I don't know why I don't know!
> V: No. I mean why did you throw them away?[32]

Here, in an ordinary conversation, Vladimir's "Why?" would be understood as

referring further back to an "original question." In general, the object in posing a series of questions is to extract a series of responses prior to any further interrogation of any individual one among them. Estragon does not know, or refuses to play by, this convention. An ordinary language philosopher could go far here.

But it may be asked whether the two crudely theorised examples could occur in one and the same world. Bowlers and rags are perfectly compatible, but can one both allow oneself to be carried away by the sound of words and at the same time be *plus logique que les logiciens*? What has to be shown is that the two apparently contradictory descriptions possess a deeper consistency. I suggest this can be found in the concept of *concrete thinking* as that term is (or was used in the psychopathology of language to characterize psychotic uses of language[33] where both a concern with *sounds* as opposed to meanings is found and an ultra-literal sense is given to words, phrases, or equally to sequences (as in the above example).

9. I will leave the possibility of referring to the psychopathology of language for illumination as little more than a suggestion backed up by some bibliographical references.[34] One could complement such an approach with one which referred to the theory of alienation.[35] In my own approach I have tried to emphasize certain connections between time; more exactly, between *history and communication*. But this is only one of many interrelationships.

I have not considered Pozzo and Lucky's communications, though I had begun some new work on this when the rewriting of this paper was interrupted by the arrival in my life of two real vagabonds, two girl runaways, and into whose history I was briefly but deeply plunged. I have come out of that experience without the heart to apply my mind any more to Beckett's world. If through labouring with Beckett's plays I have been reminded how it is in this bitch of a world, Marie-Nöelle and Montsernat brought me something else. Je tiens a les remercier de m'avoir rappel comment c'est dans cette putain de society. To confuse the world—nature—and society—culture—is one of the greater ideological mystifications; for if the former is supposedly inescapable, the latter can be changed. In changing society, in making history, we may ourselves rediscover the possibility of conversation. It is the loss of this possibility that Beckett, in a realist tradition, records.

Paris, London, Brighton

FOOTNOTES

1 The first version of this paper was used in my class *Speaking to Each Other* held at the City Literary Institute, London (Spring 1971). At that time I had read only two pieces of Beckett criticism: Colin Duckworth 's *Introdution* to the French text of *En Attendant Godot* (Harrap, London, 1956) and Stanley Cavell's essay on Endgame, "Ending the Waiting Game," in his *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Scribners, NY, 1969). The paper was revised in September 1971 and sent to Glyn Pursglove who asked me to read it to the Literary Society at St. Peter's College, Oxford. In preparing a final version for that purpose—preparation brought to an end by the events described in the last section of this essay (and by illness)—I looked at some other Beckett criticism; parts of Ruby Cohn's *Casebook on Waiting for Godot* (Grove Press, NY 1967), Hugh Kenner's excellent *Samel Beckett* in *Pour un Nouveau Roman* (Minuit, Paris, 1963) and Gunther Ander's essay in M. Esslin's (editor) *Samuel Beckett* (Prentice Hall, NJ, 1965). But I do not think I have made great use of these works; my most substantial specific debt is, I feel, to Cavell's essay.

(My readings in Beckett's other works are incomplete; I have looked at several of the plays and at *Murphy*, *Mercier et Camer*, *Malone Dies* and *Watt*—without always managing to finish these novels.)

All references to the English text of *Godot* are to the Faber and Faber version (London, Second Edition, 1965).

2 Cf. G. S. Fraser, *Times Literary Supplement*, Feb. 10, 1956. Reprinted in Ruby Cohn, op. cit. footnote (1).

3 Cf., for example, R. D. Laing, H. Philippson and A. Lee, *Interpersonal Perception* (Tavistock, London, 1966).

4 Such a kind of regard would be particularly important in a psychiatric reading of the play since in existential theories of schizophrenia the denial of autonomy (in regards, as well as in much else) exercised by parents is a major causal factor in schizogenesis. Cf. R. D. Laing and A. Esterson in *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (Penguin Books, 2nd Edition, 1970) and my note in *Radical Philosophy No.1*, Jan. 1972, pp. 22-3.

5 Reprinted in M. Esslin (editor), op. cit., footnote (1).

6 Cf. Glossary in L. Binswanger's Introduction a *L'Analyse Existentielle* (Minuit, Paris, 1971).

7 Compare the commentary on the play-within-a-play, pp. 34-5, in Godot: V: Charming evening we're having; E: Unforgettable ... etc.

8 What little I know of Brecht I know from Roland Barthes' seminar at L'Ecole Practique des Hautes Etudes, VIth Section, Paris (71-72).

9 The French title, *En Attendant Godot*, focusses our

attention on what happens *while waiting* for Godot.

10 p. 46;

11 p. 36;

12 p. 36.

13 Cf. the following passage on p. 14 starting with Estragon: We came here yesterday .... Note first that Vladimir having used an expression implying sure knowledge of what they did do is shown not to have been justified in making such a confident assertion. In having this result, the conversation is a perfectly ordinary and successful one. But what would one want to say where a person habitually makes claims which he has no right to make? The effects of Estragon's queries resemble the effects of parents' queries as analysed in Laing and Esterson, *op. cit.* fn. (4). Cf. p. 46 of that work.

14 p. 14;

15 p. 14;

16 Cf. pp. 66 & 87;68,71,84 & 93;

17 p. 38.

18. One of the few essays of Althusser which I can cheerfully recommend deals with problems of temporality on the stage, and particularly with the difference between time in which history is made and history-less time. Cf. "The Piccolo Teatro: Bertolazzi and Brecht," in *Pour Marx* (Allen Lane, London, 1969), pp. 131·51.

19 Is the theatre necessarily a place where history is not made? Even if Yes, this does not mean that a playwright may not hope that his audience may go and make history in another place. Thus Brecht.

20 That Hegel was sliding in a line from the Bible was pointed out to me by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Michael Ireland found the exact reference.

21 Though it does in the English version: P: That was nearly 60 years ago ... (He consults his watch) ... Yes, nearly sixty. (p. 33, Godot).

22 Cf. Joseph Gabel, *La Fausse Conscience* (Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1962) on the structure of the Utopian consciousness. Cf. also his *Sociologie de l'Alienation* (PUF, Paris, 1970).

23 p. 66 *Godot*;

24 p. 79.

25 The sequence of silences by pages starts as follows: pp. 11,12,16 (twice),17 (four). 19 (twice),&20: all before the entry of Pozzo and Lucky. Compare the sequence in Act II: pp. 59;60 (twice),62 (twice),63 (seven; of which two are long),68, 70, 72, 73, 74 (long), 75 (three), 76 (three), all before the second Pozzo-Lucky entry. Part of the entropy, no doubt.

26 V: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story? E: No; V: Shall I tell it to you?;E: No; V: It'll pass the time (Pause) Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. p. 12, *Godot*.

27 p. 12;

28 p. 13;

29 p. 42;

30 p. 66.

31 A term which gives us a link with descriptions of schizophrenic language in psychopathology.

32 p.67;

33 I don't want to overlook the fact that the labelling of thought and language as concrete, psychotic, etc., functions in practice to invalidate perfectly reasonable but politically dangerous statements made by patients. See the example in Robert Silman's "Teaching the Medical Student to Become a Doctor" in T. Pateman (editor), *Counter-Course: A Handbook for Course Criticism* (Penguin Education, London, 1972), p. 274.

34 Cf. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (MIT Press, 1961); E. Hanfman (editor), *Language and Thought in Schizophrenia* (Univ. of Calif. Press, 1944); J. Gabel, op. cit. footnote (36); R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (Mouton, The Hague, 1956): "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia" is the essay in that collection.

35 Cf. Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*; and Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* (Merlin Press, London, 1971; American edition by MIT Press).

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER

TREVOR PATEMAN –
LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND POLITICS

Toward a Radical Theory For Communication

> "Full of arresting and important ideas – a book of weight without gravity, in which the aim of an 'open' discourse is remarkably achieved"
> – Professor Roy Edgley, University of Sussex

THIS BOOK

offers a critique of everyday communication relevant to political and educational practice. It illustrates how types of communication can be repressive, mystifying, alienating and privatising. Individual chapters deal with Rational Error, Idle Discourse, Repressive Discourse, Impossible Discourse and the Theory of Tolerance.

THE AUTHOR

edited *Counter Course* (Penguin Education 1972) and wrote *Television and the February 1974 General Election* (British Film Institute 1974). He has contributed to *Radical Philosophy, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Human Context, Hard Cheese, Teaching London Kids, Screen Education* and many other periodicals.

THE BOOK was announced for publication by Harvester Press, but the author has withdrawn it from that press. The book is now published by Jean Stroud and Trevor Pateman, printed by the Russell Press as a perfect bound A5 paperback of 112 pages, and with a cover by Denise Riley.

HELP!

Help us pay our enormous printer's bill by ordering now at the special pre-publication price of $4.00 per copy including post and packing.

ORDERS

to Jean Stroud and Trevor Pateman, 1 Church Green, Newton Poppleford, Sidmouth, Devon, England. U.S. Distribution: Michael Corris, 487 Broadway (Room 803), New York, New York 10012.

LEFT CURVE

Prehistoric Hands. *Circa* 25000 B.C.

LEFT CURVE is an experimental magazine published by two San Francisco artists, Csaba Polony and Richard Olsen. The magazine focuses around theoretical and practical issues concerning art and revolution. It is an open cultural magazine with a non-sectarian political and stylistic position. It covers all art forms from experimental works to traditional. The stress is on original material of active contemporary artists, writers, and critics, both in this country and abroad. Issues to date have included the Guerrilla Art Action Group; *The Cultural Revolution in the Philippines* by E. San Juan, Jr.; *Notes Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Culture* by Willis H. Truitt; *Exhaustion of an Ideology: Bankruptcy of "Modernism"* by Csaba Polony; the Cultural Workers of Our America; M.I.R.; *Truth is a Convincing Answer* by Margaret Randall; *Cultural Imperialism* by Ian Burn; *Cityarts Workshop--People's Art in New York City* by Eva Cockcroft, among others.

Individual copies: $1.50. Subscriptions: $4.50 a year (3 issues), $6.50 for institutions. Publication date for #5: Nov. 75. Write to 1016 Greenwich St., San Francisco, Calif. 94133.

THE NOVA SCOTIA SERIES

Source Materials of the Contemporary Arts
General Editor: Kasper Koenig

HANS HAACKE Framing and Being Framed

7 Works 1970-75

with essays by Jack Burnham 'Steps in the Formulation of Real-time Political Art', Howard S. Becker & John Walton 'Social Science and the Work of Hans Haacke'

165 pages; 7 x 9"; 2 color plates, several b+w reproductions

$17.50 cloth $9.95 paper

MICHAEL SNOW Cover to Cover

This book consists solely of photographic reproductions utilizing the bookleaf to reveal the nature of opposite-handedness

360 pages; 7 x 8"; 360 full-page reproductions

$20.00 cloth $12.50 paper

DONALD JUDD Complete Writings 1959-1975

Gallery Reviews, Book Reviews, Articles, Letters to the Editor, Reports, Statements, Complaints

225 pages; 8½ x 11"; over 300 b+w reproductions

$25.00 cloth $14.50 paper

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED:

Bernhard Leitner The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein; 128 pages; 7½ x 11"; 88 reproductions; $9.95 paper

Claes Oldenburg Raw Notes; 544 pages; 7½ x 11"; 53 full-page reproductions; $12.50 paper

Simone Forti Handbook in Motion; 144 pages; 6½ x 9"; 40 reproductions; $12.00 cloth $6.00 paper

Steve Reich Writings about Music; 80 pages; 7¼ x 9"; 35 reproductions; $8.00 cloth $4.00 paper

Yvonne Rainer Work 1961-73; 346 pages; 7½ x 11"; 230 reproductions; $20.00 paper $11.95 cloth

PUBLISHED BY:

The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
5163 Duke Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

CO-PUBLISHED & DISTRIBUTED IN U.S.A. BY:

New York University Press
Washington Square
New York, N.Y. 10003

PHOTO CREDITS:

SARAH CHARLESWORTH: PAGES 41,42, 43, 69, 78, 86 (ROBERT SMITHSON, 'MIRROR WITH ROCKS' 1968), 107, 117, 148-149;

LIZZIE BORDEN: PAGE 22;

PAUL KATZ: PAGE 128 (PORTRAIT OF DON JUDD).

PHOTO FACING PAGE 1, PAGE 4 AND 5 FROM JOHN BERGER'S 'WAYS OF SEEING' VIKING PRESS, NEW YORK.

PAGE 118 PORTRAIT OF LORD KITCHENER

PAGES 134-135: DON JUDD 'UNTITLED,' 1967
136-137: DON JUDD 'UNTITLED,' 1971
COURTESY OF LEO CASTELLI GALLERY

SUBSCRIPTION AND SINGLE ISSUE COSTS OF THE FOX FROM NUMBER 2:

U.S. AND CANADA

INDIVIDUAL ORDERS: $3.00 PER COPY, PLUS $.50 HANDLING AND POSTAGE, $.15 EACH ADDITIONAL COPY

BACK ISSUES: (NO.1) $3.00 PER COPY, PLUS $.50 HANDLING AND POSTAGE, $.15 EACH ADDITIONAL COPY

SUBSCRIPTIONS: (FOR 3 ISSUES) $9.00 POSTPAID

FOREIGN

PRICES ARE THE SAME AS U.S. FOR ALL FOREIGN ORDERS WHICH ARE SENT SURFACE MAIL, ADD $1.50 PER COPY IF AIR MAIL POSTAGE IS DESIRED.

TRADE DISCOUNTS ON BULK ORDERS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

ALL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION REGARDING DISTRIBUTION, AS WELL AS ORDERS FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS AND SINGLE COPIES SHOULD BE SENT TO:

JAAP RIETMAN, INC.
167 SPRING STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
10012

ALL CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE IN U.S. DOLLARS TO JAAP RIETMAN, INC.

FOR NEW YORK CITY DELIVERIES PLEASE ADD 8% SALES TAX. NEW YORK STATE DELIVERIES REQUIRE 6% PLUS LOCAL TAX.