DEFINING THE PUBLIC:
Three Moments of Audience Address in 20th Century Artistic Production

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines strategies of audience address as manifest in the work of the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s, the sculptural practices of the American Minimalists and the critics who served to define their endeavors, as well as the more recent projects of institutional critique that have characterized one trajectory of post-minimalist artistic production.

Vladimir Tatlin and El Lissitzky attempted to meet the demands of a newly-forming proletariat class by siting their work in the space of political and public activity. This effort to engender a simultaneous collective response, a notion theorized by Walter Benjamin, was unsuccessful: Lissitzky returned, instead, to the space of exhibition, the conventional arena of artistic discourse, where he designed a series of exhibition rooms that created an active spectator and made visible the ordering systems of the institution. Seen in light of these radical precedents, Minimalism and its critics appear to have been caught in an approach whose departure point was the physical and phenomenological nature of the object and its context—a retreat from the path initiated by Lissitzky. With the arrival of conceptual art some fifty years later, the late Constructivist explorations would re-emerge as the practice of institutional critique. These latter modes of artistic production have examined the socio-political and economic underpinnings of the institution, the composition of its audiences, and the modes of art viewing that it has promoted.

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CONTENTS

"Art is not free, the artist does not express himself freely (he cannot). Art is not the prophecy of a free society."

Daniel Buren

"A public appears, with a shape and a will, via the various claims made to represent it; and when sufficient numbers of an audience come to believe in one or another of these representations, the public can become an important art-historical actor."

Thomas Crow

"The million year period to which the burned junk from the museums and archives related would be summed up in the history books in one sentence, according to Koradubian: Following the death of Jesus Christ there was a period of readjustment that lasted approximately one million years."

Kurt Vonnegut

Chapter One: RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTIVISM

I began this project intending to write about the innovations in modes of public address developed by the Minimalists. I turned to the moment of Russian Constructivism essentially to establish a point of comparison and methodologically, a foil for the sculptural practices of the sixties. In my explorations of the operations of Tatlin's Monument to the Third International I realized that what was so radical, in both aesthetic and theoretical terms, about this project was even more true for El Lissitzky's Proun Room and his Demonstration Rooms of 1926. The difference was that these latter projects remained in the site of the museum, calling into question not just the conventional operations of exhibition but patterns of viewing established by the institutional context which, after all, was an ostensibly public one. Lissitzky's work began to uncover the real nature of institutionally "neutral" space, involving the spectator in this exploration. The work of these two figures of the historic avant-garde prefigured both the more recent programs of institutional critique (albeit marginalized ones) of the last two decades as well as the investigations into the physical, phenomenological and optical conditions of perception/reception embarked upon by an American generation of sculptors and critics in the 1960s.

Ironically, in light of the work of Tatlin and Lissitzky, Minimalism no longer looks so radical: within this historical lineage, Minimalism appears as a retreat from a path that would require greater changes than lone aesthetic ones, a definite trans-

gression in the modernist context. The viewer-object relationship that is established by Judd's and Morris's work, while testing the precepts of a static point-of-view and the limitations of the finite through seriality, extends little farther than the realm of the optical made tactile, the hallmark of this moment. Significantly, the primary critics whose writings served to define this moment of sculptural production were also trapped by an analytic approach whose departure point was still the object: whether through an attack mounted on an analogy to theatre (Fried) or via an apology that maintained a model based on the purported inclusiveness ("publicness") of language (Krauss), the authors of the theoretical positionings surrounding Minimalist practices had not taken up the lessons of the Constructivists: even Duchamp's verification of the function of the museum was sublimated in favor of a discussion that focused on the physical aspects of this authoritative space. As Daniel Buren iterated at the beginning of the 1970s in a series of theoretical writings that would accompany his art making, all aesthetic production of the twentieth-century was and would be framed by the parameters of the museum, in itself a product of a very specific cultural paradigm. Though unacknowledged, by the time of Minimalism, "public experience" could no longer be understood as being established by or through the art object; the public was already circumscribed by the institutions which would define that experience.

It is perhaps this awareness of the powers of the institution to define not only a discourse but the constituency of its audience that distinguishes a particular set

of post-minimalist practices from those which they succeeded. The cognition that art's existence relied on institutional recognition, that the function of the museum and gallery was to define what was and what was not art, led to a number of distinct responses within the domain of artistic production—some of which posited escape and others, protest from within, as the means to out-maneuvering the confining structures of the established artistic arenas. Land Art and Earth Works literally abandoned the site of the institution and the organized rituals of temporary exhibition in favor of a utopian, romantic quest for undemarcated territory; for artists like Robert Smithson, the repressive character of the urban art world led to a kind of liberated pursuit of not-yet-colonized surrounds, where visions of an unmediated relationship with nature could mean the discovery of a new palette and infinite background for artistic creation. Concurrently, the 70s saw the formative years of conceptual practices (Battcock's "Idea Art"), wherein the dematerialization of the art object offered a means to refusing the blatantly commercial foundations of the institutional edifice. A third strain, one which will be examined in this paper, comprises the discourse of institutional critique—the utilisation of self-reflexivity, of a consciousness of the conditions and motivations which inform one's work, to alter that reality: the actualities of one's circumstances are seen not as avoidable but, via consciousness, modifiable. Buren was one of the first to articulate this position with regards to the character and function of the museum; later, others like Hans Haacke, Rosalyn Deutsche, and Kryzystof Wodiczko (Jenny Holzer, Barbara

Kruger, Dennis Adams and many who will not be discussed in the context of this paper) elaborated on this position, bringing issues of private interest vs the public, audience, and class structure into a theoretical discussion that attempts to break out of the hermeticism of the modernist debate.

In all of the post-minimalist reactions to the exigencies of the institutional frame, the status quo is problematized, whether pertaining to the "neutrality" of the white cube, the exclusivity of the art scene or the reliance on specific, traditional media. While this latter focus is often referred to as the crisis or death of painting, it is perhaps as apt, in this context, to reframe it as, what Benjamin Buchloh has called, the "crisis of audience." Rather than synonymous, these two phenomena are concurrent. Thomas Crow, in his careful study of the development of public art institutions, Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century France,[1] describes the museum in its earliest incarnation—the Salon exhibitions of the French Academy of Painting and Sculpture which originated in the first part of the eighteenth century. Tracing the increasingly large public that surrounded the arts in French society at that time, Crow describes the complicated social situations which ensued as a direct result of the truly public nature of the Salon expositions, where people from widely divergent economic and social classes would meet each other in the secular halls of the Louvre for free amusement. Crow explains that painting, which had previously

[1] I am not able to give more than a mention here to Crow's excellent and complex account of the French Salon; in any discussion of the development of public institutions for art and the concurrent constellations of audience, Crow's book is an indispensable source. His description of this modern phenomenon, including the echoes of the Baudelairean explorations of public life offers the clues to present day disjunctures between public art institutions, public art, and their true constituencies, both producers and consumers.

been created for its patron audience, a well-educated minority, was now being viewed by a vastly heterogeneous public. Aside from the effects this new social formation would have on the practice of painting and art criticism, the topic of Crow's book and one too complex for this discussion, the issues that were generated through this confluence of the experience of viewing painting, an historically private endeavor, and the development of a public institution intended for this purpose, show up the disjunctures between a romantic ideal of art's function and the realities of accomodating this newly reconstituted audience. As Crow explains,

> "There was in this arrangement, however, an inherent tension between the part and the whole: the institution was collective in character, yet the experience it was meant to foster was an intimate and private one. In the modern public exhibition, starting with the Salon, the audience is assumed to share in some community of interest, but what significant communality may actually exist has been a far more elusive question. What was an aesthetic response when divorced from the small community of erudition, connoisseurship, and aristocratic culture that had heretofore given it meaning? To call the Salon audience a "public" implies some meaningful degree of coherence in attitudes and expectations: could the crowd in the Louvre be described as anything more than a temporary collection of hopelessly heterogeneous individuals?"[2]

While painting did adapt in format and genre to its swiftly altered position in a modern secular society where patrons were replaced by the capitalist market system, this medium has continued, during specific historical moments, to represent individual creative expression and offer the lure of a private, transcendental experience to its audience: American modernist painting of the 1950s extolled the virtues of individualism, a doctrine adopted by this country as an ideology.

[2]Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 3.

The "crisis of painting," then, is not unassociated with the changing functions and conceptions of the role of the audience, its composition and the range of its power, particularly under the conditions of political and social restructuring, and the formulation of less hierarchical (politically mandated) class structures. This did not go unnoticed by Walter Benjamin, who, in prophesying the impact of new technologies on the reception of art by mass audiences, saw painting as having reached near obsolescence:

> "The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses."[3]

Bound up in this identification of painting as outmoded is an understanding of the interdependence of art and its audience—a dialectical relationship which is played out, more and less consciously, in the artistic developments of the twentieth century. It is not, then, the purported demise of painting that is of concern to me here (though the fact that this medium is not discussed with regards to significant turning points in the art history of twentieth-century public address is not unintentional), but rather the inseparable constitutions of art and publics whose chronicle begins with the rise of the public art institution and the tradition of painting which it was meant to display.

An early, striking manifestation of this symbiotic relationship was apparent

[3] Walter Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in Illuminations, ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 234.

in the work of the Constructivists whose explorations of sculptural form were motivated by the drastic processes of destabilization and reorganization in the social, political and economic realms—a situation that both prompted, and was provoked by, the second Russian Revolution of 1917. Of equal consequence, however, were the revolutions that occured first within the realm of representation, where the dedication to a new ideological and social order led the Constructivists to seek out equally modified conditions for the reception of their work; that is, alternative modes of public address and reception than those established by Western bourgeois philosophies. The obvious requirement, in a context where the masses were to be mobilized to make their voices heard and their wishes fulfilled, would be to develop forms of art that would allow for what Benjamin coined "simultaneous collective reception." Benjamin theorized this position in his seminal essay, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction;" this text is an articulation of a theory of audience, or more precisely, a model for the shift that occured within artistic practices, regarding modes of public address at this particular historical juncture of the twentieth-century.

Walter Benjamin

While Benjamin's thesis is based on the advent of film technology and the precise modes of audience address and reception that it had the potential to engender, it is the very identification of the necessity to reach large audiences outside the boundaries of the bourgeois "public sphere" that makes his essay relevant to the

following discussion. Although early Constructivism maintained formal links to the conventions of sculptural practice, certain artists among the historical avant-garde contested, through their work, the notion of an art object unconnected to its site (be it physical, ideological, or human) of exhibition. These artists' notions of the use value of art required a reorientation of patterns of audience address similar to those recognized by Benjamin in the operations of film. Benjamin compared film to architecture on the basis of their two-fold means of reception through use and by perception. Architecture, he suggested, captures an audience not merely through its optical presence but through its tactileness—its tangibility: architecture is not merely "received" by the act of concentrated contemplation but through habit and distracted viewing. Similarly, film, barraging its audiences with more images than can be synthesized at the moment of perception, forces the audience into a distracted mode of viewing that refuses a contemplative stance. Film, a cumulative medium, does not define its reception as an isolated experience through apperception but allows for collective and gradual, "distracted" and "absent-minded" perception.

> "Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilize the masses. Today it does so in film. Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise."[4]

Benjamin looked to the art of film as the medium through which mass communication would ultimately flourish and, eventually, replace the old status of art

[4]Ibid., p. 240.

with forms of political address unprecedented in the history of art. Film became for Benjamin, art's vehicle through which political and social changes could be effected: While this belief now appears as a naively optimistic vision, [5] at the moment of Laboratory Constructivism (as the work of Tatlin is sometimes classified) the notion of an art that would have the power to bring about material changes seemed within reach.

Principal to Benjamin's theorization of new modes of public address was the assertion that previous definitions of art were no longer tenable. The inappropriateness of the tradition in Western culture of "the cult of beauty" [6] for a society undergoing a revolution precisely to rid itself of the bourgeois legacy, is summed up in Benjamin's statement:

> "They ["theses about the developmental tendencies of art under present conditions of production"] brush aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery- concepts whose uncontrolled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense."[7]

Benjamin identified a need for a revision of methods of audience address and a requirement for a mode of artistic presentation that would eliminate contemplative viewing and transcendental or historically non-specific signification; for what underlies these seemingly all-encompassing formations is a very specific program for the

[5] This aspect dates Benjamin's essay and suggests that mass cultural production has become far more significant and powerful than Benjamin forsaw: Benjamin Buchloh points this out in his essay, "From Faktura to Factography" (see Bibliography).

[6] As Benjamin himself put it, "Nothing more strikingly shows that art has left the realm of the 'beautiful semblance' which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art could thrive." In Benjamin, "Art in the Age," p. 230.

[7] Ibid., p. 218.

maintenance of bourgeois power structures. These characterizations of the nature of aesthetic experience reflect both the traditional functions of art to simulate and inspire religious experience and to serve as a status symbol for the most elite sectors of society. Benjamin, in a later essay, "The Author as Producer"[8] argued the notion of transhistorical values to be as tendentious as political propaganda. The transcendental values of high art, the Kantian idealist vision of artistic practice and the correlate definitions, not just of beauty, but of the role of art and artists in society have, despite challenges (as we will see), remained powerful since the Enlightenment. This framework posed a problem for those, like the members of the historical avant-garde, who were seeking to make cultural production subservient to the demands of the substructural and political agendas of a new society. Tatlin and El Lissitzky, as we will see, sought to engage the viewer in an active relationship with the object, thereby altering the role of the "public" from a 'ruled' to a 'ruling' body: In this way, the border between the producer and the consumer (or the author and the public) was to be made more porous (everyone is a worker in a classless society).

Transformations in the political, social and economic spheres coupled with the development of photographic and film technologies precipitated a shift in artistic production: the avant-garde began to seek out mass audiences in accordance with their belief in the potentials of "simultaneous collective reception." In the essay,

[8] Walter Benjamin, Reflections, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 220–238.

Benjamin describes an history of reproduction technologies which, he argued, had altered both the way in which art works are valued (the changed significance of the concept of the original) and their ensuing mode of reception (collective—as with film). Theorizing about the notion and constitution of audiences for art, radical at the time of his essay, has remained uncommon, this practice obscured in western art and art history praxis by post-war modernism's stance of autonomy; in itself a defensive attitude toward the controlling forces of the capitalist free-market in which it had become ensconced.

The possibilities of representation and reproduction afforded by photography and cinematography allowed for the dissemination of cultural artifacts previously available only to an elite sector of society, among a wider population. Further, these processes of reproduction presented a challenge to the "authenticity" [9] of a work; a key element in the assessment of an art work's exchange value. The significance of the physical traces of an individual painting or sculpture's "history which it has experienced" was displaced by the possibility of fabricating many copies, rendering the concept of the original obsolete. [10] The printing press, photography, and then film made possible forms of representation that could keep up with the pace of real life. (Art that could incorporate real time, that is, be removed from the

[9] "The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissable from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced." In Benjamin, "Art in the Age," p. 221.

[10] Benjamin's notion of "authenticity" which, he argues is rendered obsolete by virtue of the possibility of there existing many "originals" is based on photography; one could argue that the very opposite process occurs in the case of painting, where the existence of many copies makes the original or the first, more valuable. In photography, of course, the negative provides the basis for any number of first-generation prints.

discursive space of illusion and function in virtual space, became an important aspect of sculptural production beginning in the late teens.) The obverse of these developments was what Benjamin described as the decline in the auratic function of the work of art. The "aura" of the art object, which had resulted earlier from the work's function in the context of magic, ritual, and religion was now in danger of extinction;[11] as the art object lost its select position of remove from the larger public, its value became one of exhibition rather than that of service to tradition. Benjamin characterized this process as one in which the object would meet the viewer half way, that is, nearer to his or her own environment.

A contributing factor to this shift in modes of audience address and reception is the historical fact of mass movements in the Soviet Union at the time of the consolidation of the historical avant-garde. For while the new technology made reproduction feasible, the requirements of a restructured society provided impetus for the exploitation of these new, potential art tools. Benjamin recognized the likelihood of the growth of new forms of art that would encompass the very processes of reproduction: a vision linked to the developments of Dada but with its precursor, the incorporation of processes of production, in the work of Tatlin and its full realization in the factographic, later work of Lissitzky. [12] Benjamin's essay, in a dialectic form, acknowledges both the impact that societal (or, to be accurate;

[11] "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art." In Benjamin, "Art in the Age," p. 221.

[12] This period of Lissitsky's work, including the montage project he completed for the 1928 Pressa Exhibition will not be examined in this paper. See Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography" in October: The First Decade (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 95–112.

economic, substructural) transformations can have on cultural practices and, in complement, the changes in the superstructure that could, potentially, "be useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art."[13]

Vladmir Tatlin

At the time the first model of Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third International was being constructed, Nikolai Nikolaevich Punin wrote;

> "A social revolution by itself does not change artistic forms but provides the environment which slowly alters forms of art. The idea of propaganda through monumental art has not changed sculpture or sculptors but shifted the very principle of plastic expression reigning in the bourgeois world. The Renaissance tradition in plastic art could appear contemporary until the feudal-bourgeois roots of the capitalist countries had been destroyed. The Renaissance went up in smoke but only now is Europe clearing away its smoldering ruins."[14]

Punin, a critic and champion of Tatlin's work, articulated what was to become the focus of the artist's design for a monument to celebrate the Revolution and the politically realigned society it had engendered: the new role of plastic expression would be, like propaganda, to participate in and facilitate political and social ideals. In order to make instrumental this change in "principles" (Punin's term), art would have to be relocated from the site of bourgeois aesthetic appreciation to the space of simultaneous collective experience—the place of public gathering. This shift, symbolically enacted by Monument to the Third International, was in one sense, extremely radical: to take art out of the protected environment of the institutions

[13]Ibid., p. 218.

[14]Nikolai Nikolaevich Punin, "Monument to the Third International," in Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova, *Tatlin* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 344.

and living-rooms of the bourgeoisie was an operation, re-enacted by artists in the 1930s and again in the 1970s, which has been posed, each time, as a drastic solution to the seemingly innate hermeticism of artistic practice.

> "A monument should share the social and public life of the city and the city should live in it. It must be indispensable and dynamic in order to be contemporary."[15]

Further, Tatlin's tower refused the function, as Brian Wallis has described it, of a public monument as a receptacle for public morality.[16] It was positioned, instead, as the actual site of a reorganized political system and a framework for a new public sphere. Thus, the elements that were to operate symbolically, such as the rotations of the chambers and the transparency of the structure, were not meant to represent the desires of (or desires projected onto) the public but rather to keep exposed the true workings of this new system of economic and social representation. Tatlin utilized the agencies of a new political organization to formulate his sculpture and designed an artistic structure that would, as Punin called for, participate in the life of the city. Tatlin's monument was not meant to merely symbolize the concurrent social transformations through its geometric, revolving forms and dynamic slant but was intended to engage them in its physical construction.[17] Ultimately, however, these potential operations of public address were subverted by the ultimate form of Monument to the Third International, not as a full-scale architectural structure,

[15] Ibid., p. 345.

[16] Brian Wallis, "Urbanism and the New Monuments," in *Beyond the City, The Metropolis*, ed. George Teysott (Milan: Electra, 1988), p. 211.

[17] Milner writes, "In a sense, the tower is more a social mechanism than a symbol, for it includes, physically, the processes by which social conflicts and decisions would be resolved." See John Milner, *Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 160.

but as a model and as a photographic image that maintain Tatlin's design as an icon.

Monument to the Third International was not, as was the Eiffel Tower, a wholly realizable project: Given the industrial resources available in the Soviet Union in 1920, which were far more meager than those of fully industrialized Europe and the United States by this time, Tatlin's Tower was something of a fantasy. The concept of a building whose internal parts would revolve around a central axis of an iron tower 400 meters high was, more specifically, futuristic. The tower has become, in its eternal sitelessness, a manifesto, functioning only symbolically: as a map, fully objectified and abstracted, it attests to the hopes of a population effecting a profound reconstruction of their society. But as Yve-Alain Bois explains in his analysis of the work of El Lissitzky, which we will come to presently, it is perhaps as a document of the goals of change (economic and political freedom and social equality) that Tatlin's tower has most influenced the relationship between art and its audiences. What occurs then, through the lens of Tatlin's Tower, is not just the redefinition of art as a means to political ends but the reframing of it in the non-aesthetic site of political exchange, the political space of public experience. [18]

In 1919, the Fine Arts Department of the People's Commissariat of Education commissioned Tatlin to create Monument to the Third International, a work whose

[18] I am indebted to Benjamin Buchloh for the articulation of this idea, especially the notion of "political space." The notion of "public experience" as the site exchange and as the place where "publicity" or shared political ideas are produced is one defined and described by Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt in their work *Offentlichkeit und Erfahrung*, parts of which I examine in the third part of this paper.

context was that of a society undergoing rapid economic and social restructuring as a direct consequence of an extreme shift in the political organization of the Soviet Union. The Japanese-Russsian war, the first Russian Revolution of 1905-07, and the First World War were all events that created a general atmosphere of instablility as well as a degree of political awareness among the forming proletariat class. By 1920, the Bolsheviks had consolidated their control within the government over the tsarist White Russians and the provisional government of Kerensky, and had even begun to restrict the civil strife between the peasantry and the urban populations. Soon after Lenin had seized power in 1917, those holding administrative positions within the country's cultural institutions while maintaining royalist connections were replaced by the new guard, including among them Tatlin, who were anxious to institute changes in what had become a calcified system. [19]

The setting for Vladimir Tatlin's work was not just that of political and social revolution but, also, artistic innovation. Prior to the project of designing a monument that honored the October Revolution, Tatlin had been working on three series of sculpture, the Reliefs, Counter Reliefs and Corner Counter-Reliefs, that,

[19]Tatlin, along with many other figures of the historical avant-garde (particularly Malevich), was an ideal candidate for the new posts of leadership. Tatlin had risen from the ranks of the peasantry, had been a sailor for much of his early life and thus, would not just represent the new proletariat but be one of them. After February 1917, Tatlin joined the "Left Wing" of the newly established Union of Art Workers (SDI) and was sent to Moscow to help organize a politically realigned cultural sphere. By November of 1917, however, Tatlin had already left the Union and their politics, which included riotous acts in response to the October Revolution, behind. In late November, Tatlin was delegated by the Moscow Union of Painters to work in the Artistic Section of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. During this time, under Anatolii Lunacharsky as Deputy Arts Commisioner, he helped to establish a number of museums in Moscow, Petrograd and later in Vitebsk and Novgorod among other places. He was also an educator, by profession as well as by ideology, and ran two painting classes in the Free State Artistic Studios in Moscow.

unlike the reliefs of Picasso's that Tatlin had seen in Paris, dispensed with representation altogether. In these pieces Tatlin not only removed his constructions from dependency on a sculptural base or pedestal, attaching them instead to the actual supports of the exhibition walls, but further freed them from the constraints of mimesis. These alterations to the codes of the sculptural idiom represented both a freeing up, on ideological and theoretical levels, of artistic practice from a dogmatic adherence to tradition and, on a pictorial level, initiated a procedure of deconstructing illusionism. While Tatlin's Reliefs were primary catalysts for what Benjamin Buchloh and Yve-Alain Bois have characterized, for different reasons, as the moment of a "paradigm shift" in pictorial production, it is perhaps in El Lissitzky's Prouns, Proun Room, and his designs for exhibitions that this radical departure from previous modes of audience address, spectator involvement and representation was fully carried out.

Monument to the Third International, a tower intended to reach four hundred meters, a height which would allow it to stand proudly above the monuments of the capitalist West, was itself a radically restructured architectural type. Its central vertical axis, pivoted some thirty degrees, converted the conventionally stable core into a sharp diagonal, functioning as the backbone for the structure. The dynamism of the tilted profile was further exaggerated by the cylindrical form that seemed to spin out of the top of the double spiral that composed the tower's central figure. The inner vault created within this swirl was filled with four chambers, [20] each

[20] Punin seems to have omitted one of these, the hemispherical room at the top, in his booklet

of them a different geometric shape. The enclosed room closest to the ground, cubic in formation, was intended to house the international committees, legislative work and large meetings. The pyramid above was for the offices of the executive administrative committees while the cylinder was meant to provide space for the propaganda offices which would disseminate decisions and information passed on from the lower offices by means of printing presses, telegraph, projection equipment and through the radio station, also to be situated there. Each of these rooms would revolve around its axis according to the number of times each government body was appointed to meet annually. Thus, the entire unit is not just symbolically dynamic but in fact, in constant flux.

Monument to the Third International incorporated formal attributes that modify traditional sculptural tenets. As Rosalind Krauss has noted, Tatlin's Tower both inverts conventional relationships between interior and exterior and shifts from a temporal perspective that collapses different moments onto each other to one of real time.[21] Tatlin's Tower wears its "structural logic" on the exterior; there is no facade behind which the "truth" of the structure lies. This exploding of the distinctions between exterior and interior roles was present in the Eiffel Tower and the Crystal Palace before that. In the context of Revolutionary Russia, however, the ostensible exposing of all sites of decision-making was particularly significant

published in 1920 for the exhibition of the work. It is apparent however, in Tatlin's drawings for the model.

[21]See her chapter on Futurism and Constructivism in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

given their absolute inaccesibility under tsarist rule. Similarly, the collapsing of past, present, and future moments into one, or "simultaneity" as this procedure is often called, which was explored particularly by the Cubists as well as some of the Russian Constructivists, was rejected by Tatlin in favor of non-symbolic time. That is, Tatlin's Monument incorporated parts that were in constant motion, allowing one to perceive the ever-changing present rather than future configurations: transparency on the other hand, a quality that allows for the perception of numerous but discrete physical and temporal spaces at one time, would make available to the viewer an experience of the object that would transcend the real limits of time, space, and perspective. This phenomenological operation reflected, too, the fact that the tower did not glorify a past but celebrated the current moment. This quality, I will call it "presentness," that Tatlin invests in Monument to the Third International is also echoed in the fact that it is not an ode to the past but rather a structure to make possible the present.

Seemingly incompatible with this utilitarian attitude were the utopian goals that accompanied this moment of reconstruction. The notion that art, like other endeavors, had become part of, as Lisstitzky said, "the communal property" required a consciously tendentious production; it seemed imperative that art play an active role in enforcing the ideals of the reconstituted political order. As Benjamin wrote with regard to the task of the writer,

> "You believe that the present social situation compels him to decide in whose service he is to place his activity. The bourgeois writer does not acknowledge this choice. You must prove to him that, without admitting

> it, he is working in the service of certain class interests. A more advanced type of writer does acknowledge this choice. His decision, made on the basis of a class struggle, is to side with the proletariat. That puts an end to his autonomy. His activity is now decided by what is useful to the proletariat in the class struggle. Such writing is commonly called tendentious."[22]

The compelling characteristic of Tatlin's tower, to exceed the signification system of propaganda and to achieve the parallel to what Benjamin called "literary quality and tendency," is the same element that renders it utopian: For Tatlin's proposal to build a tower in the real-time space of the city did not reflect on the conditions of its own operations; in concept it refused to be defined as a piece of sculpture and yet, it was precisely in aesthetic terms that it functioned as a symbol of the political formations of the new Soviet state. Much like Benjamin's conception of architecture, this tower was to involve its audience almost unconsciously, to deliver a message in a language of 'functional aesthetics'. In this way, Tatlin attempted to circumvent the traditional site of art. And yet, the tower could not alter the conditions of the proletariat but merely retain, at best, the traditional mimetic function of artistic praxis. That Monument to the Third International was never constructed, while the result of very real economic and technological limitations, seems also to reflect the impossibility of art, at that moment, (despite the attempt to redefine this praxis as something very different from the legacy which it bore) to function beyond the capacity of representation through the production of symbols. Tatlin, however, as we have seen, had designed his tower with the aim of seeing

[22]Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 220.

it enter and engage the site of politics and, in particular, (the notion of) a mass audience.

Lissitszky, too, tried to put "art into life" in his Tribune for Lenin and his agitprop billboard of 1919-1920.[23] It was, perhaps, the symbolic failure of this latter piece to "read" because of its reliance on the unfamiliar language of abstraction and on the efforts it required of the viewer to "make sense" of the relationship between the text and the images, that led Lissitzky, eventually, back to the site of the institution. To the extent that these initial attempts by Tatlin and Lissitzky to realign the position of artistic practice continue to seem radical in the later decades of this century not only reflects the artificial loss-of-memory effected in mainstream artistic discourse but also signals the real limitations of such an action: the space outside of the institution is as much circumscribed and defined by these official boundaries as that which lies within.

El Lissitzky

Lissitzky's billboard outside a Vitebsk factory, The Factory Bench Awaits You, was not dissimilar to other of his Suprematist compositions: In a discursive space that was not ordered by the conventions of the horizontal and vertical axes and the

[23]The "Leftist artists," as the Russian avant-garde was sometimes referred to, helped further the cause of the Bolsheviks through a number of artistic projects that, while administered under the auspices of various agencies, often took the form of extra-institutional proceedings. A new arena, including the sites of daily activity, became the "canvas" for many artists: streets, agit-prop trains that took art out into the countryside, squares, bridges, and factories were targeted for artistic interventions and the dissemination of political propaganda. The demands of a newly-formed society and mass audiences permeated the policies and activities of the Soviet cultural agencies and the artists who worked for them. But it was perhaps, precisely through the institution and not despite it, that this shift in audience address was affected.

single point perspective that these framing devices support, circles, squares, cubes, lines, planes and diagonal stripes stretch across the white background. In the upper left corner, however, Russian words direct one's attention to the real message: think well of your work and be proud of laboring hard. As agitprop, this design which displayed the words of a Leninist slogan, was meant to propagate both a sense of duty, and a desire to fulfill it, in the viewer (laborer). Bois has attributed the failure of this poster to instill this "utopic desire" in its audience (a notion which I explain below)—that is, a wish to believe in its message—to the absolute lack of complexity in the way that Lissitzky has combined the use of text and his Proun image: the typography is merely laid over the image. As Bois explains,

> "But its lack of conviction attests to the difficulty of the fundamental theoretical question Lissitzky was then trying to answer: is it possible to transmit something like a proposition exclusively by means of an image?"[24]

The Factory Bench Awaits You has been identified as signalling the inadequacy of the then recently developed language of abstraction that, like Tatlin's tower, was unable to serve as a means of communication within a society which, however reorganized, retained an important relationship to its cultural traditions. The Constructivist's use of geometry as the vehicle for reaching what was, in the early years of the twenties, still a fluctuating group (the urban proletariat and the rural peasantry were not distinct populations but were locked into each other, their individual configurations depending upon the shifting demand for food in the cities

[24] Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," *Art in America* (April 1988), p. 170.

and frequently altered government policies) met with failure. Some of the artists that had been working with abstraction shifted back to representational idioms while others, like Lissitzky, began to investigate both the site of the institution and new pictorial strategies. Tatlin's and Lissitzky's artistic explorations and ideological positions had led them to seek out a public from this not-yet-consolidated class, an approach which Leonard Folgarait has suggested contributed to the breakdown of their radical methods of audience address:

> "The success of such a strategy depends on the artist knowing the public and the public knowing itself [...] as a class the proletariat had not yet established its own conventions of behaviour, language, and self-consciousness apart from that of the peasantry [...] that these artists tied themselves so strongly to the proletariat for their most ambitious formal experiments, to such a fragile class structure, was to hold severe consequences for their own survival."[25]

Bois has, with the help of Jean-Francois Lyotard, constructed another explication of the reasons for the failure (in the specific context of Revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union) of Lissitzky's abstraction to signify to a mass public. Lyotard explains the mechanism by which propagandist images (or advertising of any kind) employs illusionism in order to make, in Freud's terminology, the "pleasure principle" and the "reality principle" appear synonymous. In this way, the viewer is lured into identifying with the image, into believing that he or she desires the very thing or concept that is portrayed. [26] In the case of Lissitzky's billboard, the abstract idiom employed was meant to radically reconfigure this type

[25] Leonard Folgarait, "Art-State-Class: Avant-garde Art Production and the Russian Revolution," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 60, no. 4 (Dec. 1985), p. 72.
[26] Bois, "El Lissitzky," p. 169.

of experience; through the deconstruction of illusionism, the viewer was presented with a pictorial image that required intellectual exercise rather than one which presented a totalized simulation of real experience. Social Realism, on the other hand, a subsequent aesthetic, offered legible representations of objects and people which encouraged the viewer to both identify with and invest desire in the image, thus urging its audience, subliminally, to conform to certain behavioural ideals. Lissitzky's work, unlike pictorial illusionism, required the viewer to play an active role in making meaning from the composition and in understanding the logic of its depicted space. [27] These procedures subverted both traditional practices of viewing and pictorial conventions. They also operated according to specific notions about the relationship between art and ideology, notions that were modified at some moment between the poster at Vitebsk and Lissitzky's photomontage installation for the 1928 Pressa exhibition.[28] The Factory Workbenches Await You deployed an artistic language whose mode of reception was unfamiliar and thus, not easily accessible

[27] Ibid., pp. 169–170

[28] I will not be considering the reasons for Lissitzky's shift from abstraction to his propaganda photomontage work under Stalin. Buchloh cites this moment as the place of a fundamental "paradigm shift" in the work of Lissitzky and others in "From Faktura to Factography," *October*, no. 30, Fall 1984. Buchloh argues, in brief, that the shift from "faktura" (work that, according to modernist principles of concern with surface, texture, and the traces of artistic processes, was self-reflexively "abstract") to "factography" (work that was presented as a collection of "facts" rather than material mediated by artistic operations and as such, was the result of the camera's eye rather than the artist's "vision") was a result of the October Revolution and consequently, of a "crisis of audience relationships." Buchloh also suggests that the artists whose work did shift in order to meet the demands of a new society also believed, sincerely in Stalin's approach. (To see this question problematized, see Repentance, a film by Tengiz Abuladze, 1987). A good response to Buchloh's analysis is Bois' "El Lissitzky," p. 160. As I have hinted at, Bois offers an alternative explanation for both the artistic (material) paradigm shift and for Lissitzky's change of aesthetic idioms. It is from this latter point that the question of relationships between art and ideology surface. Also see Peter Nisbet, "An Introduction to Lissitzky," in *El Lissitzky (1890–1941)* cited in my bibliography.

to an audience unacquainted with the notion of artistic innovation: in this sense, Lissitzky's Proun poster was utopian, not merely in its ideological underpinnings but through the formal means which it employed.

This discussion illustrates the effects of audience on artistic form and practice—the dialectical half of the approach followed in much of my analysis of later moments of artistic production included in this paper. Clearly there is more that has effected what Buchloh has identified as the shift from "faktura to factography,"[29] or from abstraction to a more legible, iconographic practice—the effects of political pressure (Gray, Bois, Brodsky), the desire to join what was considered a confirmation of Revolutionary ideals and in doing so, to respond to the change in the make-up of the audience (Buchloh), the attempt to find an artistic language that would further these aims, as well as the related (possibility of) a loss of faith in the legibility of the abstract idiom.

El Lissitzky's Prouns and Demonstration Rooms

It seems important to take a short detour here to examine the operations of Lissitzky's Proun compositions in order to understand the basis and development of his later exhibition designs, which are the works most significant to our discussion of

[29]Buchloh discusses the exact meaning of the term "faktura" in the context of the Russian avant-garde in his essay "From Faktura to Factography," *October: The First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1987, p. 81. "What qualifies the concern for faktura as a paradigmatic feature ([...]) is the quasi-scientific, systematic manner in which the constructivists now pursued their investigation of pictorial and sculptural constructs, as well as the perceptual interaction with the viewer they generate." And, in a footnote on the same page, he adds, ... "the new concern for faktura in the Soviet avant-garde emphasizes precisely the mechanical quality, the materiality, and the anonymity of the painterly procedure from a perspective of empirico-critical positivism."

innovations in audience address. Lissitzky's Proun[30] compositions are 2-dimensional drawings, lithographs, paintings (sometimes with collaged elements) of geometric shapes, ovals, lines, planes and diagonal rays which are cojoined to form illogical or irrational plastic space. As Bois points out, monocular or traditional Renaissance perspective is replaced in these configurations of familiar forms with axonometric projections. Axonometric projections, Bois explains, became the weapon against the illusionistic space of bourgeois pictorial images. By eliminating the single-point-of-view which allowed the spectator to look into the picture as far as the perspectival pivot, the vanishing point, Lissitzky engaged the "ambiguity of non-illusionistic, shifting spatial relations." [31] Further, a number of axes of projection were used, creating a space constantly in motion. Through these operations, Lissitzky has rid the picture plane of its supporting structure (in "bourgeois" art)—the viewer is no longer reassured by the legibility of a horizon line and vertical figure (himself) but must confront an image that has cut all ties with what Bois has called "phenomenal space." [32]

> "In his Prouns, Lissitzky wanted to invent a space in which orientation is deliberately abolished: the viewer should no longer have a base of operations but must be made continually to choose the coordinates of his or her visual field, which thereby become variable."[33]

[30] As Bois has explained, "Proun—pronounced "pro-oon"—a neologism coined by Lissitzky to refer to his abstract paintings, is an acronym for the Russian equivalent of "Project for the Affirmation of the New." See, Bois, "Radical Reversibility," p. 162.

[31] Ibid., p. 173.

[32] In order to conceive the painting as an abstract model, we must cut all connection with phenomenal space, with the space which is oriented around and from the pole of our bodies." Ibid., p. 174.

[33] Ibid.

Perceptual conventions are further upset by what Bois has named the "radical reversibility" of the Prouns. Because the virtual spaces of these abstract compositions refuse to posture as reflections of the "real world" and because of their elimination of monocular perspective, they have no particular orientation. It is not clear which side is up, which is left. As a result, our viewing is not instructed and not familiar. This disorientation was effected much earlier by works such as Malevich's Black Square (1915) which was both a-directional and had been hung in a diagonal configuration.[34] Without discounting the radicality and importance of this innovative precedent, the works (of this period) of Malevich's function in terms of their self-reflexivity, their ability to be about surface rather than about the discursive space which they create and thus refuse the concept of pictorial illusionism, while Lissitzky's Prouns require the viewer to look twice and question his or her expectations concerning depth, horizontality and verticality, sequence and the logic of geometries. Whether this seems an adequate basis for distinguishing between these two, abstract artistic languages, Lissitzky's Prouns foreshadow the total transformations of viewer-object relationships that occur in his Proun Room of 1923, where the viewer is indeed taken into a space (not refused as in some of the Suprematist paintings of Malevich)—but one that convolutes conventional architectural orientations.

It is here, with the notion of "radical reversibility" that Bois arrives at his

[34]This was done in order to echo the Russian icon, which was often placed at a diagonal above a doorway.

ultimate conclusion: that Lissitzky's Prouns, with their refusal of verticality, are no longer paintings but documents and as such, present a radical transformation in both the way art is to be viewed and understood. Bois cites this accomplishment as the real[35] "paradigm shift" that occurs around this moment in Lissitzky's work and in art history in general.

> "Lissitzky considered his Prouns documents because they were, for him, blueprints for action, charts for a strategy to be adopted in order to transform society."[36]

Bois presents what was, in a sense, an utopian vision of the possibilities for radical transformations on artistic and social levels. His notion of the "document," however, also reminds us of the shift that was taking place in terms of audience reception: to read a document differs as a procedure from the activity of contemplating paintings hung on the wall.

> "If on previous occasions in his march-past in front of the picture walls, he was lulled into a certain passivity, now our design should make the man active. This should be the purpose of the room."[37]

The Proun Room or Proun Space is known to many through a lithograph of Lissitzky's [38] and through his writings on this subject. The Proun Room, constructed at the Van Diemen Gallery in Berlin in 1923, was an entire exhibition space manipulated by Lissitzky as a three-dimensional ground for his work. Some

[35]See footnotes nos. 28 and 29 for Buchloh's explanation which Bois attempts to counter in his discussion.

[36]Bois, "Radical Reversibility," p. 175.

[37]El Lissitzky as quoted in Boris Brodsky, "El Lissitzky," in *The Russian Avant-Garde: New Perspectives, 1910–1930*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum), p. 94.

[38]One included in the Kestner Portfolio: The room was reconstructed in 1965.

of the walls supported wooden constructions, others, painted straight-edged shapes. As a result, the functions of the walls as separating units and the ceiling and floor as merely supporting structures were dissolved. Lissitzky painted the ceiling and floor area with dark squares, utilizing them as his canvas. Wooden tubes or slats became integral parts not just of single wall constructions but were designed to bridge and connect pieces built on two separate walls—broken but contoured so that they seemed to bend around the corners. The sequence of progression for the viewer was made unfamiliar by the transformation of the usual painting-on-the-wall format into a "complete" exhibition environment. [39] As Buchloh points out, it is perhaps in the Proun Room that "Lissitzky's earlier claim for his Proun-Paintings, to operate as transfer stations from art to architecture, had been fulfilled." [40] The attention to what Lissitzky calls architecture refers to the fact that the Prouns, with their unnatural spatial configurations, have become inhabitable. Now the viewer is forced to experience this radical restructuring of spatial and object relations rather than merely to comprehend it as a theoretical proposition.

The Proun Room does not, however, extend the phenomenological restructuring of the relationship between elements in space arrived at in the Prouns. We might compare the contributions of the Proun Room to a syntactical reordering—where conventions of sentence structure, the relations between subject, verb and object,

[39] According to Peter Nisbet, the curator and catalogue author of the Busch-Reisinger Exhibit in 1977, Lissitzky intended this working out of his ideas on spatial relationships to serve as a model not just for exhibition designs but for office and residential spaces as well. In 1929 Lissitzky realized a design for an apartment according to these principles. See *El Lissitzky 1890-1941*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College, 1987), p. 50, fn#72.

[40] Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," p. 85.

have been altered: a procedure which disorients the reader. In writing about his exhibition rooms, Lissitzky spells out what is, for me, the important shift that occurs at this moment: a transfer in artistic address from the passive, contemplative viewer to the active spectator. As with the Vitebsk poster, the image created is not representational and thus refuses to present an iconographically legible picture ready for consumption. The difficulty occurs, however, with the framework in which this shift in viewing operations is postioned: although Lissitzky has reclaimed the space of the institution as the arena for the Proun Room, thereby retreating from the space of political activity (the site intended for Tatlin's Tower and Lissitzky's poster at Vitebsk) to the place of artistic discourse, the formalized operations of this "environmental" installation reconventionalize this otherwise radical method of address. The Proun Room is confined to an interpretation of the space of exhibition as a purely aesthetic one: While the walls and contours of the institution are made visible by the direct application of paint and sculptural elements, their significance is limited to the nature of their physical presence. In a sense, then, the Proun Room, while making manifest the reordered space of the two-dimensional Proun compositions, remains confined within the conventions of institutional reception: It is not until Lissitzky's Abstract Cabinet and Demonstration Room that these conventions become a focus of the work through the highlighting, the exposing, and the subversion of specific physical characteristics which order a traditional viewing experience.

What we have examined, then, is first an attempt by Tatlin and Lissitzky to reach a mass audience through aesthetic operations that would engender simultaneous collective experience by literally siting their work outside of the museum: this move, though radical, was destabilized both by the artistic idiom and the definition of public-political artistic action employed. With his Proun Room, Lissitzky re-entered the traditional site of artistic exhibition only to delimit the revolutionary operations of his design within the confines of aesthetic space. It was not until his works of 1926 and 1927 that Lissitzky conveyed to his audience an awareness of the non-physical, institutionalized dimensions of the exhibition room.

Lissitzky continued his exploration of exhibition designs with the demonstration room for the International Art Exhibition in Dresden in 1926 and his Abstract Cabinet of 1927 for the Hannover Gallery, dispensing with the aspects of the Proun Room that, linked to the earlier Prouns, remained an experiment in axonometrically-projected, non-directional construction. Instead, Lissitzky created generic display systems and environments that would change the way in which a public would view art and facilitate an examination of conventional conceptions of the nature of the exhibition space. During the summer of 1926, Lissitzky's Demonstration room served as a framework for a display of contemporary art works. The wood slats that covered the walls in parallel lines, painted alternately black, gray and white were, in one sense, a reaction to the ostensible neutrality of the museum wall. An element of dynamism was added to the exhibition not through these

architectural elements, as in the case of the revolving chambers in Tatlin's tower, but by the spectator, whose movements would alter his or her optical perception of the art works' support. If the viewer looked diagonally to the right at a wall, he or she might see a painting hanging on a black wall; with a slight shuffle to the right, the same wall would begin to appear more gray, and eventually, if the viewer continued along this same trajectory, the wall would finally return to its "proper white" uniform. The convention of the wall hung with single, well-spaced paintings was itself polemical; in the nineteenth-century the surfaces of the exhibition rooms would have been covered by rows of paintings ordered according to hierarchies of size and "importance." As Brian O'Doherty identifies,

> "The way pictures are hung makes assumptions about what is offered. Hanging editorializes on matters of interpretation and value, and is consciously influenced by taste and fashion. Subliminal cues indicate to the audience its deportment."[41]

Lissitzky's slatted backdrops, while only suggestive of the significant and multiple layers that compose any institutional wall, required the viewer to become aware of his or her role in activating and mediating a visual experience. Lissitzky's hope was that this encounter would raise the general level of consciousness among art publics which would affect a general appreciation of, and a less easily institutionalized approach to, artistic production on the part of the audience, thereby empowering the viewer to participate in the very processes of artistic production. [42]

[41]Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986), p. 24.
[42]Nisbet, p. 52.

The other remarkable feature of Lissitzky's installation for the Dresden exhibit was the sliding vertical drawers or cabinets that covered one work while exposing another. Controlled by the viewer, these wall-shaping devices functioned to make the spectator a symbolic curator and active participant in the exhibition. Again, the actual number of choices offered to the spectator were limited and the possibility of interaction was largely symbolic. Lissitzky's Abstract Cabinet of 1927, an exhibition design completed for a permanent room in the Hannover Museum under Alexander Dorner was similar to the temporary Dresden installation except for some minor modifications such as the metal slats that cover the walls, variably spaced by sections, with electrical lights of differing colors and intensities. For our purposes, both the Demonstration Room of 1926 and the Abstract Cabinet can be seen as examples of Lissitzky's consideration of the role of the audience and his attempts to alter traditional modes of static and authoritative address, thereby coercing the spectator into being active. As Lissitzky himself wrote,

> "The private property aspect of creativity must be destroyed because all are creators and there is no reason of any sort for this division into artists and non-artists."[43]

Alan Birnholz identifies the precedent for this approach to art-viewing in Russian art history in the form of the religious icon. The icon, as mentioned above, would be placed in the upper corners of the home or on the church's iconostasis, and

[43]El Lissitzky, "Suprematism in World Reconstruction" as quoted in Alan C. Birnholz, "El Lissitzky and the Spectator," in *The Russian Avant-Garde: New Perspectives 1910-1930*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980), p. 100.

a set of prescribed responses by those who saw it were obligatory: one was meant to approach, bowing intermittently, to kiss the panel, etc... [44] What is especially interesting in this comparison is Birnholz's conclusions regarding the implications of these viewing operations. He points out that as in the case of the icon, there is a considerable degree of control wielded over the spectator: the viewer's experience is organized by Lissitzky and the number of actual choices made available to the viewer are limited. [45] Second, Birnholz suggests that through interaction, the viewing process becomes one of labor rather than a self-indulgent escape. As the historian Boris Brodsky explains,

> "The optical background did not connect but rather disconnected the individual works, creating, as it were, perceptual caesurae; no longer a continuum, "exhibitional time" now became an interrupted condition rather like the sense of time experienced by the reader leafing through an album."[46]

Echoes of Bois' description of the Prouns as documents are heard in this passage as well as the notion that conventions of "seamless" viewing have been broken up by Lissitzky's exhibition designs. In the above passage, however, is also the key to what might be the failure of Lissitzky's strategy of audience address given the context of his production: as we have seen theorized in the work of Benjamin and aimed at in Tatlin's work, the new, ideally classless society signified a change in the formation of the public sphere to one of mass audiences. Lissitzky's exhibition halls, while they involved the spectator in the production of meaning and thus, refused

[44] Ibid., p. 98.
[45] As we will see, this notion of artist control resurfaces in the work of the Minimalists.
[46] Brodsky, "El Lissitzky," p. 95.

the static nature of contemplative viewing, were organized for the individual: the nature of the institution which attends to the "private experience" of art viewing is not modified in the case of Lissitzky's rooms, where the exercise in perception leads one back to a consciousness of one's own being.

As we have seen, because of the conditions of industrial development in the Soviet Union in 1920, Tatlin's Monument to the Third International was never constructed: the tower became instead the symbol of this movement's failure to achieve its idealist goals. Constructivism's inability, as Steven Henry Madoff has described it, to "fulfill its ethical desire to become instrumental and escape the isolation that is inherent in avant-gardism" [47] has become the sign of its bankruptcy. Yet, if we look to its proponents' individual aims and achievements, we witness a position (pictorial and ideological) whose very articulation has had great effect on artistic production ever since. There are others like Madoff, who read in Constructivism the ultimate inadequacy of an artistic language that has not indelibly transformed the status of art, the nature of the institution, or the broader relationships between art and public. Buchloh's description of the notion of "faktura" as encompassing both the placement of the Constructivist object and the interaction it required of the viewer, a concept that Lissitzky the Constructivist helped to establish, does not lead him to hail the ultimate success of Lissitzky's innovations but rather, to a final assessment that is grim: [48]

[47] Steven Henry Madoff, "Vestiges and Ruins: Ethics and Geometric Art in the Twentieth-Century," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Dec. 1986): 34.

[48] Of course, in terms of Lissitzky's attempts to service a mass audience, the outcome was grim:

> "But around 1920, even the most advanced works among the nonutlitarian object-construction—by Rodchenko, the Stenberg brothers, Tatlin, and Medunetsky—did not depart much further from the Modernist framework of bourgeois aesthetics than the point of establishing models of epistemological and semiotic critique. No matter how radical, these were at best no more than a negation of the perceptual conventions by which art had previously been produced and received."[49]

While for Buchloh, the very fact and condition of the institution today stands as a reminder of the failures of Constructivism to eradicate contemplative behaviour and the authority of private expression and individual address, as Bois declares, the paradigm shift that Lissitzky affected through a move from the verticality of the painting to the horizontality of the document has effected many practices in the twentieth-century (he cites Cubism, Mondrian, Pollock, and Minimalism): Lissitzky's rooms have led to practices which critique the institution and, as Brodsky has written, "all subsequent experiments in modern art that include the viewer in relation to an environment derive from this first attempt devised by Lisssitzky in 1923."[50]

Even the very notion, apparent in the 1960s as well as in the late 1980s, of targeting an audience outside of the institutionally-coagulated public stems from the efforts of Tatlin to reach a broader constituency. The enduring importance of the work of Lissitzky and Tatlin, in the context of this discussion, lies in their efforts

"But it is also clear by now that both Lissitzky's and Benjamin's media optimism prevented them from recognizing that the attempt to create conditions of a simultaneous collective reception for the new audiences of the industrialized state would very soon issue into the preparation of an arsenal of totalitarian, Stalinist propaganda in the Soviet Union." Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," p. 103.

[49]Ibid., p. 88.

[50]Brodsky, "El Lissitzky," p. 93.

to consciously formulate methods of targeting audiences for their work, choosing not just those groups indulged by existing institutions but ones that would become useful to the functioning of a public sphere.

> "It was this class-in-the-making" writes one historian, "that the avant-garde addressed themselves to. This was the intended audience for Lissitzky's posters, for Tatlin's Tower. In a sense, then, the artists did not know their audience fully, as no one could truly define the proletariat in these years. This was part of the ambition of the avant-garde: to find, define, and address a proletarian public."[51]

By returning to the site of the institution, the arena of potentially simultaneous collective experience, Lissitzky initiated what would, fifty years later, become a focus of artistic and theoretical production; attention to the socio-political and economic underpinnings of the museum or gallery—a place as ideologically charged as the spaces of extra-artistic activity.

[51] Leonard Folgarait, "Art–Class–State: Avant-Garde Art Production and the Russian Revolution," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 60, no. 4 (Dec. 1985): 71.

Chapter Two: MINIMALISM

In this chapter I examine a variety of texts which interpret the work of the Minimalist sculptors with the intention of separating the surrounding rhetoric from the actual operations of these 'specific objects.' In doing so, I engage both the writings of the artists themselves, their supporters, and their critics. My particular focus remains on the ways in which the Minimalist artists conceived of their audiences and how this position was manifest in the work itself. Minimalism, I conclude, counter to the opinions of many of my sources, carried its inherited stance of a presumed social and political autonomy over to its relationship with its viewers, engaging them only in the most formalistic (and thus, conventional) of ways.

The consciousness of the framing operations of the institution—a focal point of a particular set of post-minimalist practices (which we will examine in the following chapter)—has a history that began before the moment of Minimalism, as we have seen, in the practices of Constructivism, as well as in those of Marcel Duchamp and his Ready-Mades. In this light, Minimalism does not appear so radical; precisely because it leaves out the crucial profiles of both the sites and the audiences that it purports to actively engage, the terms of its address and the experience of reception that it provides seem almost regressive. I should at this point clarify my aims: In highlighting the issue of audience, I reveal my biases both toward an interest in the relationship between art and its constituency and for an investigation into the theme of "public art," one that goes beyond the formulation: public access =

public experience. Thus, the purpose of this section is not to describe the traits of Minimalism but rather to examine the conceptions of audience (or lack thereof) held by a set of persons who shaped or critiqued this project. [52]

Donald Judd, Robert Morris

There are a number of strategies that have been identified as central to the formation of Minimalist sculptural production. Gregory Battcock writes in his introduction to his 1968 anthology of Minimalist texts,

> "An outstanding characteristic of Minimal Art is its clarity."[53]

This assertion, made some time before Minimalism had become packaged and placed untouchably within the canon of twentieth-century Western art history, reflects something of the formal qualities of the sleek boxes, repeated rectangles, and spare geometries of this aesthetic. The clarity of Judd's work is, at face value, indisputable. His galvanized iron stacks of blocks are slick, impenetrable, ostensibly autonomous objects that exist only as the specific forms we perceive. As Judd wrote,

> "It isn't necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear and powerful."[54]

[52] It is in this light, and only according to this tendentiousness on my part, that Krauss' critical work on the Minimalists is faulted. She has, of course, provided an account which is both complex and has offered to certain readers and lookers an enriched experience (if not a public one) of this moment.

[53] Gregory Battcock, "Introduction," *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), p. 32.

[54] Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook*, #8, p. 78.

Likewise, Robert Morris describes the clarity of his three-dimensional, fiberglass and steel sculptures:

> "Characteristic of a gestalt is that once it is established all the information about it, qua gestalt, is exhausted. (One does not, for example, seek the gestalt of a gestalt.) Furthermore, once it is established it does not disintegrate. One is then both free of the shape and bound to it. Free or released because of the exhaustion of information about it, as shape, and bound to it because it remains constant and indivisible."[55]

These formulations express their search for the pure, the common denominator of all forms. Judd's term "specific," translated as "essential," belies a quality that under the guise of a radically modern set of forms, echoes an idealist conception of art: The notion of specificity translated as the act of relating to particular conditions, seems at odds with the expulsion of all references in Judd's work. Morris' "gestalt" is but another synonym for the transcendental that true art is said to attain. If we take these statements literally, the sculpture of Judd and Morris seem like attempts at distilling human experience down to its most fundamental parts: the implications are that there exist certain universals concerning the way people live in and view the world. They also intimate that viewing (art) is a process that is naturally organized by the framework imposed from the positioning of an object in space. Viewing, then, depends upon the quality of specificity in the work, that is, upon the ability of art to achieve control over its environment, and ultimately, over time. This premise is crucial to the functioning of the Minimalist position: otherwise one might be led to ask, "Who are these forms 'specific' to? Who seeks

[55]Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, p. 228.

a "gestalt," and under what circumstances, when looking at art?" The character of Minimalism as examined through the critical literature is by no means transparent: the relationship between artistic practices and the institutions which support or censor them, an issue that is implicit in these descriptions is, however, of primary importance: I will follow this trajectory further on.

The "clarity" of the Minimalist enterprise is not so carefully measured by those involved in its production. If Judd and Morris staked their work on the notion of creating the simplest of forms, devoid of any external references or concerns, the issue of audience might be merely tangential. If in fact, the placing of an object in space, an object pared down to the indivisible, singular element that distinguishes it from any other object, was the only goal of Judd's and Morris' work, then the process of its reception would remain in the realm of critical speculation. But, as is made obvious by reading more of Battcock's, Judd's, and Morris' words, the notion of clarity is muddied by altogether different aspirations for their enterprise. Battcock added the following to his description of this moment in American artistic production,

> "Today, the artist is more immediately involved in daily concerns. Vietnam, technological development, sociology, and philosophy are all subjects of immediate importance."[56]

These declarations are intestable, and perhaps, untenable. They do, however, raise questions about the relationship of potentially autonomous sculptural objects to

[56]Battcock, p. 26.

the real world, and the degree to which Minimalist practices engaged a space where politics and 'sociology' are of real concern.

We move again to Judd who defines the parameters of his artistic goals (as opposed to the above statement which described the methods to achieve this end) in the vaguest of ways;

> "A work needs only to be interesting."[57]

Again, clarity does not capture the quintessential qualities of Judd's intentions. The subject of that thing that will be made "more intense, clear, and powerful" through the new three-dimensional work is only explained as "the thing as a whole, its quality as a whole." For the moment we are caught in a solipsism that is only clear in its deceptively minimalist language. Morris, too, eludes clarity in the description of his vision:

> "But the concerns now are for more control of and/or cooperation of the entire situation. Control is necessary if the variables of object, light, space, body are to function. The object has not become less important. It has merely become less self-important."[58]

His concern, then, lies not merely with the discreteness of the geometric forms but with the ways in which these forms relate to an environment <u>controlled</u> by them. His statement suggests an interest in a field larger than that delineated by the parameters of his polyhedra: that of the site of exhibition. Rather than paring down the number of "materials" that comprise his sculptural forms, Morris seems to

[57] Judd, "Specific Objects," p. 78.
[58] Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," p. 234.

increase them. He no longer accepts the pre-Constructivist definition, sculpture as object, electing, instead to annex the entire situation of viewing into his aesthetic domain. Yet, it is still the object with its attendant characteristics that is "in power:" and the object is, in turn, created/controlled by its maker.

> "The quality of intimacy is attached to an object in a fairly direct proportion as its size diminishes in relation to oneself. This holds true so long as one is responding to the whole of a thing and not a part. The qualities of publicness or privateness are imposed on things."[59]

What we see here, the genesis of a consciousness of audience, is related directly to the physicality of the work. The larger an object is, the more it addresses itself to the space in which it is situated, the less it is a private endeavor. The formula seems simple enough. The burden, however, is placed on the viewer who must be ready to conceive of himself as an active participant in the work.

Another characteristic of Minimalist sculpture, serial repetition or, as Judd has said, "one thing after another," was intended to preclude the possibility of internal relationships: the parts of an object were no longer meant to generate the meaning of the work, thereby placing emphasis on the exteriority of the object. Yvonne Rainer, a dancer who aligned herself with the visual artists involved in Minimalism, described the effects of seriality in the following way:

> "Repetition can serve to enforce the discreteness of a movement, objectify it, make it more objectlike."[60]

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[59]Ibid., p. 230.

[60]Yvonee Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some Minimalist Tendencies," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, p. 271.

Or, as Mel Bochner, a practitioner of these operations, explained,

> "Serial art in its highly abstract and ordered manipulation of thought is likewise self-contained and non-referential. [...] Seriality is premised on the idea that the succession of terms (divisions) within a single work is based on a numerical or otherwise predetermined derivation (progression, permutation, rotation, reversal) from one or more of the preceeding terms in that piece."[61]

The minimalist geometries refused interiority as well as anthropomorphism, stating their presence through impenetrable surfaces. The artist's signature,[62] the gestural sign of the Abstract Expressionists was effaced through the seeming lack of attention given to the texture and placement of the forms. This latter characteristic was achieved through the use of mass-produced "ready-made" materials. These properties of Minimalist sculpture have led some critics and historians to identify Minimalism as aggressive and unwielding:

> "While Pop Art—predominantly painting—was wry, campy, garish, and cynical, Minimalism, which principally took the form of three dimensional art, was cool, philosophically severe, and, initially at least, dead set against seduction and entertainment."[63]

[61] Mel Bochner, "Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, p. 100.

[62] Aside from the ways in which this tactic backfired—an issue which I address further on, the absence of signature seems, in retrospect, only to have been ostensible: the style and reductiveness of Judd's, LeWitt's, Andre's, Flavin's, etc. forms make them immediately identifiable as the trademark of their individual creators. Certainly the tendency to register the "signature aspect" of their works is a learned response conditioned by the rules of viewing set up by the art historical/critical discourse and the institutions within which it is developed and canonized.

[63] Kenneth Baker, *Minimalism: Art of Circumstance* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1989), p. 17.

Michael Fried

There exist, however, a whole range of critical assessments of Minimalism which define these efforts in sculptural practice as everything from nihilistic,[64] literal, and non-artistic to overtly solipsistic, elitist and even, as critical of the parameters within which artistic production is positioned. Michael Fried, elaborating on Clement Greenberg's statements of 1961,[65] interpreted the operations of Minimalism as an attack on "modernist painting and sculpture," a domain he attempted to inherit from his mentor, and in 1967, used a number of tactics to defend it from what he perceived as threats (to the port side of his ship): this of course, describes his seminal text on Minimalism, "Art and Objecthood."[66]

Fried begins his essay by stating that his acknowledgment of minimalism or 'literalism,' (tendentiously choosing his own sign) is contingent on the fact that it defines itself in relation to modernist painting and sculpture: this he argues, is the only rationale for taking notice of it as a position. He concludes his attack by stating that it is in defense of "the authentic art of our time" that he has taken this burden on himself, reminding the reader that the grave errors of minimalist practice are not unique to this movement alone; that we are all prone to being merely human (fallen from grace). The essential message is that the version of modernism which he champions is that which has achieved transcendence over the

[64]This is the catch word from Barbara Rose's infamous essay "ABC Art," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp. 274–297.

[65]Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp. 180–186.

[66]Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp. 116–147.

mundane—a proposition that is manifest in his criticism of Minimalism's ostensible relationship to its audience.

What is first apparent in Fried's diatribe is the basing of his argument on the most obvious of critical tactics: to equate new modes of representation with non-art. It is Greenberg who leads this charge, as Fried quotes,

> "Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today—including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper... Yet it would seem that a kind of art nearer the condition of non-art could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment."[67]

Fried, however, uses this as a springboard for his central line of assault, the likening of Minimalism to theatre: like Greenberg's reference to non-art, theatre becomes for Fried, something <u>other</u> than modernist painting, an idiom that he must attack in order to fortify the tower where Abstract Expressionism is kept safe from the diluting tendencies of the other arts, that are not "concepts of quality and value." [68]

He invokes the label of theatricality to argue that the conditions that distance the beholder from the work and make him the <u>subject</u> and the work an <u>object</u> and further, the fact that Minimalist sculpture is concerned with the circumstances in which the beholder encounters the work, link it inextricably with the conventions of theatre. Says Fried incredulously, "...<u>nothing</u> declares its irrelevence to the situation, and therefore to the experience [of minimalism], in question." [69]

[67] Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," p. 124.

[68] The full citation is; "The concepts of quality and value—and to the extent that they are central to art, the concept of art itself—are meaningful, or wholly meaningful, only within the individual arts. What lies between the arts is theatre." See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 147.

[69] Ibid., p. 127.

Fried has, like Greenberg, defined the boundaries for modernist art according to a set of formal principles that expel even the most fundamental notions concerning the relationship between the art object and its context in an effort to restrengthen a presumably independent, autonomous discourse: the concept of audience in this formulation is perceived as external to the central issues of **successful** artistic production.

As we have seen, the objects of Judd, Morris, and later, Serra, refused to be seen from one physical spot, a prerequisite for movement that would disturb the stillness of contemplation, the only mode of reception appropriate for the "modernist arts" that Fried champions. Minimalism, then, countered the activity of looking as static, perhaps as a means to reaching the goal of a "publicly" mediated artistic experience that Morris has spoken of. Yet, for Fried, as with theatre, this experience was based on distance, the distance between object and subject, or even, as he elaborates, between one person and another (he argues that minimalist sculpture is ultimately anthropomorphic). [70]

> "The theatricality of Morris' notion of the 'nonpersonal or public mode' seems obvious: the largeness of the piece, in conjunction with its non-relational character, distances the beholder—not just physically but psychically. It is, one might say, precisely this distancing that **makes** the beholder a subject and the piece in question...an object."[71]

While we have seen that Morris professed concern with the degree of "publicness"

[70] This trajectory of Fried's argument allows him to take away the basis for Minimalism's critique and rejection of David Smith's and Anthony Caro's work, by setting up a situation where the Minimalists' terms do not seem all that radical compared with theirs (all embody anthropomorphism, however latent); thus, the degree of Judd's and Morris' "success," in Fried's terms, can be evaluated in relation to these other "masters". See "Art and Objecthood," pp. 129-130.

[71] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 126.

that his work extended, that is, with the notion that art needed to move away from artistic experience that defined itself as private and inner, the Minimalists did not so much contest the solitary (individual) method of reception as much as (purportedly) the conventional object-subject relations that were mediated by the institution. For Judd and Morris, among others, their sculptural practices attempted to affect an annexing of the space of exhibition, including the viewer himself, into the total experience of Minimalism's artistic operations. What troubles Fried about this process is the potentially alienating "complicity" that this requires from the viewer. (It is significant that Ian Burn and Karl Beveridge, in a little circulated essay that we will examine further on entitled "Don Judd," [72] while holding a critical position diametrically opposed to Fried's, also remark on this sensation of alienation.) [73] Fried's notion of this experience relates to the "open-ended" and "unexacting" relationship that is established between the object and the subject in a situation where the viewer, by virtue of his presence, is required to be "part of" the work. In this way, the object's importance was to be shared with the viewer, who had become the subject of the situation created by the object and the context in which it resided.

Even at his most defensive (offensive?), Fried explored the real terms of Minimalism's operations, which we have seen, were physical (tactile) and perceptual,

[72] Ian Burn and Karl Beveride, "Don Judd," *Fox* #2, Art and Language Group, 1976.

[73] Burn and Beveridge's account of the alienating quality of Judd's work refers to the way in which it made visible the hierarchical relations between object and subject, an association institutionally mediated, and perpetuated by modernist art, only to re- establish this condition in its absolute disregard for the real nature of its audience and context.

attempting to analyze not just the seemingly diminished role of the object but the newly important concept of site:

> "The concept of a room is, most clandestinely, important to literalist art and theory. In fact, it can often be substituted for the word "space" in the latter: something is said to be in my space if it is in the same room with me (and if it is placed so that I can hardly fail to notice it)."[74]

This seems quite a radical formulation of the operations of Minimalism's method of audience address: there is an assumption in the writings of Judd and Morris that by determining the spatial parameters of an experience one affects the "space" of the viewer. "Space" becomes the loaded term here: what is underscored in the above passage seems to be that the provision of physical access does not promise equal availablity to intellectual, social or emotional "public" experiences. These, as Burn and Beveridge, and equally emphatically, Rosalyn Deutsche, point out, are inevitably linked to the economic and political conditions of the site. While the concept of site is a primary tenet of Minimalist procedures and materials, the mere physical incorporation of the viewer does not guarantee his or her intellectual comprehension nor, more importantly, his or her incorporation into the site (a political, economic, and social construction) of exhibition or with the means of production. This then, shows up the ultimate potential (there are always some audiences that will "fit right in") for alienation in the process of viewing (minimalist work). As Fried says of Tony Smith's ecstatic description of a ride he took on the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike late one night: [75]

[74]Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 134, fn. #9.

[75]For a pithy unpackaging of the completely unconscious view of the man-made world and its

"The experience is clearly regarded by Smith as wholly accessible to everyone, not just in principle but in fact, and the question of whether or not one has really had it does not arise."[76]

Again, the site of Smith's experience as he perceived it, though on a public roadway situated adjacent to industrial activity, was totally amputated from the realities of the place, **except in physical terms.** Smith continues his manifesto-like records by describing the topological features of other sites, an enormous drill ground in Nuremberg, abandoned airstrips, only to ignore the implications of these features as traces of human activity. What signifies for Fried, however, is primarily Smith's positioning of these essentially visual and phenomenological experiences, events with a duration, as a replacement for pictorial art that confines itself to the limiting functions of the frame. Fried labels Smith's 'episodes' as "situations"—events that are, by definition, inextricable from both the passage of time and the body of the spectator. For Fried, these features are characteristic of the operations of theatre: Entrenched in his own formalist vision of art as, by nature, conventional, he can only view this as both an attack on painting as object and ultimately, on the institutions which serve as the larger frame for his "modernist arts."[77] Accepting the constructed boundaries that separate and thus define discourses as individual, Fried uses the concept of theatricality as the dumping ground for all that does not

economic and political underpinnings that Tony Smith has adopted, see Burn and Beveridge, p. 161, footnote #6.

[76]Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 131-132.

[77]He cannot possibly account for the operations of Duchamp's Ready-Mades which played off of precisely the conventional and conventionalizing nature of the institutional frame within his model and thus, must relegate it to a lineage of artistic practices which he labels as Surrealist and, thus, by definition, a cousin of the theatre.

meet his standards. His description of Minimalism as endless in duration, unframed, unresponsible for its own limitations unlike modernist painting (full exploitation of the frame), simultaneously approaching and receding in time, like Smith's accounts, suggests an incorporation of the elements of narration that are, by definition, of the theatre.

> "It is by virtue of their presentness and instantaneousness that modernist painting and sculpture defeat theatre."[78]

For Fried, despite the work of Brecht and Artaud (after all, they had tried to 'undo' the conventions of the theatre), theatre relies too heavily on the presence of an audience:

> "For theatre has an audience—exists for one—in a way the other arts do not; in fact, this more than anything else is what modernist sensibility finds intolerable in theatre generally."[79]

Certainly this conception of audience did not accord with the exclusive and seemingly autonomous work that Fried's artists—the Abstract Expressionists and their followers—were producing. Another way of framing this analogy to the theatre, employed by Fried to expose the banality of the Minimalist project, is to compare it to Benjamin's notion of "simultaneous collective reception"; a mode of viewing that is a condition of theatre, one which appears threatening to Fried because of its dependence on and incorporation of the spectator. [80]

[78] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 146.

[79] Fried, Art and Objecthood," p. 140.

[80] One could extend this idea to suggest that the ideology which underlies an interest in audience and, in particular, a mass audience, was totally alien to Fried's (and American) politics of the late Capitalist era. The fact that an interest in and a catering to the semi-literate population was manifest in the work of the Constructivists, whose own context was that of a communist revolution, supports this analysis.

Fried does not specify which genre of theatre it is that has the potential to "corrupt or pervert" [81] but rather refers to "the condition of theatre" as the insidious element: the corollary of simultaneous collective experience, **dependence on the spectator**, which Benjamin had identified in the 1930s as both the necessary condition of artistic address and reception and as the catalyst for a transformation in modes of artistic production, if part of an idealist vision, has been reinterpreted by Fried in the late 60s as precisely that which endangers the institution of high art.

> "... the literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art."[82]

Art, in this usage, refers to the proverbial high art of modernism—a domain that he must defend against the ever-present shadow of mass culture that complements the history and production of art in the twentieth-century. Andreas Huyssen identifies a strikingly similar tendency in the writing of Nietzsche to align theatre with the decline of high culture:

> "And then Wagner, the theatre, the mass, woman—all become a web of signification outside of, and in opposition to, true art: 'No one brings along the finest senses of his art to the theatre, least of all the artist who works for the theatre—solitude is lacking; whatever is perfect suffers no witnesses. In the theatre one becomes people, herd, female, pharisee, voting cattle, patron, idiot-Wagnerian.'"[83]

[81] "Literalist sensibility is, therefore, a response to the same developments that have largely compelled modernist painting to undo its objecthood—more precisely, the same developments **seen differently**, that is, in theatrical terms, by a sensibility already theatrical, already (to say the worst) corrupted or perverted by theatre." (Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 136.)

[82] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," p. 125.

[83] Neitzsche as quoted by Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other" in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, and Postmodernism*, eds., Heath, MacCabe, and Riley (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 51.

Theatre, then, for both Fried and Nietzsche, becomes synonymous with low culture and, in this formulation, stands as the enemy of modernist values. Huyssen clarifies this position:

> "We may want to relate Le Bon's psychology of the masses back to modernism's own fears of being sphinxed. Thus the nightmare of being devoured by mass culture through cooption, commodification, and the 'wrong' kind of success is the constant fear of the modernist artist, who tries to stake out his territory by fortifying the boundaries between genuine art and inauthentic mass culture."[84]

Without entering into a discussion of the dialectical relations of modernism and mass culture or the gendering of the latter as feminine, what is apparent in Fried's use of a generic concept of "theatre" as an analogy to describe the ills of 'literalism', is his inability to even name, unlike Nietzsche, his real point of contention: that Minimalism appears too accessible, debased by its interest in the experience of reception that it provides and, by extension, its audience.

Rosalind Krauss

While the sculptural works of Judd and Morris do not invite collective viewing, since they are primarily concerned with individual perception, what is for Fried a threat, the incorporation of the viewer as subject, provides Rosalind Krauss with a basis for critical speculation that rejects a formalist approach. It is the notion of accessibility, of "publicness," that serves as the core for Krauss' structuralist model concerning the production of experience through language—a model which

[84] Huyssen, p. 53.

she positions as the most appropriate explication of the workings of Minimalist sculpture. In the chapter "The Double Negative: A New Syntax for Sculpture" of her book *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Krauss suggests that to understand the significant operations of Minimalism one must look beyond formal reorderings to the employment of a "model of meaning severed from the legitimizing claims of a private self."[85]

Her proposition, one extrapolated from an examination of the key characteristics of this artistic idiom, makes use of analogies to human experience and language. As the title of this chapter suggests, Krauss opts for an approach that likens artistic practices to those of linguistic operations: the result is an analogy to language, a medium which she has claimed is, by definition, public. Basing her model on Wittgenstein's questioning of the existence of private language, Krauss argues that language is a system of conventions by which people communicate and thus, is a generator of meaning only in the space between those who share it: Language then, is the arena of the public. Likewise, Krauss shows how Minimalism sought to create meaning in this shared realm, where perception, in lieu of (but just like) language, would provide the frame by which experience is defined. The corollary of this, that the self is "arrived at" through experience ("We are not just what we think we are but what others perceive us to be.") and not prior to it (nor to language), echoes the sculpture of Minimalism which, Krauss argues, does not present itself as a *priorily* of significance to its audience but as "to be known" through their perceptions and

[85] Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 266.

projections. Krauss clarifies this point in the following two citations, one describing the work of Morris:

> "In focusing on the work's moment of appearing within a **public space** [my emphasis], Morris defeats the way that surface in traditional sculpture is understood to be a reflection of a pre-existent, internal armature or structure."[86]

the other, Serra's One Ton Prop (House of Cards) of 1969:

> "We are not a set of private meanings that we can choose or not choose to make public to others. We are the sum total of our visible gestures. We are as available to others as to ourselves. Our gestures are themselves formed by the public world, its conventions, its language, the repertory of its emotions, from which we learn our own."[87]

The first quotation suggests that what was effected by the Minimalists was a shift from the sculptural object as a self-reflexive, and inward-turning product of modernist tenets to an unelitist, accessible "experience." The second goes one step further, making comment on the transformation of the role of the artist that Minimalism ostensibly enacted. Krauss' use of the term 'gesture' is of course intentional: what had been perceived as the narcissitic, self-celebrating, and, above all, "private" signature of the Abstract Expressionist has been transfigured by the minimalist into something "formed by the public world, its conventions, its language," etc... . At the risk of being simplistic, it seems that the logic proceeds as follows: we are all a product of the conventions that are, by definition, developed in the public realm and thus, we are all formed by the public "space" which we

[86]Krauss, *Passages*, p. 267.
[87]Ibid., p. 270.

inhabit (and furthermore, share). Therefore, the things that we, as "public people" (Minimalist people) produce, are things which both arise from and lend access to public experience.

But Krauss' analogy, like Fried's to theatre, makes certain assumptions regarding the status of the arena in which the Minimalist objects operated:

> "The ambition of minimalism was, then, to relocate the origins of a sculpture's meaning to the outside, no longer modelling its structure on the privacy of psychological space but on the public, conventional nature of what might be called cultural space."[88]

Ian Burn and Karl Beveridge in a biting (and little circulated) essay entitled "Don Judd," have already formulated what I will appropriate as a response:

> "You've [Don Judd] said that works of this sort, what you've called three dimensional work, are "real space." But this "real space" ends up being not a neutral space but a particularly **loaded** space. 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."[89]

It is apparent from Krauss' notion of how meaning is manufactured in the work of Judd and Morris, through the sum of experiences had by those who perceive it, that she has made certain assumptions about the space in which these processes take place. The problem with this formulation is, as Beveridge and Burn have so deftly

[88]Ibid..

[89]Burn and Beveridge, "Don Judd," p. 131. (This is, of course, precisely what occured in the United States around the moment of Greenberg's ascension to uncontested power in the art world.)

shown us, that there are certain underlying hypotheses about access to "public experience," about the "publicness" of institutional spaces, about the availability of a fundamentally abstract idiom, about the determining materialist—economic, political, and social—conditions that make these experiences possible, that Krauss never exposes to herself or to her readers. The result is an approach which, although positioned in opposition to a formalist critical strategy, seems to uncover little more than this recently discredited method.

Let us return, however, to the operations of Minimalism that Krauss' model interprets. Minimalism as espoused by Judd and Morris positioned itself in opposition to the relational character of painting and pictorial illusionism. The first is exemplified in Morris' three-dimensional shapes as described in a statement by the artist that we have already cited above but which bears repetition here:

> "Characteristic of a gestalt is that once it is established all the information about it, qua gestalt, is exhausted. (One does not, for example, seek the gestalt of a gestalt.) Furthermore, once it is established it does not disintegrate. One is then both free of the shape and bound to it. Free or released because of the exhaustion of information about it, as shape, and bound to it because it remains constant and indivisible."[90]

According to Krauss, Morris has described what is fundamental to the operations of Minimalism—that one's expectations about the constitution of a given object and one's experience of it, through perception, are not one and the same. The former is constructed in the private space of the mind (the intellect) while the latter unfolds and is made known to one in the shared and public space of present,

[90]Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," p. 228.

phenomenological (tactile, visual, perceptual) experience, the external space where the Self is formed. As opposed to the concept of artistic intention (by definition, private), this type of experience, engendered by Minimalist objects and language, positions Morris' conception of gestalt as that which rejects the construction of an *a priori* 'ground' in which the objects sit. As Krauss articulates,

> "The gestalt seems to be interpreted as an immutable, ideal unit that persists beyond the particularities of experience, becoming through its very persistence the ground for all experience. Yet this is to ignore the most rudimentary notions of gestalt theory, in which the properties of the "good gestalt" are demonstrated to be entirely context-dependent."[91]

Restating this hypothesis according to Krauss' linguistic frame, we could say that the Minimalist object replaces internal relationships with a concern for syntax, where meaning is constructed in the space shared by the physical attributes of the room and the audience which inhabits it.

The second operation, the expelling of illusionism from Minimalist sculpture reads for Krauss as a means to altering the traditional ground for the art object (the figure) from an *a priori* space chosen by the artist to one that only comes into being in the presence of the viewer: In this way, as correlated with her analogy to language, the experience of the viewer is not predestined but is constructed in a space mediated by (Self and other people's) perception.

> "And clearly, the **meaning** of an attempt to undermine illusionism cannot be dissociated from the baggage that Western picture-making

[91] Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post-60s Sculpture," *Artforum*, vol. 12 (Nov. 1973), p. 50.

> carried along with it. It is a rejection that inherently implies the disavowal of the notion of a constituting consciousness and the protocol language of a private Self. It is a rejection of a space that exists prior to experience, passively waiting to be filled; and of a psychological model in which a self exists replete with its meanings, prior to contact with its world."[92]

Lyotard's description of the mechanisms by which illusionism operates, rehearsed in the preceeding chapter, reverberates here: this strategy provides the viewer with a completed pictorial space. In the absence of an illusionary ground, the viewer is forced to analyze the relationship between the universe of the object and that in which he or she stands. Simultaneity of perception, the viewing of many aspects of the object from one moment in time and space, is refused in favor of an experience generated by the movement of the spectator.

This shift in methods of address and reception as explained by Krauss above, is ostensibly part of a larger project—to offer access, as language does, to public experience. There is almost a moralizing tone to her analysis;

> "...Judd wants to repudiate an art that bases its meanings on illusionism as a metaphor for that privileged (because private) psychological moment."[93]

Minimalism, then, according to Krauss, not only provides access to public experience, but by extension, equates artistic discourse with the (proverbial) space and operations of the public realm.

We have reviewed two critical investigations into the nature of Minimalist sculpture, one based on an analogy to theatre, the other, on a model constructed

[92]Ibid., p. 46.
[93]Krauss, *Passages*, p. 258.

from a philosophy of language. The first, Fried's, cannot consider the phenomenological operations of this work of the 60s, its address of audience in physical, perceptual (and, thus, psychological) **and** visual terms, because it remains by-and-large restricted by a vision of artistic production as a history of material and formal manipulations. The second analysis, which attempts to get at the non-material effects and aspirations of Minimalism through a model informed by the writings of both Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty, invests in this body of artistic production the transposition from art as a private expression of individual intentions to a means of communication and experience that is, by definition, public. While these two points-of-view, one attacking, the other supportive, seem at first to stand in opposition to one another, I propose that they are extremely similar. Both Fried and Krauss identify Minimalism's attempt to incorporate the viewer, not just as beholder, but as subject in the process of experience-making that is initiated by the sculptural objects: their disagreement only enters when they consider whether or not this experience as art is valid and valuable:

> "A broader notion of theatricality seems to be required here. Theatricality may be considered as that propensity in the visual arts for a work to reveal itself in the mind of the beholder as something other than what is known empirically to be. This is precisely antithetical to the modern ideal of the wholly manifest, self-sufficient object..."[94]

In this citation above, (excerpted from an essay by Howard Fox) Fried's notion of theatricality has been extended to include precisely the type of experience that

[94]Howard N. Fox, *Metaphor: New Projects by Contemporary Sculptors* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), p. 16.

Krauss has identified as inherent in the workings of Minimalist sculpture: the disjunctures, between the world as we expect it, intellectually, to be and the world as we then experience it, function as the theoretical crux of Minimalist strategies. The terms of its reception are based on the experience of human perception. But what then of the models these critics employ? Krauss writes that modern minimalist sculpture is

> "predicated on the feeling that what sculpture was is insufficient because founded on an idealist myth. And in trying to find out what sculpture is, or what it can be, it has used theatre and its relation to the context of the viewer as a tool to destroy, to investigate, and to reconstruct."[95]

In a sense, for her language and theatre are analagous; they both function as the arena of public experience—as the shared space of ideational and perceptual exchange. Here we can transpose the words of Fox to explain the relationship between these two arenas that serve as models for a critical vision of Minimalism's operations:

> "... their very conceptual foundation in an operation of language is itself theatrical. Not all language is verbal, but all language—indeed all organized communication—is theatre."[96]

Whether or not this statement is meant to be more profound than the cliche it recalls ("all the world's a stage..."), Fox's reflection on the meeting point of language and theatre help us here to understand the proximity of Fried's and Krauss's outlooks: both identify the shift implemented by the Minimalists toward a concern with the terms by which their work is received. As Hal Foster explains,

[95] Krauss, *Passages*, p. 242.
[96] Fox, p. 17.

"In a brilliant move, Morris then redefines this object/monument scale in terms of private and public address, in terms, that is, of *reception*—a shift in orientation that turns the 'new limit' for sculpture into its 'new freedom'."[97]

Hal Foster

Accompanying this shift, however, is the issue, not just of how the work is to be received but by whom it will be perceived. It is precisely this corollary that is absent from both the accounts of Fried and Krauss. More significantly, and by way of possible explanation for this ommission, is the fact that this question is also absent from the writings (and work) of the Minimalists themselves. Foster initiates this discussion when he writes:

"In phenomenological terms the minimalist delineation of perception is somehow said to be 'preobjective,' which is to suggest that perception is somehow before or outside history, language, sexuality, power—that the perceiver is not a sexed body, that the gallery or museum is not an ideological apparatus."[98]

Though he identifies some very crucial ideas in this passage, Foster quickly dismisses them on the count that they are the subject of a later art and therefore, anachronistic when applied to the sculpture of the 1960s. [99] ' But Douglas Crimp, who also has the advantage of hindsight writing some twenty odd years after the publishing of

[97]Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art 1945-1986*, eds. Julia Brown and Richard Koshalek (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), p. 172.

[98]Ibid., p. 171.

[99]'Here I am the one who is anachronistic (not to say perverse) to question minimalism on matters developed only by later art, and yet such an inquiry does point to the historical and ideological limits of this art, limits expanded by its critical followers." (Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," p. 171.) Given our discussion, in the first chapter, of the historical precedents for critical institutional analysis, it would seem an omission, rather than "anachronistic," to exclude these questions.

"Art and Objecthood," clarifies what he calls the aestheticization of the concept of space as that which is operating in the work of the minimalist object-makers:

> "In accepting these spaces [of the institution], the minimalists couldn't either expose or resist the hidden material conditions of modern art."[100]

Rosalyn Deutsche's evaluation reiterates Crimp's point:

> "Minimal artists had initiated a critique of artistic autonomy by investigating the spatio-temporal conditions of art's perception. The temporary, site-specific installations mounted by the minimalists incorporated the place of a work's perception into the work itself and demonstrated that perceptual experience depends on the conditions in which viewers encounter works of art. But formalism re-entered minimalist art in the assumption that the places of perception are politically and socially neutral."[101]

Minimalist practices, then, despite those words of Tony Smith's which describe his exhiliarating discovery of aesthetic experience unfettered by the convention of the frame, accepted a larger frame, that of the seemingly autonomous institution of art, thereby setting up a relationship between object and viewer that was itself institutionalized. What this means is that the way in which the work was received, as an example of high art, as important American art, as a form of artistic production approved by the major museums and magazines of the 1960s art world, was already determined for those audiences Minimalism purported to address and involve in its operations.

[100]Douglas Crimp, "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity," in *Richard Serra*, edited by Ernst Gerhard Guse (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 58.

[101]Rosalyn Deutsche, "Property Value: Hans Haacke, Real Estate, and the Museum" in *Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis. (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 22.

As we have seen, Burn and Beveridge contend that the modernist institutions of artistic production and exhibition have served, historically, to protect art and its audiences from posing certain questions regarding art's relation to other realms of social, economic, and political production. In keeping with these practices, particular accounts of just what this history was, were favored over others. Foster's fear of imposing a model of artistic praxis informed by later developments in art history onto the production of 1960s sculpture, his hesitancy to fault Minimalism for not investigating the true nature of the spaces and audiences that it incorporated, ignores another history, prior to (Tatlin and Lissitzky) and concurrent with, Minimalism, that had begun to do just that: it is precisely at the moment of Minimalism that artists like Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke were revealing the institutional structures that had been erected to support a very specific set of discourses, including that of Minimalism itself.

Foster, on the other hand, argues that Minimalism was a self-conscious movement, one that understood modern art as an institutional discourse. Autonomy, then, became both the subject and precondition of what Foster labels as their neo-avant-garde attack. He refers to Peter Burger's theory that art only gained its autonomy in the context of a capitalist society:

> "This premise allows him [Burger] to argue that art became an autonomous institution only in capitalist society, for only then was it relieved by the ideology of fair exchange, of its role as a means of legitimation."[102]

[102]Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," p. 176. Foster's thesis rests on the supposed failure of the historical avant-garde: "In short, the very failure of the historical avant-garde and of the first neo-

To the extent that this paradigm shift only became possible within late capitalism when, as Burger has argued, the autonomy of the institution of art was fully realized, Minimalism, I would argue, seems to have helped in securing this autonomy rather than participating in its critique. Foster, however, states this somewhat differently, positioning Minimalism as an "historical crux" between late modernism and the development of practices of institutional critique, alloting to it the role of investigating the parameters of art's autonomy (through the operations of seriality), a function which he suggests was subversive:

> "Though involvement with this logic [the logic of serial production] must ultimately qualify the transgressivity of Minimalism and Pop, it is important to stress that they do not merely reflect it: they exploit this logic, which is to say that at least potentially, they release difference and repetition as subversive forces."[103]

Foster declares that these radical intentions were sublimated in later accounts of Minimalism—a rewriting that, he argues, had more to do with the obscurantist nature of the dominant accounts of art history than Minimalism itself.

> "Indeed, the American repression of the transgressive avant-garde (i.e., dadaism, productivism, surrealism) was instrumental to the dominance of Greenbergian formalism, which not only overbore this avant-garde institutionally but also redefined it almost out of existence. Thus, for Greenberg in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939, 1961), the only true avant-garde is the aestheticist, not the anarchic, one, and its aim is not at all to sublate art into life but rather to purify art from life."[104]

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avant-garde [Klein, Rauschenberg] to destroy the institution by the second (pop and minimalism) neo-avant-garde, a critique that in turn enables the analysis of other institutions in the advanced art of our time."

[103]Ibid., p. 180.

[104]Ibid., p. 175.

Foster explains this tendency toward the depoliticization of the American avant-garde as generated by the "tastes of the renewed middle-class of post-war prosperity." The critics, like Greenberg, needed to re-write the terms of these practices, repoliticizing them in order to position them as symbols of an America of free expression, liberty and advanced culture. [105]

Anna Chave

Anna Chave (taking up Foster's challenge),[106] examines Minimalism as a set of practices that came out of and broke away from American modernism.

> "But it was an account of the history of modern art that Greenberg had inscribed as the true history that enabled these [Minimalist] objects, which verged on being non-art, to be lionized instead as art of the first importance."[107]

In an approach very different from Foster's, Chave, in an article entitled "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," suggests that Minimalism's seeming lack of attendence to the nature of the institution was less than subversive (and that the implications of such an approach extend beyond mere historical ignorance or innocence): to her, they signify Minimalism's identification with the "True Discourses" (a term she borrows from Foucault with its associations to the discourses of power) or, as I will call it, the discourses of the dominant. Chave uses a method altogether

[105] See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[106] At the beginning of the essay Foster argues that any worthwhile account of Minimalism must acknowledge its relation to, as well as its break with, late modernist artistic production and its role as the catalyst for what followed: As a "brisure of (post) modern art, an in-between moment of a paradigm shift (in which advanced art of the present will emerge as a complex displacement, not its simple antithesis)." Foster, p. 162.

[107] Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine* (Jan. 1990), p. 45.

distinct from those of the other critics we have examined in this chapter, attempting, quite radically, to re-establish what she argues was the original referentiality of the specific and uncompromising objects of this sculptural idiom. While I am arguing a more conventional line which adheres to the premise that Minimalism became entrenched in its own hermetic concerns within the institutional frame, a position which makes it impossible for me to engage her propositions concerning Minimalism's possible link to fascistic and phallic symbolism, [108] her intention to uncover Minimalism's effect of reinscribing (as Chave herself has named this operation) a discourse which supported the dominant or ruling class, one both predominantly male and even more categorically of a privileged economic sector, seems worth mentioning. Just as Fried's opposition to the "largely ideological position" of Minimalism masks his own intentions, Minimalism's claim of the indispensable importance of its audience which was made manifest in the most formal of terms, hides a particular attitude regarding the framework of the institution, the nexus of artistic power and discourse that served as the space in which the Minimalist "shift" was enacted. As Burn and Beveridge remind us,

> "But all this conveniently ignores that an "end-of-ideology" is as overtly ideological as it pretends not to be."[109]

The central distinction, then, between Foster's and Chave's propositions, aside from what I will call Minimalism's 'means' (seriality, referentiality or the complete subver-

[108]Further, I do not subscribe to her interpretation of feminist criticism which allows Chave to address pop-psychological notions such as the fear of intimacy as an innate, male characteristic, etc. I tend to think that this type of reading reduces the strength of a "feminist interpretation" rather than being synonymous with it.

[109]Burn and Beveridge, "Don Judd," p. 138.

sion of the logic of the modernist sign), is not primarily the relation of Minimalism to the theoretical and ideological positioning of late-modernism but more generally, its position with regards to the dominant order and extra-artistic attempts, wide-spread in the 60s, to transform power relations within society as a whole. Foster, as we have seen, argues that Minimalism paved the way for radical critiques of the dominant cultural institutions (in a sense, a position that follows the lines of Adorno's definition of constructive engagement through artistic and intellectual means). According to his line of debate, Minimalism has only later been 'co-opted' or embraced by the mainstream orders in keeping with the logic of capital, through which even differences are eventually absorbed as potential commodities to be exploited for the interests of profit. [110]

It is Chave, however, who provides a perspective that considers this later co-option of Minimalism as a symbol of "American order," its business interests, and corporate powers not as a disjunct aftereffect but as a signal of this idiom's inherent nature: Minimalism, for Chave, might have exposed the real nature of the dominant discourse but, by refusing to offer a better vision or even a different one, Minimalism became easily disguised as a positive symbol and even advocate of the policies of the institutions in which it was exhibited and the object-viewer relationships which were engendered there. It does not seem anachronistic (as Foster has suggested), to deride Minimalist practitioners for having relied on strategies of address that while radical in the 1920s in the Soviet Union appear merely formal

[110] The effects of a culture absorbed by the "near totality of its capital". (Foster, p. 180).

(and as such, conventional) precisely in the context of late capitalist culture where the notion of autonomy, in government decision-making, in national policy, and in art, was already being contested as undemocratic. In this light, strategies that employ perception as the primary mode of reception through the incorporation of the ungendered, generic body of the viewer remain formal and general rather than, as Judd and Morris would have it, specific and literal. [111]

[111] Although it exceeds the self-imposed frame of this thesis, I would like to suggest that Minimalism's real context could be perceived as a linguistic one. In this sense, Krauss's model is more appropriate than she suspected. "More to the point, can we ask you what sort of relation your writing has to your work? [...] Maybe the easiest way to summarize the function of your writing is to say that it operates almost like a Manual for the sculptures or objects that 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. 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 . . ." (Burn and Beveridge, p. 129). As Burn and Beveridge suggest here, the Minimalists constructed a context—the terms of their works' reception—through the language employed in their writings. This proposition is not so far-fetched if we consider Krauss's own proposal that the artworld of the sixties "went public" through the discourse established by the magazines and institutions where Minimalist sculpture was exhibited. As Krauss explains, the institutions of the dominant culture began to support a precisely articulated artistic practice through "the discourse of a collective language about the aims, ideals and even rules of [their] given enterprise, [thereby affecting] the conversion of a merely private preoccupation into a discipline." (Rosalind Krauss, *Eva Hesse, Sculpture 1936-1970* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1979): i.).

Chapter 3: POST-MINIMALISM

Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third International targeted new audiences for art. El Lissitzky's demonstration rooms changed modes of audience reception from passive to active, encouraging viewers to become aware of the institutional frame that surrounded both the work and its audience. In relation to these innovations, however, the formal operations and strategies of public address of Minimalist practices were less than radical if not regressive. The tenets of the latter elucidate the self-absorption of the neo-avant-garde during a moment when radicality was defined only within the hermetic framework of artistic production. (Reception was a concept only vaguely, and occasionally invoked.) With this historical analysis as our backdrop, we will proceed with an examination of a number of more recent examples of artistic production that continue to extend the trajectory along which Constructivist practices were aligned: many of the following projects, particularly those of Hans Haacke, were originally received only to be excluded from the canon of late modernism.

While I have concentrated on sculpture both in the case of Constructivism and Minimalism, the last chapter deals with examples that contest the primacy of the object. Hal Foster would argue against this sequence, one which suggests that there is a shift after Minimalism to an increasingly ideational or conceptual art:

> "This genealogy [of Minimalism] cannot be a formal history of influence or evolution (such as the story of a 'dematerialization' of art after Minimalism that continues the banal thesis of modernism as a process of

reduction)..."[112]

This, however, is not the implication I seek to suggest by my choice of un-object-like works or "projects" (for lack of a better, inclusive rubric) to represent the 1970s and 80s. Rather, it seems there is a logic to this change in form with regards to advances made in the area of audience address: this occasional but apparent pattern of transformation seems to signal a shift in the relation between art as an artifact to artistic production (at its most "current" or avant-garde) as an integral part and manifestation of social processes. We begin this chapter, then, with the notion of site-specificity, a concept whose definitional development echoes an increasing concern with real space (political, economic, and social).

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Site-specificity was a concept and practice pursued by a generation of sculptors whose work grew out of the Minimalist idiom. It was a primary tenet underlying most of the environmental/earthworks, many of the large sculptural objects and work early attending to a critique of the institution, that characterized sculpture in the late 1960s and 70s. The claim of attachment to a specific location reflected a variety of intentions and conceptions, however, both about the internal operations of the work and the modes of audience addresss which it manifested. It is this term that leads us out of the practices of late modernism's autonomy to methods of artistic production that overtly declared their engagement with a public. For those

[112]Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," p. 177.

who have posited the minimalist formulations of Judd, Morris, Andre and others as a materialist critique, post-minimalism (as this period of diverse procedures is often referred to) is seen as a continuation of the Minimalists' "paradigm shift" to incorporate radical modes of audience address into their art work. For those who see Minimalism as addressing the single viewer rather than any one collective of viewers, as turning backwards to an idealist/individualist bourgeois vision that was in position prior to the Constructivist reorganization of art object-viewer relationships, the work which succeeded Minimalism or was concurrent with it but aimed at different ends seems to maintain more affinity with the examples from Tatlin and El Lissitzky that we examined at the beginning of this paper, than with Minimalism itself.

Robert Smithson

We return once again to Rosalind Krauss whose work has helped form the canon of critical scholarship on the sculptural practices of the 60s and 70s in America. Krauss has stated that the notion of site-specificity in sculpture (which, according to her, presents, by definition, models of the human form by virtue of being three-dimensional and freestanding: anthropomorphic) is an "abstract way of saying that the individual is determined by his or her political and cultural context." [113] As I argued in the last chapter, these generalized, blanket claims for the Minimalist idiom seem untenable. Krauss reformulates this statement in her

[113] Rosalind Krauss, "In Our Time," segment of *Art of the Western World.* Television series produced by Suzanne Bauman, WNET, 1989.

comments on Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, a site-specific earthwork formed on Utah's Salt Lake in 1970. This work, made from basalt rocks and earth found at the site organized into a spiral-shaped pier that juts fifteen hundred feet out onto and into this landlocked body of salt water is interpreted by Krauss as a "modern restatement of the relationship between the artist and nature away from the historical exhaustion of painting and sculpture."[114] (It is not clear whether Minimalism was the 'last straw' on the exhausted camel's back in this formulation or whether it had already begun the regenerative process.) Clearly there is a move in Smithson's work away from the elements of Minimalism that have allowed it to be identified as a materialist critique: Their use of industrially manufactured materials and their tactics of leaving the work seemingly unsigned, are procedures discarded in favor of local, untampered–with materials and processes of a man-made aesthetic restructuring of the natural landscape. Yet Spiral Jetty, the most celebrated of Smithson's works,[115] incorporates elements of a refusal to maintain a traditional relationship with an art audience.

Krauss proposes that what is innovative in the way that Spiral Jetty reformulates a relationship to its audience is in the experience of feeling decentered that it provides. This notion is interpreted for us by Bois:

> "For, as Rosalind Krauss has shown, this space, from Rodin to Serra, is one of passage and displacement from the center, a space interrupted by

[114] Ibid.

[115] I use this particular icon because I am attempting to formulate an analysis which takes into account the procedures of audience address that have been ignored in the endless sequence of discussions of the canonical examples of modern sculpture.

> the discontinuous time of involuntary memory, a slender space whose divergence it is up to the spectator to explore, while eventually connecting its threads for himself."[116]

As Bois reiterates, modern sculpture's physical operations are seen to create an experience of "passage" for the spectator, who must take in Smithson's piece by walking along the fifteen foot wide pathway. The references to a time of mythic labyrinths and heroes who must find their way through them, argues Krauss, produce an experience of movement through time and space that is analogous to the psychological movement through "historical fantasies" that we create in order to place ourselves in control of our world. [117] These descriptions of psychological phenomena induced by physical and perceptual processes, however, seem to go little beyond the descriptions we have already considered.

It is, instead, the fact of moving outside the gallery space that is significant. Smithson has chosen a site that is <u>not</u> only not the site of the institution but one that is even less traveled and exposed to passers-by. While this action of locating is linked to Smithson's investing of the natural landscape with visions of the renewal of meaning (in idealist terms) in his art, it also reflects the artist's understanding of the constraints on art-audience relations governed by the institution. Unlike Serra, who has often chosen sites that were specifically situated within dense, urban environments ("There is one condition that I want, which is a density of traffic

[116]Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara–Clara," in *Richard Serra*, ed. Ernst Gerhard Guse (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), pp. 40–59.
[117]See Krauss, *Passages*, pps. 280-282.

flow."),[118] Smithson has placed his work in a context which, if only that it is "left-over," is less mediated by the economic and political forces that order and regulate all urban spaces. Serra of course, has explicitly chosen to wrangle with the latter, "loaded" sites, seeing them as essential to the formulations of his pieces.

In choosing to move dramatically outside the museum, not only to accomodate large-scale pieces (which is one tactic for making the move to outdoor spaces imperative) but to realize designs which are inspired by and make use of the figure and materials of the site, Smithson questions the physical and ideational limitations which the art institution perpetuates. His interest in these issues also surface in his own writings. In 1972 Smithson published an article entitled "Cultural Confinement" in *Artforum*, the place that Krauss has cited[119] as the emergent arena of artistic discourse [which she argues is, by definition, public] ten years earlier, which likened the space of the art exhibition to a manifestation of the social control system of the state apparatus:

> "Some artists imagine they've got a hold on this apparatus, which in fact has got a hold of them. As a result, they end up supporting a cultural prison that is out of their control. Artists themselves are not confined, but their output is. Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells- in other words, neutral rooms called "galleries." A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. A vacant white room with lights is still a submission to the neutral. Works of art seen in such spaces seem to be going through a kind of esthetic convalescence. They are looked upon as so many inanimate invalids, waiting for critics to pronounce them curable or incurable. The function of the warden-curator is to separate art from the rest of society. Next comes integration. Once

[118] Douglas Crimp, "Richard Serra's Urban Sculpture: An Interview," in *Richard Serra Interviews, Etc. 1970-1980* (The Yonkers, N.Y.: Hudson River Museum, 1980), pp. 163-187 (p. 168).
[119] Rosalind Krauss, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture 1936-1970* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1979).

> the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomized it is ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only if they support this kind of confinement."[120]

At one level, Smithson's words must be understood in the context of his own artistic production, as part of his creative work: as, perhaps, a legitimation of his own endeavors. His reflections on the nature of the exhibition space in the context of New York at that time seem an attempt at devaluing what was a competitive and rigidly hierarchical context for his own art-making. Smithson had exhibited his early work, abstract paintings, at the Artist's Gallery in 1959 and then again in Rome in 1961. In 1962 he showed a group of assemblages at the Castellane Gallery in New York City, the last exhibition he would have until 1965. It was not until that year that he emerged publicly (in the art world) as a sculptor and as an author of writings on art. Smithson had clearly engaged in the discourse and the space of this newly defined network of publications and galleries prior to developing his "environmental art," "site-specific art" and "non-site" projects of the later 60s. It was perhaps in reaction to his early art world experiences that Smithson was led to seek out alternative modes of artistic production that could not be contained, by definition, within the constricting boundaries of these institutions.

Beyond these inferences, we can view the shift, albeit early in his career, that occurs within Smithson's work in the mid-60s as representative of a larger attempt to circumvent the Greenbergian definitions of artistic practice and the

[120]Robert Smithson, "Cultural Confinement," reprinted in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press), p. 132.

audiences to which they were addressed. Spiral Jetty, if not "interactive," did not require contemplative attention but a method of viewing closer to that of Benjamin's "state of distraction." One must walk through Smithson's work, while experiencing a whole number of other elements (wind, sun, rain, birds...) that are not within the control of the artist. Further, implicit in Smithson's explorations of alternative, non-institutionalized spaces and traditionally un-artistic materials was a critique of the prevailing forces of commodification that determined the value of the art work in terms of its monetary (exchange) value: it was these conditions that, to a large extent, engendered the making of immovable, site-specific work.

Daniel Buren

While Smithson sought to undermine the institutionalized structure of the art world by detouring past the physical nexus of its domain, Daniel Buren, a French artist and theorist was exploring a similar set of issues only to arrive at very different conclusions.[121] In a series of essays written between the years 1967 and 1970,[122] Buren investigated the mechanisms by which the museum/gallery framework defines and gives value to specific traditions of artistic production while concealing its own operations—thereby obscuring its function as an ideologically motivated construct through which particular values and viewpoints are condoned and perpetuated. For

[121] I will limit my discussion of Buren's work to a set of his theoretical writings; I will not address any of his numerous art projects which he perceives as the basis for all of his textual compositions.

[122] These essays were published separately in a number of different exhibition catalogues and magazines before they were finally compiled under the title, *Five Texts*, published by The John Weber Gallery, New York and The Jack Wendler Gallery, London, 1973.

Buren, Smithson's ("Land art" or "Environmental art") "solution" to the hegemony of the American art institution would only validate the very boundaries it sought to elude:

> "The by-passing of the limit M [museum] is presented as a sublimation (and a "solution") whereas, in reality, this solution could simply be called an **escape**. The attempt is doubly reactionary: this individual search for greater freedom is based on a return to nature which itself rests on the double illusion concerning the disappearance of the object and the disappearance of the Museum/gallery."[123]

The positioning of art as natural, eternal, and "beyond all ideology" was identified by Buren as the method by which a bourgeois (in France, an accurate label rather than a polemic one) idealist philosophy employs art as "a security valve for the system, an image of freedom in the midst of general alienation:" [124] within this constellation, the context of artistic production is limited to art history, an account of precedents which, in itself, has been constructed to exclude the powerful political, economic and social processes which have produced the past and the way in which it is currently recounted.

Unlike the Minimalists, his contemporaries, Buren focused on the function of the museum not as a physical place but as an ordering system: this privileged site is aesthetic, economic and mystical (promoting myth) in nature. Its functions, as Buren described them, are to preserve, collect, and provide refuge from threatening scrutiny: Each of these operations reinforce the notion of art as eternal, as internally hierarchical, as exclusive, and significantly, as ostensibly self-sufficient. For Buren,

[123]Daniel Buren, "Critical Limits," *Five Texts* (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), p. 47.
[124]Buren, "Critical Limits," in *Five Texts*, p. 45.

then, neither the museum/gallery nor history itself are natural formations—but rather, are framing devices that sanction one type of experience over another while empowering certain audiences and excluding others.

> "Like the chiaroscuro that privileged a certain part of the picture to the detriment of another, or like composition and perspective which privileged, inside the picture, a certain object in relation to another or a certain person (powerful-hero-prince-king-lord) to the detriment of others (servants-slaves-conquered-poor), or vice-versa, the museum accords importance to that which stands out in relation to that which does not and among works that do, emphasizes (publicity-value-catalogue) a particular work rather than another."[125]

The museum/gallery then, does more than classify artistic production: it defines art as such. Buren cites Duchamp's Ready-mades as the prototype of work which explores the framing operations of the institution. By decontextualizing everyday objects, by removing them from their original contexts and placing them within the space of the museum, Duchamp has transformed them into art objects. While Duchamp seems to have made an attempt at ridding art of illusion by presenting the "real," commonplace object rather than a representation of it, Buren argues that the mechanisms by which the museum/gallery operate transform, not the material object, but the meaning of it. In the process of transporting the object from the actual space of the everyday to the site of exhibition, the Ready-Made is aestheticized:

> "The reason for this is that the place where this urinal has just been put (the museum, the gallery, or any other defined artistic place) has the same function as the support or tableau for the [Cezanne's] "apple."

[125]Buren, "Standpoints," in *Five Texts*, p. 39.

> The "apple" is received inside the canvas, the [Duchamp's] urinal inside the museum. The framework of representation has become enlarged. What has changed is the framework in which the object is seen, the container."[126]

Thus, Duchamp's found objects do not become works of art soley because they have been designated as such by an artist but are altered by virtue of their recontextualization within the space of the art museum/gallery. Further, they gain an audience only through their positioning in this bounded domain.

While some of Buren's writings of this period appear now as scientistic, as positivist attempts to uncover the "systematic" framing operations of our cultural institutions,[127] his deconstruction of the role of context in the formation of artistic experience, one which considers the limits of cultural knowledge as part of the frame for aesthetic reception, one which, significantly, reveals the physical space of exhibition as laden with political, social, and historical meaning, extends far beyond the Minimalist approach to context that we examined in the preceeding chapter. [128] In a sense, it is Hans Haacke and not Richard Serra who continues to extend Buren's examination of the power and subtlety of the institutional frame during the decade of the 1970s: Haacke utilizes the concept of site-specificity to self-reflexive ends, focusing on the multi-dimensional character of the artworld and its many exhibition sites, the place within which his own discourse is established.

[126]Buren, "Standpoints," in *Five Texts*, p. 37.

[127]See in particular, Buren, "Critical Limits," pp. 43-61.

[128]The fact that Buren was able to comprehend the workings of the institutional frame at a time when American artists were not is, at least in part, related to the European marxist tradition out of which he emerged.

Haacke, through his production, reiterates Buren's position:

> "It goes without saying that it seems insufficient and unnecessary to exhibit in the street or the countryside, outside Museums or Galleries. This neither solves nor even poses the problem."[129]

Unlike Smithson and Serra, then, Buren and Haacke choose to remain within the institutional system—an action informed by their desire to alter and expose the operations of this calcified superstructure.

Richard Serra

Serra's work, on the other hand, emerges directly out of the Minimalist's phenomenological experiments with perception and viewer incorporation: it therefore seems logical to attend to his notion of site-specificity before we address that of Haacke's. Further, it is with Serra that the Minimalists' nod in the direction of audience becomes labelled as a determined attempt to coalesce for his production a supportive "public": As Haacke (and Buren a few years earlier) investigates the complex structures that interrelate to comprise the American artworld of the late twentieth century, Serra reveals, perhaps unintentionally, the manipulated concept of "public" that has come to replace the traditional configuration of audiences for art. In this context, site-specificity acquires an increasingly elaborate set of significations.

It is with this logic in mind that we must understand Tilted Arc, Richard Serra's by now infamous Corten steel, bowed slab that was once attached to its

[129]Buren, "Standpoints," *Five Texts*, fn. #6, p. 41.

site at Foley Square in Manhattan. [130] Casting, an earlier work of Serra's, provides the necessary (inevitably suppressed) background, explains Douglas Crimp, for comprehending Serra's formulation of the notion of site-specificity. [131] Like the example of Splashing (1968) which Crimp cites in an essay entitled "Richard Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity,"[132] Casting was a work made at the place of its exhibition through a series[133] (characteristically Minimalist) of procedures whereby molten lead was poured on the warehouse floor and scraped back into parallel waves. It was a refusal of objecthood and a literal attachment to site that defined **Serra's** site-specificity in these pieces and informed his later work of the following two decades: Through these operations, reception as a procedure was effectively distanced from that of consumption. To the extent that the

[130]Serra was commissioned by the U.S. Government's Art-in-Architecture Program to design a piece for Federal Plaze in 1979. His proposal for Tilted Arc, it was claimed, was subjected to much scrutiny by a number of panels that were organized to oversee the project during the two years before its installation. By the time it was installed in June 1981, the site-specific work had been modified to meet a number of Design Review Panel specifications. Two months after, however, a petition with 1,300 signatures of Federal employees working in and around Federal Plaza was submitted to the GSA (General Services Administration under whose auspices the Art-in-Architecture program is run), requesting the removal of the sculpture. For a clearly organized, abridged version of the testimonials with well-researched time lines of the preceeding events, see *Public Art, Public Controversy*, Sherril Jordan, New York: American Council for the Arts, 1987.

[131]In some sense, it was around this concept that the testimony at the hearings should have revolved, given that this was the only issue which equated the moving of the piece with its total destruction, thus making a compromise impossible.

[132]In *Richard Serra*, ed. Ernst Gerhard Guse (Rizzoli International Publishers, Inc.: New York, 1988).

[133]It is interesting to note that Bois has come up with a reply to Fried's dismissal of seriality as indicative of an unwillingness to come to terms with the frame or boundaries: by way of Serra, many of whose works incorporated the tactic of seriality, both on film ("Hand Catching Lead," 1969) and in sculpture, Bois argues that Serra's use of this strategem was part of an effort "to destroy that which has been the age-old foundation of narration, namely its conclusion." This underscores my own musings about Fried's position on this issue: earlier I had supposed that Fried's accusations concerning the 'literalness' and 'theatricality' of Minimalism might have been linked to the potentially narrative (because theatrical) nature of Minimalism.

manifestation of this particular "action"[134] was connected not to the gallery or museum but to the warehouse for the duration of its "life," Casting fully avoided even the site of commercial action. This characteristic was specific to Casting, however; many of Serra's sculptural works of the late 60s on have occupied the space of the commercial gallery.

Again Crimp argues for Serra's clever tactics of undermining conventional systems. Serra's pieces could not be moved to the private living room nor did they sit comfortably in gallery and institutional exhibition spaces.

> "At the same time, art's institutional exhibition spaces, surrogates of the private domicile, were revealed as determining, constraining, drastically limiting art's possibilities."[135]

Serra, writes Crimp, holds the space of the gallery **hostage**, thus declaring it as the site of **struggle**. Serra, he adds, has **broken apart** the calcified idea of private vs. public. Crimp has staged a war with Serra in command.

It seems that for Crimp, Serra's efforts did not lead the front in terms of formal changes: Serra's sculpture, in this sense, was and is of the Minimalist moment. It is in the continuation or formulation of a materialist critique through a set of specific operations such as size/scale and site-specificity, argues Crimp, that Serra did what the Minimalists couldn't: "resist the material hidden conditions of modern art."[136] The problems with his essay, however, begin here. In an attempt to argue

[134]Krauss explains Serra's work as a series of transitive verbs—See *Passages*, pps. 225-227.
[135]Douglas Crimp, "Redefining Site-Specificity," p. 5.
[136]This "resistance" did not last as long as Serra or Crimp would have liked, as was illustrated by the case of Tilted Arc: "Relocation would, in fact transform *Tilted Arc* into an exchange commodity in that it would annihilate the site-specific aspect of the work.

the case of Serra's procedural critiques, Crimp plays the role of an attorney all too well: nothing is left unaccounted for. Serra's use of the materials of production (rather than those manufactured for re-use) as well as his reliance on an industrial labor force to actually form his pieces is argued as the real point of refusal of the idealist myth of artistic creativity. It becomes difficult to resist the intimated corollary—that this is where Serra becomes one with the workers rather than an elitist group of artists/intellectuals—not a wholly original typecast. [137] But beyond Serra actually being transformed into a member of a group not traditionally included in the institutional base of the art world or its viewing public, Crimp stresses the connection of this mode of artistic production with claims of Serra's ultimately "public" art:

> "It is this exclusive reliance on the industrial labor force (a force signalled with a very particular resonance in the sculpture's name [Strike, 1971]) that distinguishes Serra's production after the early 1970s as public in scope, not only because the scale of the work had dramatically increased, but because the private domain of the artist's studio could no longer be the site of production. The place where the sculpture would stand would be the place where it was made: its making would be the work of others." [138]

The last concept is not quite as radical as Crimp projects it to be: nothing is more familiar in the studios of the great masters than assistants to whom little credit was ever given beyond the attribution of "the school of" and that only to distinguish

[It] would become exactly what it was intended not to be—a mobile, marketable product." from Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc Destroyed," *Art in America*, vol. 77, no. 5 (March 1989), p. 36.

[137] Anna Chave points out that here Serra aligns himself more with the industrialist magnate who merely picks up the telephone to make his command than with the worker who must actually fabricate the piece and satisfy his or her boss' demands. Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power." *Arts Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 5 (Jan. 1990): 44-63. (See p. 51 in particular.)

[138] Crimp, "Redefining Site-Specificity," p. 80.

the real work of the artist himself. But more relevent to our concerns is the very labelling of Serra's work as public, not in 1971 but in 1988 when it seems that the experience of the Tilted Arc trials taught us nothing if not that the notion of an all-encompassing-public art is a depleted one. [139]

On March 6–8, 1985, a public hearing was held, ostensibly to determine the fate of the sculpture. By May 1, William Diamond, the New York Regional Administrator of the GSA, officially recommended its relocation, a decision which Serra and others claimed would signal the destruction of Tilted Arc. In Serra's own words; (called "acerbic" by the editors of *Art in America*):

> "The United States government destroyed Tilted Arc on March 15, 1989." [140]

The hearings, which some have shown to be a complete sham,

> "Last night, Mr. Diamond appeared on cable news program [...] and announced midway through this hearing that the GSA had obviously made a mistake in commissioning Tilted Arc, [...] and that the plaza should be restored to its original empty state and made available for other purposes... What, I would like to ask Mr. Diamond is the purpose of this hearing, now in the third day of testimonials? [...] You do not care what I have to say. You do not care what anybody has to say. Last night you proved what others have said: This is not an open hearing, it is a show trial. [...] You Mr. Diamond, in your statements last night, have revealed the utter bankruptcy and total fraudulence of these proceedings." [141]

[139] Further, Crimp's claim for Serra's disruption of the calcified idea of private vs. public "is totally depleted" when, in the quote above, Crimp labels the artist's studio as private and the site of production and alienated labour as public, thereby accepting traditional social configurations set up by the dominant class.

[140] Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc Destroyed," *Art in America*, vol. 7, no. 55, (May 1989), p. 35.

[141] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, in *Public Art, Public Controversy*, p. 72.

did bring together many of the more reknowned artists, critics, art historians, dealers, curators and collectors of the day to speak, primarily, in favor of Serra's piece. They, in the unanimity of principle if not actual method of defense, constituted a public. And yet, the "public" was cited by those who organized the hearings, in particular by William Diamond, as being the reason for which the hearings had been convened. [142]

This public, quite a different group from the first, appeared not only to be casting the deciding vote but effectively calling for the election in the first place. During the proceedings, adversaries of Tilted Arc claimed another public for their cause: John Gattuso, an attorney, included the following in his testimony,

> "I feel that Tilted Arc should be removed for several reasons: [...] because the presence of the arc exists in the face of strong community opposition—meaning the civil servants and taxpayers."[143]

The pertinent question here is which public are we talking about:

> "You have put a lot of emphasis on a kind of polling that has gone on here, [in the form of] petitions and letters. [...] If you are going to have a poll, how are you going to determine the constituency? How are you going to get a representative selection of the will of the public...?"[144]

[142]The account given in *Public Art, Public Controversy* cites that some 13,000 signatures were recorded on a petition circulated to request the removal of the work from Federal Plaza. But Serra's own description, which seems to be quite accurate, shows the numbers to be quite different: "During the three-day hearing (March 6–8, 1985), the GSA presented 3,791 signatures for relocation and 3,763 signatures against relocation. These nearly equal numbers were never mentioned in Diamond's statements to the press, nor did he ever bother to mention that approximately 12,000 people work in the Federal buildings at 26 Federal Plaza. Given this population of workers, 3,791 signatures for the removal of Tilted Arc do not constitute a majority of any kind: They represent neither a majority of people working in the buildings at 26 Federal Plaza, nor a majority of the people working in the federal enclave in downtown Manhattan, nor a majority of the people living in the neighborhood." This statement is excerpted from Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc Destroyed," p. 37.

[143]John Gattuso as recorded in *Public Art, Public Controversy*, p. 142.

[144]Gerry Rosen in *Public Art, Public Controversy*, p. 90.

It seems that the public has become merely a tool for those needing to build up their defense. Almost never did the public of the petitions have their say but rather it was the interested, educated public made up of curators, artists, scholars, critics, policy-makers and specialists called on to provide expert analyses of specific conditions. Even then, the overwhelmingly supportive testimony of the art world public was disregarded. The decision to remove Tilted Arc was made **in the name of the public** rather than by the public. If nothing else, the undeniable evidence of competing voices, all claiming to be entitled and (most) qualified to make a decision about the sculpture's fate, is an attestation to the impossibility of using the term public in its singular form to refer to a generalized audience for art: the term demands a qualifier and discrete groups their right to be accounted for. But perhaps even this formulation is utterly naive: as Jurgen Habermas has theorized with regards to the realities of a social welfare (democratic) state.

> "Large organizations strive for political compromises with the state and with each other, excluding the public sphere whenever possible. But at the same time the large organizations must assure themselves of at least plebiscitary support from the mass of the population through an apparent display of openness (demonstrative Publizitat)."[145]

The proceedings of the Tilted Arc hearings seem, in this light, perfectly predictable; "public opinion" became a matter of demands formulated by larger agencies through the packaging of support via and for Habermas' public sphere—that is, the institutions (whether of the art world, the International Court of Trade—whose windows

[145] Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," trans. Sara and Frank Lennox, *New German Critique*, vol. 3 (1974): 49.

faced onto the Plaza, or the GSA). As we have seen, "openness" in this case was only apparent, and "public opinion" little more than "publicity."[146] Serra, too, has remarked on the frustrating nature of this condition:

> "With only minority support for the removal of Tilted Arc, Diamond—abiding by his own ground rules—ignored the numbers and insisted in statements to the press that "the people" had demanded the sculpture's removal. To me this was one of Diamond's most despicable misrepresentations and it was definitely the most damaging."[147]

The issues that the trial of Tilted Arc surfaced and the imagined vs. actual operations of the piece underscore the crucialness of a critical approach that concerns itself with the question of audience address and its counter-image, audience reception. Crimp holds that most audiences were unequipped to confront Tilted Arc because they had not been made privy to the "radical perogatives of a historic moment in art practice." He faults the institutions and those to whom they must answer as having obscured this history. As we have seen in the case of Casting, the terms of Serra's interpretation of site-specificity were developed through a series of works and without knowledge of these procedures, 'argues Crimp, the radicality and logic of Tilted Arc cannot be understood. Yet it is Serra himself who offers a less hermetic description of his definition of site-specificity—one that would seem

[146]The term "publicity" refers both to Habermas' "Publizitat" and Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt's use of the same. Habermas' use of the word is explained by his translators as that which "describes the degree of public effect generated by a public act. Thus a situation can arise in which the form of public opinion making is maintained, while the substance of the public sphere has long ago been undermined." (See Habermas, p. 55). This latter event, although cited by Habermas as having occured at a specific historical moment, is re-emphasized by the very construction of a government agency whose interests are seen as separate from those who supposedly elected its formation (according to democratic procedures of election). Kluge and Negt's deployment of the concept is also relevant here and will be addressed later in this chapter.

[147]Serra, "Tilted Arc Destroyed," p. 37.

to allow for the inclusion of a larger viewing public:

> "Based on the interdependence of work and site, site-specific works address the content and context of their site critically. A new behavioral and perceptual orientation to the site demands a new critical adjustment to one's experience of the place. [...] Every language has a structure about which one can say nothing critical in that language. There must be another language, dealing with the structure of the first but possessing a new structure to criticize the first."

Thus Serra proposes his sculpture as attempting to engage in a dialogue with the surrounding site, including both its architectural, spatial, and socio-political dimensions. This exchange, however, was to be critical and aggressive in nature. To the extent that this was picked up by its viewers, Tilted Arc succeeded in "preying upon the people's impotence in controlling their degraded social environment in a city where that control is granted only to property owners." [148] As this piece was situated in the center of mechanisms of state power, it literally effected business as usual. And yet, what of this sense that the piece was imposing, aggressive, not user-friendly? Crimp's response seems a bit glib—he proposes that Tilted Arc simply reveals the egotistical nature of the human condition: that is, the condition of an alienated society. More complicated is the analysis he provides of the hearings which he shows to have revealed the true function of government—not to protect the rights of individuals but private property: the very catalyst for the conflict between individuals. [149] In this case, Tilted Arc was deemed the property of the United States Government. As Serra himself reminds us glumly,

[148] Crimp, "Redefining Site Specificity," p. 87.

[149] Crimp refers us here to Marx's famous text "On the Jewish Question," in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, New York, 1975, pp. 211-241.

> "Works which are built within the contextual frame of governmental, corporate, educational and religious institutions run the risk of being read as tokens of those institutions. One way of avoiding ideological cooptation is to chose leftover sites which cannot be the object of ideological misinterpretation. However, there is no neutral site. Every context has its frame and its ideological overtones. It is a matter of degree. But there are sites where it is obvious that art work is being subordinated to/ accomodated to/ adapted to/ subservient to/ required to/ useful to... In such cases it is necessary to work in opposition to the constraints of the context, so that the work cannot be read as an affirmation of questionnable ideologies and political power. I am not interested in art as affirmation or in art as a manifestation of complicity."p.41[150]

Tilted Arc became more than an affirmation, however—it became the property of the U.S. government (something other than public). As Serra explains, even under the Berne Copyright Convention Treaty adopted in part by the United States in 1988, (the Treaty was authored in 1886) the clause that protects the rights of the author, even if he or she is not the owner, to object to any "distortion, mutilation, or other modification" has been omitted. Thus, Serra had no legal recourse to protect his work from one of his audiences. Yet perhaps Crimp's ultimately idealistic interpretation of the success of Tilted Arc is the most interesting—even if the outcome was predictable:

> "The achievement [of T.A.] is the redefinition of the site of the work of art as the site of political struggle."[151]

What is signalled in Crimp's statement, however, is what Rosalyn Deutsche will

[150] As Habermas has outlined it, the public sphere and the state (government) are not one and the same but rather, opponents, (contrary to what one would expect under democratic political structures). Thus, the place of private opinion must fill up the place which mediates between society and state, in order to regulate the actions of those in control. This, of course, seems particularly difficult in the case where even the sanctioned routes for doing so are part of the apparati of state power, such as was the case for Tilted Arc.

[151] Crimp, "Redefining Site-Specificity," p. 88.

point to as the need for an understanding of the non-aesthetic, political, economic, and social struggles which are, by definition, the city. For it is through attention to these processes that the sites to which works such as Tilted Arc are specific will really be engaged. The syntactical disruptions to the plaza caused by Serra's sculpture brought to light the difficulties inherent in the use of an abstract idiom to maintain a specificity, a predicament discovered, as we have seen, in Vitebsk in 1920.

Brian Wallis's description of the function of monuments as the symbols of public morality underscore current conditions where morality is a concept invoked by those who hold power. In this sense, Serra's sculpture and its ultimate fate dilineated the parameters of its dominant audience: a public with the power to refuse the artist's formulation of a critique of the morality of the commodity. As Martha Rosler summarizes,

> "I am reminded of the crisis of acceptance of "public art" (the flap over Richard Serra's Tilted Arc is the best example), in which the passing audience refuses to constitute itself as its public, the body implicated in its discourse. Certainly in the absence of a political public—of even the conception of that space in which political dialogue and decision-making occurs—government-sponsored art can only be perceived as government-imposed art. Since it doesn't have a public—since there can hardly be said to be a public—this art cannot be accepted as a work chosen by a designated governmental commission that stands for, that represents, the public, the public-at-large."[152]

Serra's Tilted Arc was perceived as a threat to the aura of neutrality that overlies the space of the city, its architecture and its art; Serra's public art, in this sense,

[152]Martha Rosler, "The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), p. 13.

was too specific.

Hans Haacke

Hans Haacke, a German born artist who has lived and worked in New York since the middle 1960's is, like all of the other artists we have discussed so far, difficult to classify as a member of any particular artistic movement. While he was briefly involved with the German Group Zero,[153] Haacke was exposed to and engaged with the discourse of American Minimalism, the context of his early art world experience in this country. Although I will discuss his complicated relationship to the sculptural operations of Judd's "specific objects" and Morris' "objectness," it is as a non-minimalist that I perceive and will present Haacke's work. Haacke was essentially written out of (marginalized by) the historical legends of American sculpture during a time when the institutions participating in the formulation of a national cultural legacy were fortifying their domains against the residue of counter-(dominant) culture attacks by a public that refused to participate in its government's primary activities of war, racism, and sexism. It was not that Haacke's work during the 1960's addressed these hotly-debated issues with any specificity but that by 1970, his "sculpture" had refused a preoccupation with either the formal or visual status of its existence. Thus, he established a method of working and an approach to artistic production that refused internal (to the art

[153]Group Zero originated in Dusseldorf but between 1956-68 various configurations of its "members" (proponents of its plastic and counter-painterliness aesthetic) participated in exhibitions throughout Europe and even briefly in the United States.

world) as well as external (to the world of "bourgeois" capitalist culture) protocols, thereby showing up the relative compatibility of Minimalist practices with the aims and philosophies (ideologies...) of the museums, magazines, and art institutions that supported them.

My particular interest in Haacke in the context of this paper is spurred by his choice of arenas in which to develop his work: Haacke did not seek to escape the site of commodification (of art) like Smithson,[154] nor did he choose, like Serra, to insert his work through formal means into the actual premises of the mechanisms of power in order to visually and phenomenologically break up and alter "business as usual,"[155] but rather, he chose to remain within the institution while challenging the primary components of artistic practice that it sought to legitimize: contemplative modes of reception and the hegemony of the visual. Related to these trangressions and, in fact, as the impetus for them was Haacke's strategy of, and belief in the importance of, specificity. Bois writes,

> "One could even say that Haacke, like Brecht, identifies generalization itself as the weapon of the enemy."[156]

Of course, as we have already seen, specificity in content does not guarantee the same in terms of audience address. But in Haacke's works, the viewer is implicated as an accomplice in the activities of the subjects of his investigations: the viewer (and thus, one who participates in this realm)'s ignorance of the workings of the

[154]Here I refer to Haacke's "mature work"; that is, his projects after 1970 rather than his earlier earth/environmental pieces which seem to function along the lines of postminimalist operations such as Smithson's.

[155]If, indeed, this can be claimed for Serra.

[156]Yve-Alain Bois, "The Antidote," *October* # 39, p. 131.

culture industry, of its actual methods of survival, inculpate him or her in the indirect misdeeds that are its means. As Buchloh explained, Haacke learned early on, through his MoMA Poll (1970) and John Weber Gallery Visitors' Profile I + II (1972) in which viewers were queried about both personal information and political opinions, who his audience was composed of:

> "He [Haacke] nevertheless refrains from agitational aesthetic, since he understands (from his own Visitor's Polls, if nothing else) that his viewer is not the revolutionary author/producer, but rather a privileged liberal middle-class spectator, who is safely contained in the institutional and discursive network within which these works are experienced."[157]

Haacke's work could be argued to be specific to an audience which participates in the late capitalist culture of social relations that, through economic and political links, effect the status and well-being of not just those who support the economy directly, but of those who, though their voices are silenced, provide the labor and capital by which profits are made and cultural institutions sustained. This, of course, describes a vast number of people with otherwise widely variable lifestyles and outlooks: but Haacke, it is safe to say, addresses the audience of the institution and though large, reminds each individual how, as part of an even larger public, they affect the world around them. Likewise, he reminds the viewer to be suspicious of the seeming neutrality of the social and institutional infrastructure that surrounds him[158] and frames his world.

[157]Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," *Art in America*, vol. 76, no. 2 (Feb. 1988): 107.

[158]The closest Haacke gets to being gender-specific is in The Right to Life (1973) where he charts the company policies of American Cyanamid, the parent corporation of Breck hair products. The female employees of this company were exposed to toxic substances and upon discovery of this,

Haacke's refusal to conform to practices that obscured the political nature of their positionings, had its beginnings in his sculpture prior to 1969, although much of this early work reflected his flirtations with Minimalism.

> "A very important difference between the work of the Minimal sculptors and my work is that they were interested in inertness whereas I was concerned with change."[159]

Haacke's Ice Stick (1966) and his Grass Grows (1969) are two examples of his representations of natural systems: Ice Stick, made from wood, stainless steel, copper and an electric coil from a refrigeration unit, is a cooling system that condenses the humidity of the local environment and transforms it into ice along the surface of the coil. Haacke has described this sculpture in very specific terms:

> "This piece, incidentally, has been reproduced rather often, probably because of its erotic connotations. This was not intended.[160] It's just easy to make a straight freezing coil. I am not into Surrealist game-playing and metaphors. In other words, there is not much to be said because everything is right there. What can be said is only descriptive. There are no mysteries and psychological investigations would not reveal my secrets."[161]

This statement of Haacke's is, nevertheless, much like those of his Minimalist brethren; the emphasis on clarity, on everything being in the work, on honesty of composition (all is exposed) seems to be exactly what Haacke's slightly later

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were given the choice of shifting positions internally to lower paying jobs, leaving the company, or remaining in their places and undergoing sterilization to prevent any diseased child-births. This piece is targeted at an industry no doubt run by men, but to the extent that the piece addresses the victims also, concerns of women regarding conditions of the workplace are engaged by association.

[159]Hans Haacke as quoted in Jeanne Siegel, *Artwords: A Discourse on the 60s and 70s* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 214.

[160]This disclaimer seems somewhat suspicious.

[161]Hans Haacke in Siegel, p. 214.

work begins to contest and explore. The artist will, in his pieces like Mobilization (1975) and A Breed Apart (1978), investigate, precisely, the 'mysterious' nature of 'clarity' and just how much can be revealed by shattering the pretense of distance that lies between seemingly unrelated people-interests, corporations-interests, and events. Further, this statement seems to counter Haacke's invitation to the viewer to explore all the links between economics and aesthetics, including the social relations that are the art world. That he should dismiss the psychologically-based uncoverings seems odd: it seems that he advocates the "restoration of truth" to all kinds of coded systems, including gender-based ones.

Haacke's Grass Grows (1969), completed for the New York Earthworks project held in Central Park, also illustrates the changing character of natural systems not through optical excercises (although these are a corollary) but via the "real-time" processes of organic growth. In this project, Haacke seeded a mound of earth and allowed the grass to grow. It is at this moment that familiar artistic forms that signal aesthetic production, like the pictorial composition or sculptural object, disappear from Haacke's work. Realizing that his was a discourse that would be engaged at the levels of aesthetic form, within the controlling framework of the institution and by a variety of audiences, Haacke chose to move away from the seeming neutrality of the "thing":

> "That closed pictorial and sculptural art work is dislodged in favor of a decentered object whose various and shifting origins and affiliations always remain visible in Haacke's contextual definition as the elements of social conflicts and oppositional interests, as unreconciled contradictions

within the sphere of aesthetic reproduction and reception."[162]

It is precisely these "unreconciled contradictions," which Buchloh identifies, that become the subject matter of his work after 1969. While these early pieces of Haacke's remain concerned with natural (from nature) systems, the incorporation of the object's own specificity becomes, in his Real-time Systems projects, the means by which he resists "the false autonomy of modernist strategies and their legacy in 60s formalism."[163] In Haacke's work of the 1970's and early 80s, the natural systems are replaced with political and social ones that also have their own, often covert, specificities.

So many of Haacke's projects are relevant to this discussion but for the sake of brevity I will focus on two of them: [164] Gallery-Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile, Parts I and II (1969) and 1970) and Shapolsky *et al.*, Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 (1971). Before I begin, however, a brief mention of some other of Haacke's projects seems worthwhile. Haacke's third polling project was undertaken as part of the exhibition Information at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in September 1970. A single question was posed via a ballot sheet to the museum visitors: "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for

[162]Benjamin Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," p. 106.

[163]Benjamin Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," p. 109. The author writes further, that through these operations Haacke refuses the "free-floating signifier and the granting of the viewer's disavowal of the real specificity of the object."

[164]The information used in the following descriptions, other than material quoted directly, is provided in *Hans Haacke: Framing and Being Framed*, ed. Kasper Koenig (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975) and *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1986.

you not to vote for him in November?" While this project obviously required the participation of the spectator, it further turned the audience into the subject of the work. Haacke did not present answers and information via representation to the viewer but rather shifted the terms of production onto the spectators themselves. In addition, while the connection was not described explicitly for the audience, some museum visitors were aware that the Rockefeller family had been involved in the founding of the museum in 1929 and that Nelson Rockefeller was then currently serving as chairman of the Board of Trustees of MoMA. As Rosalyn Deutsche explains, through this installation, Haacke exposes the fact that there is no neutrality in the institutional arena. [165]

Also of interest to our inquiry into modes of audience address are two projects of Haacke's, Manet-PROJEKT '74 and Seurat's "Les Poseuses" (small version), 1888–1975. While both of these works are far too complex to describe here, I would like to point out a couple of their pertinent attributes. The first piece, Manet-PROJEKT '74, was intended for an exhibition at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. Although Haacke was first invited to participate in this show and his piece accepted, he was informed later that his work had been omitted from the exhibition. Although censored, Haacke showed the piece at Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne concurrent to the international art show at the Wallraf. What Haacke has accomplished in this piece and in

[165]Rosalyn Deutsche, "Property Value: Hans Haacke, Real Estate and the Museum," in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, p. 26.

Seurat's "Les Poseuses" is a juxtaposition of the real (or a facsimile of the original) paintings with a set of wall panels that present the social and economic situations of the people who have owned the works over the years and the purchase price they paid. What Haacke enacts, in brief, is a commodity history, or a history of the works as commodities. In this way, culture is demonstrated to be inextricable from power and money; the social history of the work and the individual paintings' specificity becomes inscribed in the minds of the audience. Both of these projects restore to the paintings what, in Benjamin's terms are the "authenticity" and thereby, the "authority" of their auratic existence. As the history of the works is rejoined to the object, the function of the work as an object of exchange rather than one of use is underscored. The increasingly investment-oriented character of the paintings' status becomes evident as we read Haacke's texts describing, in chronological order, the history of proprietary interests and capitalist social relations (transactions). As Brian Wallis writes in regard to some of Haacke's later pieces,

> "Intensively his work activates an involvement by the audience, provoking the viewer to become a reader of the texts and to seek out more factual information (often provided by Haacke in wall labels)."[166]

These words are reminiscent of Bois' description of Lissitzky's Proun works and perhaps signal a similar strategy, although in the case of Haacke, the viewer-as-activated-reader is actually confronted by texts rather than pictorial "documents." Certainly, in both instances, there is an attempt to "make the problem" the viewer's, thereby requiring him or her to participate in the formulation of a relevant (to his

[166]Brian Wallis, "Institutions Trust Institutions," *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, p. 54.

or her own context) experience. Wallis goes further, writing in his introduction to a catalogue of Haacke's work,

> "For while the ostensible subjects of Haacke's works are the specific social and economic conditions he bares, the real political consequence is the education and transformation of the viewer."[167]

This, as we have seen, was the intention, if not the achievement of Lissitzky's demonstration rooms.

Haacke's Gallery-Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile was developed and exhibited in two separate stages; Part I at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York in 1969 and Part II, with a slight modification that dispensed with the information regarding locations of birth, at the Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne (the site of Haacke's later exhibition of 'censored material' in 1974). The materials for the first section consisted of maps representing Manhattan, the five boroughs of New York City, the New York metropolitan area, the whole of the United States and a flat projection of the world. The piece, in itself a representation of the site of the exhibition, began on November 1, 1969 with a member of the audience inserting a red pin on one of the appropriate maps at the point which identified his or her birthplace, and a blue one at the address of his or her permanent residence. By the time the exhibition had closed on November 30, 1969, 2,022 residences and 2,312 birthplaces had been pinpointed. What emerged as a mapping out of a demographic study and a profile of a specific population began as a strategy of audience address that reversed conventions of art viewing. Like with the MoMA Poll, this installation did

[167]Ibid., p. 7.

not present material to be received by the spectator but rather, required the viewer to contribute information which would qualify the actuality (reality) of the site. In addition to activating the viewer, this self-reflexive work, by definition, targeted a specific public: the audience became the subject matter. Beyond this reversal, Gallery-Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile uncovered the social organization of the city and mapped out the manifestations of social processes which are the real "builders" and organizers of the city. There were almost no pins on the Manhattan map beyond 100th Street on the east side nor on the west side in the Clinton area, where a number of city-run housing projects are located. While this project was not organized to include a control group (at another nearby gallery, for example) it is likely that the results reflect closely the composition of the current audience for gallery art in New York.

The shortcomings of this project seem to lie in the very fact of its reliance on simple audience participation methods which delineate a number of fixed choices, a set of parameters by which a potentially variable set of responses are restricted. As with the phenomenological exercises of the Minimalists' perceptual constructs, Haacke creates a carefully controlled environment which renders the viewer a participant in a sociological experiment. [168] And yet, to the extent that this work could not have been completed without the audience, it follows a mode of aesthetic production that makes a collaborator out of its audience—a strategy whose origins

[168] Benjamin Buchloh refers to this notion in terms of a "behavioural experiment". See his "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," p. 104.

we have seen in the Constructivist and Productivist work of the historical avant-garde in the nineteen-teens. As Buchloh points out, the appearance of Haacke's early attempts at engaging the audience (physically as well as on visual terms) as a radical maneuver underscores the regression of Minimalist practices in these terms: after a set of practices that posit shifts in the perception of static objects as inclusive of both the viewer and his or her environment, the use of operations that require active contributions (even if limited to a finite set), on the part of the audience, seem both intricate and innovative.

> "Activating the viewing subject—or, in Walter Benjamin's terms, transforming the passive, contemplative mode of bourgeois aesthetic experience into an (inter)active participatory mode of perception and collaboration—had been one of the programmatic goals of the Productivist esthetic after 1921. The extent to which this central issue of a participatory esthetic was reduced during the 60s to a simplistic level that assumed an infantilized viewer is certainly one of the more astonishing facts of postwar history."[169]

In the second section of this project, Haacke presented 732 photos of building facades in Manhattan that were identified as the permanent residences of the gallery-goers at the Howard Wise exhibition in 1969. The photos were mounted in the Paul Maenz gallery in Cologne according to the layout of the New York City grid, with the horizontal axis representing 5th Avenue, the ceiling, east, and the floor, west. Again, the visual aspects of this work are not primary: its form is dictated by the exigencies of its content. In order to represent the actual circumstances of the audience at the Howard Wise Gallery, in order to restore a truth to the abstracting

[169]Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," p. 104.

operations of addresses (and lot numbers, as we will see), in order to cleave apart the objectified representation of the city that maps fulfill, Haacke reintroduced the actual "real world" referents which the red and blue push-pins had merely signified. Ironically, Haacke performed these operations merely by offering the viewer an image of the building facades, themselves signs (status symbols) of wealth, class, and status.

The last piece of Haacke's that I will discuss here will be considered through Rosalyn Deutsche's critical model; one based on urban theory and planning concepts. Deutsche has written about Haacke's "Real-Time Social Systems" and offers a view point which parallels Haacke's refusal to honor barriers and academic boundaries lodged between discourses. Haacke confronted these limits in his dealings with the Guggenheim Museum in New York, itself an institution which depends upon the conventional instruments of separation. In 1971, Haacke proposed to exhibit two of his "Real-Time Social Systems" pieces for a show at the Guggenheim: Judging them incompatible with the agenda of his institution, Thomas Messer, then the director of the museum, cancelled the show. In censoring what he labelled an overtly political and overly "direct" piece of journalistic muckraking, Messer implicitly outlined the arena of the institution as ostensibly neutral and unallied to the politics of everyday life. As Deutsche explained in regard to the Tilted Arc hearings,

> "... confined within the boundaries of critical aesthetics, discussions failed to perceive the function of public art in contemporary urbanism—the social processes producing the city's tangible form. While they frequently entailed complicated materialist critiques of art's production and aesthetic perception, they obstructed an interrogation of the condi-

tions of production of New York's urban space."[170]

Shapolsky *et al.* Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 is a project that remains within the confines of the institution (intended as "public") while exposing the nature of the direct and indirect social relations that all elements of the city share. Thus, Haacke's investigations rely on a multi-dimensional notion of site-specificity that disabuses the formal conception of urban space as purely aesthetic, physical, or functionalist.[171] Two maps included in this work, made from photo-enlargements, illustrate this tendency toward abstraction, where the landholdings of the slumlord Harry Shapolsky and his partners on the Lower East Side and in Harlem are objectified aesthetically, as pictorial configurations and representationally, as economic entities. In 1971, the date that Haacke identifies as the "beginning" of his piece, Shapolsky *et al.* controlled the largest number of properties of any single real-estate concern in these Manhattan areas. On one level, Haacke's work seeks to uncover the finely woven web of corporations (over seventy) and individual investors that comprise the Shapolsky group: the subject of Shapolsky ... is the private ownership, by a specific group of investors, of tenement buildings, warehouses, and low-end-of-the-scale housing and the devices by which profits are accrued through 'careful' and intricate management techniques. In keeping with this agenda, Haacke presents the viewer with 142 photographs (each 10" × 8") of the building facades and empty lots of the Shapol-

[170]Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," *October* # 47 (Winter 1988): 16.

[171]See Deutsche, "Property Value: Hans Haacke, Real Estate, and the Museum," p. 24.

sky properties paired with 142 typewritten sheets (of the same size) which include relevant data concerning the property's address, block and lot number, lot size, building code, name and address of the deed holding corporation and its officers, the date of acquisition, the preceeding owner, and its mortgage and assessed tax value. [172] The photographs and typed information cards are grouped in pairs of six and framed on a white background. Supplementing these documents are six panels that chart the business transactions (sales, mortgages, etc.) of the real estate group via two columns containing the names of the dummy sub-corporations, and arrows linking them to each other, representing specific transactions. Haacke also provides a board with explanatory information regarding the history of Shapolsky, [173] his colleagues and the type of information used to create this piece of documentary work. [174]

The photographs of building facades included in Shapolsky ... are not carefully cropped, not well composed, not even shot from a flattering angle. These black and white shots, unbordered, unsentimental and refusing to heroicize their subjects, reject the humanist tradition of social reformist photography of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in America: [175] Deutsche explains their operations:

[172]This information is available in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, pp. 92–97.

[173]Shapolsky has been indicted on a number of charges, including rent gouging and the bribing of officials and was investigated by the IRS for tax evasion: None of this information was included in the work, however.

[174]Especially interesting is that Haacke uses only information that is publically accessible to create his pieces. All that he has learned about Shapolsky was on public record, highlighting the particularly covert nature of their operations—it clearly took Haacke many a painstaking hour to reconstitute the tangled mesh of the Shapolsky clan's activities even though nothing was "directly" hidden.

[175]This tradition is named, by Deutsche, Martha Rosler, and Allan Sekula, among others, as "liberal aesthetics." Sekula in particular calls it the "find-a-bum-school of concerned photography,"

> "Simultaneously [as the social documentarian's distinct position of class privilege in relation to his or her subject matter is confirmed], however, power and privilege are concealed, even as they are reinforced, since the aesthetic realm the work inhabits is proclaimed as a universal public sphere unfissured by class, racial, or gender divisions."[176]

The photography of Jacob Riis, a Danish social reformer who traveled widely in the United States documenting the conditions of the working classes and slum dwellers, has become the classic example of this genre of photography which separates the viewer from the subject of the image. In contrast, Haacke produces flat, iconic representations as an analog to the status of the Shapolsky properties as architectural commodities, exchanged among the real-estate group members as a means to financial gain. Even the format, a series of photographic and textual documents, serve as counterpoint to the production and exhibition of single images which position the viewer in a static, reverent position; Haacke's "snapshots" stand in opposition to the mysterious and foreign images of American photographic ghetto views.

> "Engaging its public in an active reading process, the work emphatically rejects the single-image form of the painted, photographic, or sculptural object accompanied by a discrete caption, a form intended to produce a timeless experience of "presentness" and evoke meditative responses from spectators abstracted from historical conditions."[177]

Through photographic images and documents, Haacke implores his audience to consider the non-visual and non-visible realities of a system of economic relations that functions to shape the urban environment—rather than a set of formal relations that are severed from it.

in reference to the abundance of images of homeless people and urban skid rows.

[176]Deutsche, "Property Value," p. 28.

[177]Ibid., p. 27.

Haacke extends the notion of site-specificity from the Minimalist incorporation of the physical and optical aspects of the site of exhibition and even, the Constructivist/Productivist attention to the ordering and control of the environment to one in which context is understood as the social processes by which physical formations are produced. The "site" of Haacke's Shapolsky piece includes not just that of the museum but also, as Rosalyn Deutsche has pointed out, the city. As a result, the viewer is forced to consider the site of exhibition, initially the Guggenheim, in the same terms as that of the Shapolsky properties, slum shelters on the edges of Manhattan: within this framework, the Guggenheim's ostensibly "public" function as an institution for the safe-guarding of our art treasures (themselves positioned as universally available and universally valued interests) is called into question.

> "Haacke did not simply extend the notion of site-specificity geographically. Nor did he naively attempt to surmount institutional boundaries by placing his art work symbolically 'outside' the museum's walls and addressing 'real' subject matter. Rather, he permitted a more profound vision of the institutional apparatus by infiltrating the twin fetishisms of two sites: the city, constructed in mainstream architectural and urban discourses as a physical space, and the museum, conceived in idealist artistic discourse as a purely aesthetic realm, each appeared as tangible spatial forms marked by a political economy."[178]

Exposed in the act of placing images of everyday reality within the museum is the simulated pristine and sacred environment created by the institution to protect itself from precisely the mundane concerns of the publics that it excludes. The Guggenheim, both in its splendor as an architectural object and as an agency which prides itself on its maintenance of social autonomy, could not afford to be implicated in

[178]Ibid., p. 29.

story of a city whose social structure is manifested in a spatial organization which locates buildings such as the Guggenheim and Harlem tenements within a mile from each other. [179] While the Guggenheim stands as a monument of architectural achievement, the apartment buildings, intended for use as human shelters, are valued in our capitalist system only as exchangeable items. And yet, as Deutsche points out, it is not only as an effect of social processes but as a container of them that the Guggenheim operates. As we learn from other of Haacke's (later) works, culture is used frequently to legitimate the interests of corporate capital and real-estate through sponsorship by such companies as Mobil Oil, the Chase Manhattan Bank, and Paine Webber among many, of art exhibitions and cultural events. As Deutsche explains, Haacke's Shapolsky... piece is not just about the dealings of one Manhattan slumlord but about property relations in general: In the arena of a capitalist economy, private property and shelter is the right of those who can afford it. The corollary of this fact for both Haacke and Deutsche, is that art, like land and buildings, must be understood as elements of the larger systems of commodity exchange, even when that commodity is the reputation of business interests.

The particular operations by which Haacke uncovers the relations between culture and power are based in what Buchloh has described as the reconstitution of all of the contextual aspects of the objects used, including site-, context-, and

[179] Ironically, Thomas Messer accused Haacke of attempting to use the Guggenheim as a refuge from which to make political accusations safely. See Deutsche, "Property Value: Hans Haacke, Real Estate, and the Museum," p. 36.

object-specificity. [180] Through this approach, the viewer is not led to reflect on his own particular, physical conditions of viewing-which is what occured in Minimalist practices where the site of exhibition was acccepted as "neutral"- but is reminded, instead, of the vested interests of competing economic and political concerns by which culture is supported. The viewer is thus encouraged to consider the larger social structures and relationships which engender various "public" and "private" realms. Haacke's work is not neutral: [181] it aims to restore to visibility facts that have been written out of the proceedings of institutional and urban (social, political, and spatial) ordering processes, to represent what has been left out.

In formal terms, Haacke offers the viewer "information" that is presented in such a way that it is legible rather than compositionally interesting or beautiful. In both the Gallery-Goers' and Shapolsky pieces Haacke presents rather than represents the history and make-up of specific social systems: while the pins that mark the residences of the gallery visitors, the photographs of the buildings in which they reside, and the informational reports on the deeds and mortgages pertaining to Shapolsky-managed properties are all signs that refer to absent physical referents, they restore to the discursive space of the pictorial object and that of the art institution, the audience for and the social processes by which art and its institutions are produced. In this sense, Haacke positions the art object itself as a trace of larger

[180]The Museum of Modern Art's recently-built luxury residential tower whose sales proceeds are used to finance the institution is an even more direct example of the link between art institutions and private (real-estate) interests.

[181]Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," p. 107.

physical and systemic realities. [182]

Rosalyn Deutsche

Just as Haacke explores the connections between culture and business, Deutsche reveals the ways in which "public art," "public space" and processes of urban development are connected to and controlled by private interests. Positing that public art must be understood within the context of processes of urban growth and the forces behind spatial transformations and that public space must be seen as an ammenity, not for some undefined "public" but for the real-estate and corporate interests that subsidize their fabrication, Deutsche transcends acceptable boundaries of conventional aesthetic discourse. In this way she restores to the discourse concerned with "public" culture its hidden "causes" (Krauss' term). This linking up of mechanisms that thrive on a constructed pretense of autonomy, particularly within the realm of social control, is not unprecedented: Bois reminds us of Walter Benjamin's insightful assertion,

> "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." [183]

Along similar lines, Deutsche writes of New York City cultural events, monuments and urban redevelopment plans featured by government as "public" works:

> "But today there is no document of New York's ascendency which is not at the same time a document of homelessness." [184]

[182] Buchloh reminds us that Haacke himself is enscribed by his own specific conditions of being a member of the white, male, middle-class.

[183] Walter Benjamin as quote in Bois, "The Antidote," p. 129.

[184] Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," *October* #47 (Winter 1988): 5.

Both of these statements remind us of the "other side of the story": cultural production has its complement in the spheres of economic and social relations, even if these are hidden behind the doors of the private realm. The false separation between the private and public realms [185] that is implemented in late capitalist society facilitates precisely the kind of practices that Haacke investigates: culture serves as a screen for "private" business activities while basic necessities such as housing and food are relegated to the private sphere. As Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, two German theorists[186] who have written on the historical development of the bourgeois public and private spheres suggest,

> "Federal elections, Olympic ceremonies, the actions of a unit of sharp-shooters, a theatre premiere—all count as public events. Other events of overwhelming public significance, such as child-rearing, factory work, and watching television within one's own four walls, are considered private. The real social experiences of human beings, produced in everday life and work cut across such divisions."[187]

What Deutsche adds to this observation within a discourse concerned with artistic production is that what this division between what is of public interest (and by extension, although as Habermas clarifies, not by definition, of government concern) and what is protected as private implies is a means to, in Henri Lefebvre's words, a "right to the city." In these terms, subways, train stations, parks, and other "public facilities" are positioned as having inherent functions; competing uses are argued to displace "natural" and appropriate operations. It is not the physical site of the

[185] See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

[186] Alexander Kluge, a filmaker, is a key member of the second generation of New German "Kino".

[187] Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, "The Public Sphere and Experience: Selections," in *October* #46 (Fall 1988): 60.

architecture that dictates these functions, however, but people, who ascribe conventions of appropriate behaviour to the spaces of the city. The parameters for permissible conduct are not neutral but reflect specific ideological beliefs. Thus, someone like Messer, the director of the Guggenheim who cancelled Haacke's exhibition, appeals to our sense of the 'correct' and 'fitting' role for a public institution: he answers for us that museums are meant to protect culture, not be involved in politics. Buren's identification of the the museum's role as preserver and protector of a specific cultural lineage resurfaces, illuminating the real meaning of Messer's statement.

What this position uncovers is the commonly-subscribed-to definition of the public realm: not the site of social and political exchange among a heterogeneous set of constituencies but the place where the dominant voices, backed by power and money, drown out every other dialect in a struggle for the right to control the city. Similar to the work of Haacke, Deutsche links up the art world with urban phenomena such as gentrification, urban "renewal" and "revitalization." These processes are not natural to the life of a city but are engendered by private interests whose pursuit of profits requires the production of space (as a commodity) and the fabrication of an image of urban ascendency. These means, however, require others, such as the warehousing of buildings (by eviction and through the withholding of basic services in order to force tenants out), the depreciation of whole neighborhoods (until the discrepancy between their potential value and their current value is max-

imized),[188] and the resulting effect of homelessness as the only prospect for many former residents of these targeted-for-redevelopment areas. Once the territory is prepared, real-estate developers tend to build and restore housing to meet high-end and luxury standards. The sum total of this trend is a decrease in the size of the housing stock available for low- and moderate-income residents in an increasingly gentrified Manhattan. In her essay, "The Fine Art of Gentrification," Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan outline the consequences of the East Village art "scene" in the early to mid-'eighties on the gentrification of this Manhattan area. Having explained the processes by which a number of art institutions and gallery establishments were implicated in the transformation (not merely physical but social) of this area of New York City, Deutsche and Ryan repair the (obliterated) connections between artistic discourse and the conditions of its real-life context. In a later essay, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," [189] Deutsche investigates the discussions of urban geographers, urban planners, critics, and theorists in order to theorize these earlier notions of art's role in the social context. In this essay, she stresses the necessity of understanding the real meaning of "public art" and "public space"; terms and concepts that have become popular in current critical discourse as well as in government parlance when evoked as a sign of federal, state, and municipal efforts. Contrary to the definitions created by these latter bodies, Deutsche reiterates,

[188]This is called the "rent gap" and is an essential part of Neil Smith's "theory of uneven development".

[189]In *October* #47 (Winter 1988): 3-52.

> "Rather than a real category, the definition of 'the public', like the definition of the city, is an ideological artifact, a contested and fragmented terrain."[190]

Further, she exposes the tendency on the part of public art advocates to consider art within a mythologized urban context:

> "Typically, it claims to oppose cultural elitism while remaining committed to artistic quality, a claim that corresponds to broader assertions that the redeveloped city provides quality space."[191]

As we have seen, however, the issue is not of a redeveloped city but for whom it is redeveloped. The author further refutes notions of the accessibility of public art by examining examples that are offered up as functional, such as furniture art by the late Scott Burton or Siah Armajani, clarifiying their operations: this art's claim to being useful is made possible by having first set up concerns of art and those of utility as being in opposition to one another; only then do these ostensibly public works seem to have transcended the problem. "Public art" like public space, then, is positioned to be integrated into its sites: Deutsche exposes this operation as one which leads to the fetishization of both the art work and its physical context, thereby allowing those who have an economic interest in the site to discuss it solely as a formal and physical place. As we know by now, however, the city, its public spaces, and its public art, are merely traces, indexical signs, of social, economic and political processes.

[190]Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," p. 12.
[191]Ibid., p. 16.

Bois, writing about Haacke, describes an approach similar to Deutsche's in which the "restoration of truth"[192] to a text, (or in the case of Deutsche and Haacke, to historical accounts and to the discourse of art itself) serves as an "antidote" to the falsity engendered by the first account: Bois describes the effectual antidote as, by definition, context-specific. [193] This notion both echoes the work of Haacke and Deutsche that we have already examined as well as that of Kluge and Negt, whose concepts of counter-publicity and oppositional public spheres are themselves positioned as antidotes to the hegemonic order of the bourgeois or classical public sphere. In order to find "moments" in the development of counter-spheres, texts, and publicity, one has to, in Benjamin's famous words, "brush history against the grain." [194]

Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt

In a text translated as "The Public Sphere and Experience," [195] Kluge and Negt propose a model of western capitalist culture in which what they call the bourgeois [196] and proletarian public spheres operate in a dialectical relationship with one another. The former signifies both the spatial terrain in which meaning

[192] This is the title of a work by Bertold Brecht, "On the Restoration of Truth" written in 1934.
[193] Bois, "The Antidote," p. 132.
[194] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," (Thesis No. VII), p. 257.
[195] Translated by Peter Labanyi in *October* #46 (Fall, 1988). "The Public Sphere and Experience" is a selected group of excerpts from their book, *Offentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972). The complete translation will be published by University of Minnesota Press.
[196] Kluge and Negt acknowledge the datedness of this term but suggest that it signifies the "social origins of the ruling concept of the public sphere"—that is, the term "bourgeois" is an historical concept which continues to define the "postbourgeois forms of the public sphere". See Kluge and Negt, p. 61.

is manufactured, distributed and exchanged through social processes, as well as the experience and ideas that are produced in this territory **by the ruling class.** The proletarian public sphere, then, refers to a similar set of concepts within the context, not of the ruling body, but of usually unempowered and disenfranchised social classes, sites, and experiences. These latter formations are more difficult to identify, however, because of their expulsion from the history of public experience by the ruling bodies.

> "Rifts in the movement of history—crises, war, capitulation, revolution, counterrevolution—denote concrete constellations of social forces within which proletarian publicity develops. Since the latter has no existence as a ruling public sphere, it has to be reconstructed from such rifts, marginal cases, isolated initiatives."[197]

Particular to Kluge and Negt's concept of the bourgeois public sphere is the separation of the public and private realms, a configuration that we examined briefly above. In being isolated from spaces of experience and activity designated as private, the traditional (bourgeois) public sphere is not grounded in what these authors call the "life-interests" or basic subsistence issues of daily life but rather, is concerned primarily with the tangible interests of capitalist production: we have seen this to be the case in both Haacke's and Deutsche's descriptions of the protection of real-estate and business interests under the rubric of public affairs while housing, food, and health care are relegated to the realm of the private in this country. Kluge and Negt define additional, more contemporary formations that overlay the public sphere of

[197]Kluge and Kluge, p. 61.

the ruling classes—such as the "new production public spheres" [198] inhabited by the "consciousness industry," advertising concerns, publicity campaigns as well as the "seasonal public spheres" of elections and public opinion polls. All of these arenas are contingent upon the needs and requirements of those who control public institutions, financial, political, and cultural, and seek to affect, directly, the private sphere of the individual.

> "What is striking about the prevailing interpretations of the concept of the public sphere is that they attempt to bring together a multitude of phenomena and yet exclude the two most important areas of life: the entire industrial apparatus of businesses and family socialization. According to these interpretations, the public sphere derives its substance from an intermediate realm which does not specifically express any particular social life-context, even though this public sphere allegedly represents the totality of society."[199]

Much of what is produced in the traditional public sphere might be termed "publicity"; that is, the stuff of which social experience is made. [200] Bourgeois publicity, then, represents social experience fabricated through and within the public sphere by those who control this arena. Thus, proletarian publicity, or counter-publicity is the creation of social experience that addresses itself to and is created by those

[198]These "new" or "industrial" production public spheres, according to Kluge and Negt, do take into account the production processes and life-contexts, like the Krupp factory in Germany and Pullman and Hershey here in the United States which provide housing, food, and village ammenities for their workers unlike the traditional public sphere. These are, however, **rooted in the classical public sphere** as a direct expression of the domain of production! See "The Public Sphere and Experience," p. 71.

[199]Kluge and Negt, p. 63.

[200]It is Peter Labanyi, the translator of Kluge and Negt's text who introduces this term, in order to distinguish among the number of concepts expressed by the authors' "public sphere". As Labanyi points out, however, "publicity" is a word which in English, connotes a tool used by private interests as a means of creating desired and favorable reputations. While this is appropriate for the notion of "bourgeois publicity," when the qualifier is changed to "proletariat" or "counter" (publicity) the term seems particularly ironic and subversive.

whose interests are not represented by the hegemonic interests of the ruling public sphere. Counter-publicity, like Bois' counter-text, functions in opposition to the status quo.

What is especially important about Kluge and Negt's model to our discussion is the defetishization of the concept of the public sphere and the resultant strategies of opposition to the dominant social structures. [201] The authors refuse to denote the concept of the "public sphere" as a physical space only, thereby dispersing the smokescreen behind which developers, corporations and city planners hide when organizing the social and political hierarchies within their constituencies. Further, "publicity" when positioned in opposition to the social experiences fabricated by the dominant culture (that is, counter-publicity within an oppositional-public sphere) is not used (ideally) to construct mediated experiences for disenfranchised groups but rather as a means to restoring the links between experiences and discourses disembodied by the contrivance of distinct public and private realms. This approach restores not just "truth" but "specificity" to the reductive condition of the dominant

[201] Frederic Jameson writes, ". . . for there are social and historical reasons why a new and more adequate philosophical language—which is to say, a new public language—is lacking. The forms and experiences to which such a language corresponds do not yet exist. The very absence of a proletarian public sphere problematizes the attempt to name it, except in the gaps in our present discourse." (Jameson, "On Kluge and Negt," *October* #46 (Fall 1988): 157.) As I have learned from some arguments in feminist discourse, it is unlikely that, to use Kluge and Negt's term, "oppositional" or "counter" spheres do not exist but rather that language, controlled, if not constructed by, a mainstream, dominant public does not allow their experiences to be expressed. Certainly, the "proletariat public sphere" of Kluge and Negt's thesis is not a coherent and collected group but precisely populations that are dispersed with "no existence as a ruling body". It seems that Jameson assumes that for every sign there must exist a material referent—but, perhaps, the diverse and disconnected counter-culture, counter-bourgeois publicity attempts are themselves indexical signs, traces of an appropriate language that is missing.

social order and the life-experiences it engenders. [202]

> "A public sphere can be produced professionally only when you accept the degree of abstraction which is involved in carrying one piece of information to another place in society, when you establish lines of communication. That's the only way we can create an oppositional public sphere and thus expand the existing public sphere."[203]

Deutsche, then, does just this by re-establishing lines of communication between urban and aesthetic discourse.

Krzysztof Wodiczko

Krysztof Wodiczko, a Polish emigre artist now working in New York, is the author of counter-public sphere tactics that include the projection of photographic images onto the facades of buildings and monuments as well as the design (a collaborative project initiated and organized by Wodiczko) of a series of mobile structures intended for use by homeless men and women in urban areas. Wodiczko's projec-

[202]Frederic Jameson, ("On Kluge and Negt," *October* #46), in a critical piece on the subject of "The Public Sphere and Experience," suggests that Kluge and Negt's conception of the origins of the public sphere and its potential, current counter-image in oppositional-public spheres is based on a nostalgic vision of history. On page 213, Kluge and Negt write, "The public sphere is in this scene what one might call the factory of politics—its site of production. When this site of production—the space in which politics is first made possible at all and communicable—is caught in a scissors-grip between private appropriation (which is no longer public in the authentic sense) and the self-eliminating classical public-sphere (its mechanisms of subtraction and exclusion); when this public sphere threatens to disappear, its loss would be as grave today as the loss of the common land was for the farmer in the Middle Ages. [...] The loss of land also means a loss of community because, if there is no land on which the farmers may assemble, it is no longer possible to develop a community." To this, Jameson responds that on one hand this mourning of the demise of traditional agricultural and communal societies seems to reflect a rose-colored vision of the past. He amends this accusation a few lines later; ". . . and their vision of communal life on the land would certainly seem to provide evidence of historical nostalgia—but Negt and Kluge explicitly repudiate conceptions of the dialectic that aim at restoring some primal unity ('what kind of reality would the reappropriation of something lost have?' [pp. 42-44]." (See Jameson, p. 160). To some extent, I have decontextualized and abstracted Kluge and Negt's thesis while attending to my own discussion, thereby ignoring much of the historical specificity of theirs.

[203]Kluge and Negt, "The Public Sphere and Experience," p. 212.

tions, which range from the overlaying of the swastika symbol on the entablature of the South African Embassy in London to the positioning of images of Soviet and U.S. missiles on the arch at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn to the projection of pictures of homeless men and women onto sculptural monuments in Boston on the occasion of a municipal New Year's Eve festival and, in New York, on the monuments of George Washington, General Lafayette, and Abraham Lincoln that stand in Union Square recover the ideological positionings of the inanimate architectural environment. Equally reparative, Wodiczko's projections relate to their sites as socially-constructed spaces, and thereby force viewers to examine their surroundings in a way that extends beyond conditioned modes of viewing.

> "Indeed, the success of Wodiczko's work depends on the degree to which it mobilizes in its audience an awareness that the architecture on which it projects images is not merely a collection of beautiful or functional objects but speech acts, endlessly transmitting messages about the meaning of the city. To become effective, against the effectivity of dominant architecture, Wodiczko's projections must, therefore, disengage viewers from habitual modes of perceiving and inhabiting the city—of receiving its messages."[204]

Wodiczko's alteration of the monuments at Union Square, statues restored with municipal grant monies aimed at enticing the developer Zeckendorf to build a multi-million dollar luxury housing complex adjacent to the park, serves to make both gentrification (urban "revitalization") and the victims of this process visible to the city dweller—a viewer too well-trained to see the city as anything but physical space. By converting the heroes of the dominant culture into representations of

[204]Deutsche, "Architecture of the Evicted," unpublished manuscript forthcoming from Exit Art, New York, p. 5.

homeless men, symbols of those who had recently been evicted from the park, Wodiczko reminds us of who controls the "public space" of Union Square and of the realities of urban redevelopment, a mechanism which benefits certain groups at the expense of others. The artist's (slide) projections expose both the dominant mode of visual and intellectual objectification of artistic and architectural elements of the city—our patterns of living in and viewing the urban environment. To the extent that we re-see the city through Wodiczko's manipulations of the urbanscape, tendencies toward homogenization of the city's population—by means, as Deutsche reminds her reader, of the literal expulsion of certain classes and races from the city—are made apparent along with the effect this process has on the discursive arena of the objectified city [205] —where representations of these expelled social groups are equally absent. [206] Their inability to compete in the governing mode of social exchange—as consumers[207] —renders the homeless and the poor powerless and without "public" territory. Like Kluge and Negt, Deutsche sees the withdrawal of public space, where dominated groups can organize their experience into group

[205]One of the most blatant examples of protecting the image of the city comes to mind—the expenditure of thousands of dollars (if not more) on the fabrication of decals—images of flowerpots on window ledges surrounded by white frilly curtains printed on one-sided adhesive plastic- –for placement in warehoused, abandoned, and tax-foreclosed buildings in New York, primarily in the South Bronx so that commuters on the Cross-Bronx Expressway to and from the wealthier, outlying suburbs and regions would not be made so aware of the blight they were passing through (and by). This was one of Koch's better strategies for dealing with the problem of homelessness.

[206]Of course, to the extent that those without homes are acknowledged, perceptions of these people are "mediated by already-existing representations, including the naming of such people as the 'homeless' in the first place". See Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," fn. #1. Part of this sentence is paraphrased from Deutsche, "Architecture of the Evicted," p. 9.

[207]As well as the fact that many of the homeless are indeed that because they are not able to participate as producers—the penalty, homelessness, begins a vicious cycle of deterioration wherein employment becomes impossible to obtain while having no place to sleep, change one's clothes, eat, etc. . .

expressions, as a threat to the existence of the public sphere—especially where, as the former characterize it, 'the public' is defined as a mass of consumers and spectators.

Strategically, it is precisely to the consumer that Wodiczko addresses his Homeless Vehicle: not to the financially-secure citizen but to the potential user of these carts who is marginalized by his or her inability (not necessarily a result of incompetency but rather of the conditions of a society organized by the the concerns of capital) to participate in the social relations of late capitalist culture based on the commodity—a term that embraces both luxury goods and necessities. Wodiczko offers his audience both the possibility of collaborating in the making of this product[208] and the potential to be reinstated as a visibly functioning member of society.

Made from sheet metal, wire grid, plastic and nylon sheeting, plywood, metal rods and rubber-coated wheels, Wodiczko's Homeless Vehicle is a variation on the theme of the shopping wagon, used by the luckier of homeless people who survive on the streets by collecting returnable bottles and cans for eventual trade-in. Unlike the shopping cart, the Homeless Vehicle (there are a number of versions) provides a platfrom for lying down on, baskets to separate plastic and glass bottles and metal cans from eachother, storage bins, as well as a basin for washing up in, and

[208] Wodiczko collaborated with David V. Lurie and many others, including homeless men and women, students, university professors, photographers, and technical, building and design consultants to realize the Homeless Vehicle in its many stages of development. For now, these living-mobiles are still more visible in the protected space of the gallery than in the streets, but this is by no means the goal of the project. See, David V. Lurie and Kryzystof Wodiczko, "Homeless Vehicle Project," *October* #47 (Winter 1988): 52-76.

a makeshift container for use as a toilet. This mobile structure which Deutsche has called the "architecture of the evicted" (in contradistinction to the dominant architectural scape which "evicts"), is not intended for the discursive space of the gallery but for use in the city's streets, where it is aimed at breaking the pattern of experience in which homelessness has become an objectified condition. Thus, Wodiczko makes use of the characteristic of the visual in artistic production to restore-to-present (not represent) conditions obscured in the virtual space of the urban environment while satisfying some of the basic requirements of a population left virtually unaddressed by the public discourse of city, state, and federal governments.

> "Instead of rendering the homeless invisible or reinforcing an image of them as passive objects, the Homeless Vehicle illuminates their mobile existence. Instead of severing or cosmeticizing the link between homelessness and redevelopment, the project visualizes the connection through its active insertion into the transformed city. It facilitates the seizing of space by homeless subjects rather than containing them in prescribed locations. Consequently, instead of restoring a surface calm to the 'ascendent' city, as reformist plans try to do, it disrupts the coherent image, which today is only constructed by neutralizing homelessness."[209]

While the characteristic of mobility is perhaps both the solution to and the precondition, if enforced, of disenfranchisement,[210] the Homeless Vehicle makes possible

[209]Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," p. 50.

[210]It seems to me that mobility might just as logically be interpretable as a negative condition: enforced, this situation is precisely what makes the homeless less-than-citizens in an arena where people are defined by their property. Even at the lowest end of the scale this is true: welfare checks, for example, are given only to those who can provide residence addresses (these include municipal shelters). Within this formula, the Homeless Vehicles, symbolically entrench the homeless in their condition. I have communicated this to Wodiczko in conversation and was made to understand the importance both of constant visibility (as a reminder to the more fortunate and as a measure of safety) and ability to move about with one's belongings (in line with the requirements of the job of

and noticeable lives, though marginalized by our society, which insist on access to (on a "right to") the city.

Martha Rosler

In an essay titled, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," Martha Rosler reviews the structures that define and delineate audiences for art: for Rosler, as for Haacke, Wodiczko and Deutsche, these audiences are, by definition, subdivided into groups, some powerful, some disenfranchised, based on class divisions.

> "The most important distinctions among members of the art audience are those of social class, the weightiest determinant of one's relation to culture."[211]

Rosler offers a catalogue of art institution audiences, including those who own high culture, those who cultivate an "appreciation of art as evidence of elevated sensibilities,"[212] as well as those people who, as "onlookers," without access to contemporary artistic discourse except through "rumor and report," are excluded from the ranks of audience altogether. The very richest collectors purchase art for prestige and enjoyment as well as, like many multinational and domestic corporations, to pro-

collecting bottles and cans). In this sense, Wodiczko has made the symbolic functions of this work subservient to the demands of the task at hand—the provision of temporary shelters which are safe and instill pride in those whose other options are even less favorable. Further, mobility is perhaps the first step, though a small one, in refuting the notion of land as private property. As Deutsche writes, "Implicit in its [the Homeless Vehicle's] impermanence is a demand that its function become obsolete, a belief in the mutability of the social situation that necessitates it." (Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," p. 51.)

[211]Martha Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, Makers" in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Boston: David Godine Publishers, Inc., 1984).

[212]Ibid., p. 312.

mote their own reputations; the middle class buy art for decoration, entertainment, status and, primarily, as an investment (these people are affected by the general health of the economy and tend to invest only when the economic climate is favorable); while the "non-buying public" serves as the mass audience for big-draw exhibits such as those focusing on canonical movements in European and American painting, sculpture and photography. As Haacke confirmed in his museum polls, Rosler identifies the middle- and upper-middle classes as the primary art public. This configuration, she maintains, is a deliberate result of restricted access to high culture and its artificially constructed nature:

> "In our society the contradictions between the claims made for art and the actualities of its production and distribution are abundantly clear. While cultural myth actively claims that art is a human universal-transcending its historical moment and the conditions of its making, and above all, the class of its makers and patrons- and that it is the highest expression of spiritual and metaphysical truth, high art is patently exclusionary in its appeal, culturally relative in its concerns, and indissolubly wedded to big money and 'upper class' life in general."[213]

It is, further, precisely these contradictory qualities of exclusiveness and purported universality that distinguish high culture from low culture and lend to the former its prestigious social value. For Rosler, however, the most crucial element of the frame of high art as an institution and as a discourse, is the fact that these audiences are not determined by the artist but by the market and the need for new commodities in a system which requires the continual introduction of new objects and styles for consumption as fuel for its operations. In her analysis of the conditions of

[213]Rosler, p. 312.

artistic reception within the contemporary American context, Rosler argues that the concept of audience is perceived as tangential, as an incidental, if necessary, condition of artistic success. She traces this general unconcern of artists with their viewing audiences as originating, historically, with the demise of the patronage system in early 19th century Europe and its replacement by market relations. The social transformation that occured at this moment left artists without the support of a benefactor class and more significantly, at the mercy of the market. Almost in reaction, a doctrine of art for art's sake, of an artistic privilege of autonomy, was subscribed to by artists who would no longer concern themselves with their audiences but with the necessities of their own creative production. (As we have seen, however, there were a few exceptions.)

> "The new conception of the artist was of someone whose production cannot be rationally directed toward any particular audience."[214]

Clearly this attitude (ideological, economic and cultural) was not coincidental but came about as a necessary strategy for maintaining the status of high art and its producers. In order to survive as such, art had to maintain its status as something unexplained simply by the laws of commodity production and consumption. Ironically, Rosler reiterates, the notion of an autonomous art which was meant to liberate the producer from the constraints of the market system preserved his or her art as mere objects (to be consumed)[215] : this, as we discussed earlier, seems

[214]Rosler, p. 319.

[215]Rosler, p. 333. Her exact words are, ". . . this insistence on the uselessness of art was meant as a cry of the producers' liberation from the object relations of their product. In an ironic reversal, the denial that the meaning of photographs rests on their rootedness in the stream of social life preserves the photography at the level of object, a mere item of value hanging on a wall."

to echo the story and fate of Minimalist production. [216]

The lack of clear directives in modes of audience address on the part of many art producers in this century is then, indirectly, a manifestation of the pressures of the capitalist market. For Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience" is a theory concerned less with the restrictions imposed by the frame of the institution of high art than with the role of the artist as "addresser," as the single most important agent in the potential, if improbable, transformation of the structure and composition of art audiences in late capitalist America. In 1989 Rosler organized a series of three exhibitions at the DIA Foundation in New York's Soho area, the center of high culture activity, which focused on the basic issues of urban life.

> "These exhibitions and discussions are intended to suggest the interrelations between the city's political, financial, real-estate, and art systems. But they also address issues of housing and homelessness directly." [217]

I do not have room to do more than mention at the collaborative efforts of this exhibition's participants and the numerous components of its tripartide configuration: I will remark only that the roundtable discussions which it incorporated[218] served as

[216] As Rosler wrote in a footnote to the same essay, "The invention of Minimal art in the sixties proved fortunate; having no generally intelligible meaning and looking remarkably like nothing other than stray bits of modular architecture, it has sold very well to big companies as appropriate decoration for corporate offices and lobbies, which reflect the same Bauhaus-derived sensibilities." (p. 324). While this is perhaps too reductive a formulation it parallels my general conclusions as to the achievements, in terms of audience address, of Minimalist art.

[217] Rosler, "Artist Statement" from "No Place Like Home" exhibit at the DIA Foundation, New York City, 1989.

[218] Each of the three exhibitions included evening lectures and forums on issues of housing, homelessness, artist survival techniques, etc. ... under the title, "Town Meetings".

the requisite elements, as Brian Wallis has suggested, for the formation of a public sphere: although temporary, through the acknowledgement of the role of processes of displacement and homelessness, inseparable from processes of redevelopment and revitalization, inseparable even, from the discourse of art, this arena formulated by Rosler, made possible the production of "counter-publicity" and, amazingly, of public experience. In this way, Rosler pointed her audience in a new direction, adding the following advice:

> "We must inventively expand our control over production and showing, and we must simultaneously widen our opportunities to work with and for people outside the audiences for high art, not as annunciatory angels bearing the way of thought of the 'haute monde', but to rupture the false boundaries between ways of thinking about art and ways of actively changing the world."[219]

[219]Rosler, "Lookers . . .," p. 334.

Afterwords

It seems ironic to have engaged in a discussion of the juncture between art and the public in the late twentieth-century without ever mentioning the work of Mary Miss, Siah Armajani, and the late Scott Burton to name a few of the artists who have recently been fulfilling large commissions for open-air sites around the United States. What might appear as an omission is, in fact, the effect of a deliberate action on my part; although the work of these artists are often labelled as "public art" by virtue their siting and their source of financial support, it is my belief that these latter characteristics are generated as a definition of publically "accessible" art by the institutions in which this production is formally and philosophically, if not physically, circumscribed. Much of the work that is touted by federal art agencies and business corporations as "public art" is art that reflects private interests. Sponsored by public-private partnerships to promote luxury urban development such as the recent project at Battery Park on the lower west side of Manhattan (a project which boasts "urban furniture" by all three of the above-mentioned artists), this work addresses itself to a very select public. My interest in this work, in the context of the following paper, is limited precisely because these sculptures are not speculative—they do not examine the parameters of their condition. Their audiences remain classless, raceless and genderless—all false assumptions about the worlds which they inhabit. Art of this type, even when placed in "public space," accepts the delimited and hermetic boundaries of the institution, thereby ignoring

even the most fundamental issues of audience adddress in artistic production. To analyze their function further in my efforts to trace the shifts in the consciousness and conceptions of the public in twentieth-century art practices would have been tantamount to building up a critical theory with which to encage a pack of straw dogs.

This chapter, then, has examined modes of artistic production that are not so easily classified, historically or formally, under a single heading. Robert Smithson, who completed Spiral Jetty in 1970 and whose collected writings were published in 1972, post-humously, contested the institutionalization of art-viewer relationships in both his environmental works and writings. Richard Serra, while maintaining a Minimalist profile, has continued, pursuing his notions of site-specificity, to address audiences outside the physical boundaries of the art institution with such pieces as Clara-Clara, St. John's Rotary Arc, and Tilted Arc: he still works in much the same idiom, perhaps daunted less by what might be deemed the failure of his Federal Plaza sculpture than by the decisions of federal spokespeople to remove his piece from the site. Rather than seeing the events of the Tilted Arc hearings as a reflection on the ability of abstraction to communicate to mass audiences, Serra has chosen, along with many others, to see this moment of censorship as reflecting the ideological positioning of Reagan's America. Certainly it signalled the bankruptcy of the notion of a **universal** public sphere; a fact recognized by Jurgen Habermas when he stated that public discourse is class-based and that communication

is the transformative element in the public sphere: As we have seen, the outcome of the trial of Tilted Arc paid little more than lip-service to the concept of communication. Hans Haacke, an artist who has now become an art world name, was not received by art institutions in the same manner as the Minimalists or even the slightly later (though over-lapping) generation of the post-Minimalists, although he was their contemporary. His is an art that did and continues to contest not just the protective boundaries of the museum in what has come to be called the practice of institutional critique but the specific characteristics of artistic production that support a position of autonomy in artistic praxis. Haacke refuses to sustain the primacy of the visual; calling into question modes of contemplative and reverent reception that are inherent in the exhibition formations of high-art. Private business concerns are exposed, in Haacke's work, as intricately linked to and supported by the infrastructures of the "public realm," a point theorized by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in their writings on the historical concept of the public sphere. Negt and Kluge, who see the public sphere as the central element in the organization of public experience, and as more far-reaching than the area Habermas' definition encompasses, refer to the generation of counter-publicity and oppositional-public spheres as a means to counteracting the hegemony of cultural formations established by the ruling class. Rosalyn Deutsche brings in the discourse of urban theory to further expose the relations between art and and the social processes in which it (consciously or unwittingly) participates: in making parallel the

actual processes and nature of urban development and redevelopment, Deutsche weaves a complicated discourse that interlocks the city, its inhabitants, and aesthetic representations (or public art) incontrovertably together. Further, Deutsche examines a term that is both commonly used in current artistic and urban planning parlance and yet, one that is particularly problematic to define: public art. Often this tag is invoked in reference to art that is interactive, accessible to its viewers, functional or chosen by the community in which it is placed. Public art, Deutsche reveals, is indeed art by concensus—but the conceding is done by those with a very particular outlook: public art often serves as a concession to the function of, as Brian Wallis has put it, cosmetic remedies. Thus implicit in the notion of public art are specific conceptions about the organization of urban land and the ways in which the objectified environment should be perceived by its residents. Public art as used to beautify or aestheticize the urban environment functions as a band-aid, serving to temporarily cover up the critical issues of urbanism. There are, however, public art practices (or better, counter-public sphere practices) that maintain a specificity, like Lissitzky's and Tatlin's practices, toward particular audiences. In these examples, specificity is aimed beyond the locational, beyond the physical characteristics of the site to address the social processes (economic, political, and demographic) that qualify its reality. "Public art," like Wodiczko's and Rosler's, contests the hegemony of a singular notion of public, which, as Deutsche says, is only representative in so far as it excludes. Rosler attempts not to elevate mundane concerns to

the level of high art but to challenge the modes of address of high art that exclude the concerns of and the people disenfranchised by the dominant public sphere and the separation of private and public realms, a device used to structure and control urban territory and social policies. Brian Wallis suggests that Wodiczko's Homeless Projections represent a shift from Serra's critique of production to a critique of reproduction through the displacment and exposure of meaning inherent in the physical environment. But Wodiczko, in the context of an enquiry into modes of audience address, goes beyond this formulation, offering a critique of the notion of public as an adequate term for addressing marginalized groups. The characteristic that the practices and writings of Haacke, Wodiczko, Rosler, and Deutsche share concerns a method of audience address that cannot be described as a shift in visual or optical terms but rather, as a refusal of the hegemony of a singular art audience by means of a singular, "art discourse."

> "How can there be said to be a private sphere when millions are told simultaneously to insert suppositories in order to gain hemorrhoid relief? And how can there be said to be a public sphere when most of the audience is apparently unconcerned with this simultaneity of address, and even whether or not the message applies to them?
>
> How can there be said to be a public sphere when schematic diagrams of the operation on the president's penis and lower intestine appear prominently in the mass media? Concomitantly, how can there be said to be a public sphere when the concept of privacy violated by these examples has long since been erased by everyone's apparent longing to appear on TV and thus be inscribed in history?
>
> How can there be said to be a public sphere when the rules of civil behaviour—personal, moral and legal—are suspended for celebrities? Concomitantly, how can there be said to be a public sphere when it has become impossible to challenge or criticize representatives of the state except in the most restricted terms circumscribed by a foolish

politeness?

Finally, how can there be said to be a private sphere, how can there be said to be a public sphere, when the image of the terrorist, the grisly specter of the death of private and public alike, is put beside me at the family dinner table?"[220]

[220]Rosler, "The Birth and Death of the Viewer: On the Public Function of Art," p. 15.

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